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Online Employee Scheduling & Workforce Management Solutions

Wabasha County (MN) Sheriff's Department, Wabasha

Deputy Joe Schneider couldn't recall the exact name of Wabasha County Sheriff's previous computer-based scheduling program but it did have efficiencies over pen and paper.

But ultimately, officers had to either transfer the results from a paper copy hanging in the squad room or snap a photo of the sheet with their phone if they wanted to take it along.

"It would map everything out for us, give us the shift-dates and whatnot, but it once (the administrator) got it all squared away, he would have to make a copy of it and hang it on our board back there," Schneider recalled.

Requesting time off involved completing a paper form, garnering a supervisor's signature, then awaiting the approval. Once OK'd, copies of the schedule change were made and distributed around the department so everyone could jot corrections on their copy.
The old program did the job, but information lapses were common. An officer might call-off, but if the scheduling expert weren't working that day, calendars weren't updated.

Schneider noticed Aladtec's display while attending the Minnesota Sheriff's Association winter conference. The name looked familiar, but he couldn't recall why until he got home and noticed it was the same program his girlfriend uses as an EMT with the Plainview Ambulance Service.

He shared the info with Chief Deputy Jim Warren and one day, Warren suggested they schedule a demonstration. Sheriff Rodney Bartsh signed the subscription agreement a month later. Warren, whom Schneider describes as having "100 irons in the fire", invited the

Department Info:

Roster: 48 members, including FT & PT deputies, dispatchers and administrative staff.

Calls: About 7,000 in 2017.

Service area: Pop. 22,000, approx. 550 sq. miles, including 22 sq. miles of Lake Pepin and the upper Mississippi River and backwaters.

Unique challenges: Annual spring & fall motorcycle 'Flood Run', Wabasha Co. Fair, large influx of seasonal residents and boaters on the Mississippi. Providing contract coverage for cities of Elgin & Mazeppa

Aladtec users since 2018

Neighboring agencies also using Aladtec:

Wabasha Ambulance, Pepin (WI) Emergency Ambulance Service, Lake City Ambulance, Scenic Valley EMS, Cochrane, WI; Plainview EMS, Durand (WI) Municipal Ambulance Service; Elgin Ambulance, Elgin; Altura Ambulance Service, Mondovi (WI)Area Ambulance, Mondovi; Eyota Volunteer Ambulance Association, Red Wing Fire & Ambulance, Edenbrook Skilled Nursing, Rochester, Premier Security Inc., Rochester; Zumbrota Area Ambulance; Spring Valley Area Ambulance, Chatfield Ambulance and Fire, Dunn County(WI) First Responders, Menomonie; Kasson Fire & Rescue; Cannon Falls Ambulance Service; City of Lanesboro - Ambulance; Dodge Center City Ambulance; and Preston Area Ambulance.

deputy to become the department champion for Aladtec.

Wabasha staffs its countywide patrols with two 12-hour day cars, a 12-hour midday car, and two 12-hour night cars. It also assigns an officer daily to patrol the City of Elgin.

Schneider leaned on Aladtec's support staff to develop primary schedules for much of their 48-person department, but he's pretty much figured it out for himself since.

"I've used (tech support) when we've needed them," he said. Initial training included himself, the dispatch supervisor and another administrator. Now, tweaking schedules is "like … seamless."

Most officers log in to Aladtec via their department-issued smartphones. The hilly, bluff region does present connectivity challenges at times, but access is generally reliable.

Like anything new, acceptance of the cloud-based program came quick for some, more slowly to others. "The new guys thought it was really cool -- and the old guys didn't," Schneider said, chuckling.

Shortly after staff began using Aladtec, Schneider began playing around with the Forms tool.

"Right away we built a form that I thought would be very handy. We have two part-time squad cars. We used to have a little bit of a time keeping track of mileage" and maintenance needs, "so I created this form "Squad Use Report" for the part-time officers."

Next up? A solution for tracking monthly mileage on full-time officers' take-home squads.

"The administrative assistant always had a time trying to get everyone to (submit) their monthly mileage, so now she's got it scheduled right in the software -- "Squad mileage report due" -- so we just put in our VIN, our mileage, submit that to her, she puts it on the spreadsheet."

She sometimes uses Aladtec's Mandatory Message tool as a reminder for procrastinators. They're unable to log onto the system until they've acknowledged that prompt.

When the department's phone provider pitched installing a chip in squad cars to keep track of vehicle maintenance, Schneider suggested they could accomplish the same goals with an electronic form.

"We came up with a Squad Maintenance Report, so oil change or anything gets done with the car, they fill out that report, and they submit it, I print it out and (the administrative assistant) staples it to the bill and sends it to accounting. Essentially what they wanted was a running maintenance list on these cars, and they were going to spend a lot of money to get that. Once we (assembled) this report and I showed them you can go under Reports and click and get that, and you narrow it down to which squad and you've got your running maintenance report."

Schneider knows there are other Aladtec features the department can harness to find new efficiencies, but he doesn't want to push co-workers too hard, too fast.

Some officers are still growing comfortable with using the camera and digital recorder in their Department-issued smartphone for documentation. Squads are also equipped with mobile data terminals through which deputies file reports using CIS Records Management System.

"For right now, I think I've overloaded the guys pretty good with all the changes they're going to have, and now it gets into the summer, get thru that, but maybe this fall, we'll be lookin' for different things to switch over" to Aladtec, he said.

Schneider believes Aladtec is worth its annual subscription fee. Officers "really like to be able to pull out their phones and see real-time schedules. That's been huge," said Schneider. His co-worker no longer spends a couple of hours bi-weekly, composing schedules and distributing paper copies. Deputies no longer have to visit the squad room to learn about open shifts and chances at overtime.

"I think it's alleviated a lot of gaps in communication. The Chief Deputy likes being (informed). Somebody comes with a bill for $500 for squad maintenance, he's like -- 'Why didn't anybody tell me about this?' We're getting things set up so someone can just fill out a form. They don't have to send an e-mail and worry about who it goes to. You fill out that form, and you're good. Everyone has access to the information they need to have," said Schneider.

"It works very good, and it's definitely worth the money."

Schneider has grown familiar with Aladtec's Help section, filled with blog notes and video entries.
"I've watched a few of them when I was putting forms together. If I need the information, I know right where to go for it. Most of the stuff is pretty easy. I wouldn't say I'm a computer guru, but I get by."

Dep. Joe Schneider

Deputy Joe Schneider earned his Law Enforcement associate degree from Alexandria (MN) Technical and Community College in 1999. He worked four years as a patrol officer in Plainview before joining the Wabasha Co. Sheriff's Dept. in 2003. He worked full-time in patrol five years, and investigations for several years and now splits his time between patrol and increasing administrative responsibilities with the department.

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