

# INCREASING INTEROPERABILITY AND CRIME SOLVING THROUGH DATA SHARING

Public safety agencies in Newton County, Georgia needed a solution that would allow them to exchange real-time information and benefit from a dependable software system. The Covington Police Department and the Covington-Newton County 911 Communications Center wanted to expand their existing Spillman Flex system to increase multi-jurisdictional interoperability. Covington-Newton County 911 Communications Center Director Mike Smith said gathering information from other agencies had been a difficult and time-consuming process. Police officers looking for information about a suspect or vehicle had to call other agencies and ask them to search for the data.

“We had to make a phone call to somebody and ask them to manually find the records or search through the disparate [software] system,” Smith said. “It was very cumbersome.”

In 2005, the county issued a special purpose local option sales tax that would allow 10 agencies throughout Newton County to access data in the Flex system. As a result, the Covington Police Department, Covington Fire Department, Covington-Newton County 911 Communications Center, Newton County Sheriff, Newton County Fire Service, Newton County Emergency Medical Service, Oxford Police Department, Porterdales Police Department, Newton County Animal Control, and Newton County District Attorney began sharing data using a shared-host Flex system.

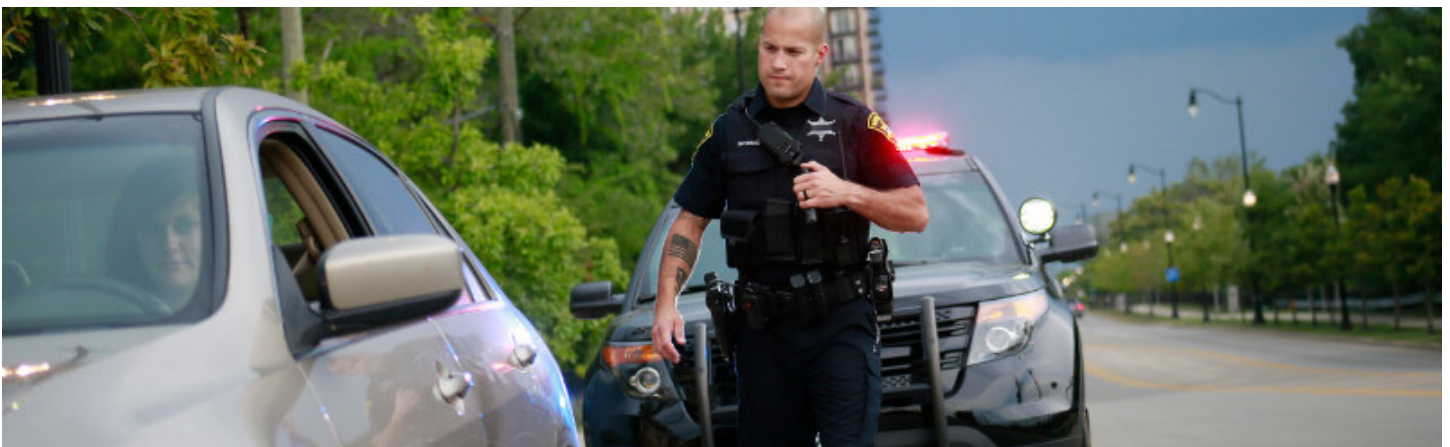
Data is stored on a server hosted at the Covington-Newton County 911 Communications Center, where it can be easily accessed by each of the participating agencies. Each agency has the ability to retain its individual preferences and restrict access to specific data, while still providing neighboring users with a collective pool of information.

“We’re able to get into that system and get data, and that’s been a big asset to the sheriff’s office,” said Newton County Sheriff’s Office Chief Deputy Jerry Carter.

In 2008, the shared Flex system helped the Covington Police Department solve a murder, Smith said.

The agency received a call from a witness who saw a person being abducted from a house. By the time Covington police officers responded to the location, the suspects and victim had left the scene.

While interviewing witnesses, Smith said the officers were able to find out the name of one of the suspects. Officers looked up the name in Flex and, using the Involvements<sup>®</sup> feature to link related information, saw that the name record had an associated phone number. Involvements also showed that the phone number had been used in the past to make a 9-1-1 call from a residence in Covington. The police arrived at the Covington address and arrested the criminals.



The benefits of data sharing have been felt throughout the county, Smith said. The Newton County District Attorney's office uses the system to save time in processing cases. Rather than meeting with police officers to gather information, personnel can look up records and other data using the Flex system.

The Covington Fire Department and the Newton County Fire Service use the shared system to check for previous incidents at a location. When responding to an emergency call, personnel at Newton County Emergency Medical Service can use the system to see whether the victim has a history of medical problems, Smith said. In addition, Newton County Sheriff's Office uses Flex to find information needed to complete citations and warrants.

"The warrant divisions love it," Smith said. "It makes their job so much easier."

The Covington Police Department has been a Spillman customer since 1992 and Smith said the system has proven to be very reliable and easy to use. For example, the Flex software streamlines information management for the Newton County agencies by enabling data to be stored in a central database, ensuring the highest standards for data accuracy and reliability.

Covington Police Department Chief Stacey Cotton said the software's reliability has made him a life-long Spillman advocate.

"It's just a great robust system that has served us for many years now," Cotton said. "If I was going to take over at another agency, the first thing I would do would be to purchase Flex."

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#### **ABOUT SPILLMAN**

For more than 30 years, Spillman Technologies has provided public safety professionals with innovative software solutions and reliable customer service. Today, Spillman's integrated public safety software is used by more than 1,500 sheriff's offices, police departments, communication centers, fire departments, and correctional facilities nationwide.



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