

BRENT BURNS: Thank you for joining the Cisco Education and Government Unified Communications Podcast Series. I'm your host, Brent Burns. And a special thanks to our guest today, Morgan Wright. Morgan, tell us a little bit about your background. How long have you been in the public-safety arena?

MORGAN WRIGHT:: Well, probably between actually being in public safety and then working in this area, getting close to 26 years.

BRENT BURNS I know all of our listeners are familiar with 911 services as they exist today. What are the next-generation 911 services that you're focused on now?

MORGAN WRIGHT:: A lot of people, they pick up the phone and they dial 911, and they don't realize how complex it is behind that, because 911 is the only phone number in America that doesn't have a single place where the number goes to. It can go to many places, depending on where you're at. So a lot of people pick up the phone, and sometimes they expect that you're supposed to know everything and sometimes you don't always get it. So the current status still is voice-only. It's supposed to deliver in what they call -- there's a phase 0, 1, and 2, and that's about supplying number information and location information. And not everybody has complete phase 2 compliance, so you're still hearing operators on the phone, call takers, asking, "What's your location, what's your address?" So kind of the current status, it's voice-only; very limited, not a whole lot of way to collaborate or communicate with other agencies, because it's based on strictly some of this legacy technology. Well, what they have started looking at for next-generation 911 is, look, consumers are really driving this. We have voice over IP from the home, we have cell phones, we have text messaging on those cell phones, we have video. They're realizing that we're missing a lot of ways people communicate. People just don't communicate by voice anymore. There's actually a national plan out; it's called the Net 911 Act. It was just passed back in July. And this office has actually 270 days to come up with a plan to show how the United States is going to transition from its current state to a network-based -- an IP-based -- network-based emergency communication system, and that's going to require investment in new infrastructure -- new network infrastructure -- and new applications.

BRENT BURNS: What's the connection between unified communications and mobile devices, voice over IP instruments, and this emergency-communications solution that Cisco is developing?

MORGAN WRIGHT: One of the things that this is inherent on is that this solution that we have called the ECCP, the Emergency Communication and Collaboration Platform, is built and structured around Cisco Unified Communications for a couple reasons. One is that when people call in on an emergency line where it's non-emergency, it's very difficult to transfer those calls out. You have to do additional work to do that. Or when a call comes in on a non-emergency line that is truly an emergency, how do you quickly and easily move all of that information, including the number and location information, into the 911 queue? And then third is, how do you conference people in, because what people don't realize on these 911 centers -- like after Katrina, and Rita, and Wilma -- when these centers go down, they go down because they're physically tied to phone lines. So that's been one of the issues is that they've been too dependent on infrastructure. Unified communications gives us the chance for disaster recovery, to be able to operate anywhere that you have access to the networks so the network becomes a platform. So it allows you to seamlessly and easily, and natively, transfer these calls back and forth -- whether it's emergency to non-emergency, non-emergency to emergency -- or conference other people in. And this is why this has been so powerful. Many agencies already have an investment in Cisco Unified Communications. They're saying, how can we combine our 911 with our unified communications and be able to take text and SMS and video and photographs over the cellular network? Or

be able to send those from wireline networks as well? So this, with unified communications, brings all the power of what Cisco already does and combines that with 911, and that's why we used the word collaboration, because Cisco allows them to now be able to put collaboration into what they do -- more than just communication, and it's more than just voice.

BRENT BURNS So your vision would be to gracefully migrate what is both in name and solution today a place where calls, audio-only, would go to something that's much more than that over time?

MORGAN WRIGHT: Absolutely right. You're spot on. Because this is about utilizing what you already have in your current investment -- being able to, over time, develop a very graceful migration path that allows you, based on your needs, your requirements, your funding, this allows you to move over time to an EC3, an Emergency Communication and Collaboration Center. And it moves from taking voice only to voice, video, data, text messaging. We've built a lot of this stuff out already. And really, what it is is that we've got so much capability ready to go, we're really waiting for the industry, the public-safety, actually, community, to catch up to us. And it's now being done legislatively and now being done through laws. This is a change that's going to happen, no matter what. But I think we're very well-positioned. We've got the tools, we've got the resources, we've got the applications.

BRENT BURNS How much of this does Cisco do on its own and how much does Cisco partner with others in the industry to deliver this public-safety solution that you're referring to, Morgan?

MORGAN WRIGHT: Cisco does not do it all. We're not a 911 company. We have partnered with Positron, who is basically a global leader in this area -- I believe they're number two globally in this area -- because they have a set of expertise in terms of how to handle 911 calls. Now what Cisco is expert at is we're experts at the network, we're expert at voice communications. And we have many other partners, for example, like Red Sky Technologies, that actually accentuate our offerings, complement our offerings.

BRENT BURNS How does Cisco interoperate with existing radio services and networks that are out there?

MORGAN WRIGHT: This has been one of the biggest challenges public safety has had, is how do they make things interoperate? Simply telling people that everybody has to buy the same kind of radio is not interoperability. That's a monopoly. To really get interoperability, it means any device, any platform, on a standards-based network, meaning to be able to communicate with anybody else on any device. For example, I remember as being a trooper got involved in a chase and came into the city one time. The only way I could hear what was going on in the city is I had to hear what was going on in the scanner, and I had to be able to hear the police channel and the sheriff's office channel. And then I was talking to my dispatcher, who talked to, over a phone line, talked to the dispatcher at the police department and the sheriff's office who were then communicating with their deputies. Well, in a chase, when you're going pretty high speed, that takes a long time for that information to get around. That's not the way it should work. It's not the way it should work in a disaster situation, in a crowd-control situation, and in an emergency situation. We have to be able to talk with each other, regardless of what device we have. One of the things Cisco does is we look at the network as a platform. We can take any form of voice, take it to the network, and share it across the network, because the network has no concept of distance, and then share it back again. We can make a cell phone talk to a radio. We can make a radio talk to an IP phone or a PC client. But not just for the sake of having it. It's for the sake of being able to meet your mission and do your job. It's called IPICS, the IP Interoperability and Collaboration System, where we can take any form of voice and talk to any other form of voice. We're agnostic. We don't care if it's a radio and we don't care who it's made by.

BRENT BURNS Well, I know we have listeners that I'm sure will be intrigued by what you're saying and seek to find more information. So where can we point our listeners where they can find out information about the next-generation 911 services as well as what Cisco is doing?

MORGAN WRIGHT: From a government standpoint, there's probably a pretty good site that has a lot of collection stuff overall on all the initiatives. And it's actually done by the Department of Transportation. So it's www.its.dot.gov/ng911 -- and that will get you a lot of good information on what some of the requirements are, what are some of the pilots that are going on out there. The second thing is that from a Cisco standpoint, we provide a lot of this information also on our government page. So they can go to www.cisco.com/go/government and find a lot of information on there as well.

BRENT BURNS Morgan, some of our listeners may be familiar with your other podcasts. For those that are not, can you tell us about those, and where we can find them?

MORGAN WRIGHT: Absolutely. Me and a couple other -- well these guys are still current cops, I'm a former cop -- but we actually do a weekly podcast called Copcast, about cop and tech issues. So they can find us on either iTunes with the keyword Copcast or go to copcast.net. And also, I run a site called thethinblueonline.com. It's a great place to share and gets all sorts of different types of information. But this is the state, this social networking, this is how people are now sharing information, and I'm glad to see that Cisco is in this position. And I love to be a part of this, man, because I'll tell you, nothing is more fun than to show people what you can do once you have a network.

BRENT BURNS: Well thank you for your time today, Morgan. I really appreciate it. I learned a lot along the way, and I very much appreciate you taking the time to share it with us.

MORGAN WRIGHT: Absolutely my pleasure, Brent. Thank you guys, and good luck to everybody out there.

BRENT BURNS: I'm your host, Brent Burns. We'll see you next time on the Cisco Education and Government Unified Communications Podcast Series.