

# Lee County Sheriff's Office enhances officer safety with a Sprint® GPS Solution.



*Using GST Optima™ Tracking, dispatch maintains communication with officers in the field without significantly increasing costs.*

**The Lee County Sheriff's Office**, located in Opelika, Alabama, is a full service law enforcement agency serving a population of more than 125,000 people. Located in the east central portion of the state, Lee County covers 616 square miles and is the home of Auburn University. The sheriff's office has more than 150 employees, 68 of whom are sworn deputy sheriffs. With a constant emphasis on professionalism, the sheriff's office maintains an around-the-clock law enforcement presence in rural Lee County.

## Challenge

As the fourth fastest growing county reaches a population of more than 125,000 residents, managing public safety has become increasingly challenging for Lee County Sheriff's Office. In this particular instance, Sheriff Jay Jones and Major Tommy Carter were challenged with finding a way to maintain contact with Lee County's officers while out in the field, ensuring their safety at all times.

"Our primary concern is the safety of our deputy sheriffs. Anything we can do that will allow us to enhance their safety out in the field is a priority," said Sheriff Jones. "Being able to identify the location of their vehicles at any given moment is a critical component."

In previous years, the sheriff's office used radio communications to maintain contact with its officers and track their location out in the field. While the radios were sufficient when patrol cars were in range, all contact was lost when a car ventured outside the radio range. Officers and dispatch would lose contact, preventing the uninterrupted communication demanded of public safety, as well as a constant view of each patrol car's location. As a result, a small team from the sheriff's office, led by Major Carter, set out to investigate alternative solutions.

## Solution

While searching for a cost-effective solution, the team decided a GPS tracking solution could remedy its issue. They identified various tracking solutions, some of which were free of charge and others that proved to be too costly due to high monthly monitoring fees and expensive in-car equipment. Several options required data storage on the office's computers, which would have slowed system performance. Other solutions could track a patrol car using an IP address assigned to the individual computer in the vehicle, but would not have met the sheriff office's need.



*“The problem with that is when a car goes out of range and ends up roaming and switching IP addresses, the car disappears from the tracking system. Our cars are all over the country so that would not work for us,” said Major Carter.*

*Soon, Major Carter and his team came across GST Optima Tracking – an affordable, real-time resource location data solution. With the team’s interest piqued, the GPS solution was installed in two patrol cars to be tested over the weekend. By Monday, the sheriff’s office was so impressed by the units that they decided to add the service to all 50 of its patrol cars.*

*Today, each patrol car is equipped with a computer and aircard, sending real-time location data over the Sprint network using a GPS antenna. This data is then transmitted back to the GST mapping software, allowing all personnel to view patrol car locations. With information automatically updated every 30 seconds and manually updated every second, Major Carter and Sheriff Jones never had to fear falling out of touch with their officers again.*

*“I would urge any law enforcement agency, particularly with budget constraints, to consider the Sprint/GST Optima solution for a reliable way to maintain the safety of their officers at an extremely affordable price.”*

*- Sheriff Jay Jones, Lee County Sheriff’s Office*

## *Bottom line*

*Lee County Sheriff’s Office realized immediate benefits from the system that have improved efficiencies across the agency. With GST Optima Tracking, dispatch can save time by quickly identifying the closest patrol cars and routing them accordingly. Supervisors can also now ensure coverage across the county with the ability to refer to historical data, allowing them to track and adjust patrol patterns.*

*Officers in the field have enjoyed additional security with a tracking system that never loses sight of their patrol car, as well as identifies if his/her location imposes possible danger. In an emergency, the sheriff’s office now has the capability to add other departments to the system for expanded situational awareness.*

*Since the patrol cars were already equipped with computers and aircards, the cost to further equip each car with the Sprint GPS tracking solution was even more affordable at only \$9.99 per month, per vehicle.*

*“Within the first two months, the system has already paid for itself,” said Major Carter. “We’ve had three separate incidents where we were able to get a deputy the backup he needed and avert what could have been an extremely dangerous situation. With what we’re paying for the system, you can’t beat it.”*

*Major Carter also adds that the level of service has been top notch from Sprint and GST. “The way we see it, if the support isn’t there, then the product doesn’t do us much good. Sprint and GST are always there—we’re very impressed.”*

*With the overwhelming success of the service thus far, the Lee County Sheriff’s Office is looking to add the solution to its investigation and civil divisions in the near future.*

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