

# Des Moines Police Department

A Crescendo Case Study



## Efficient crime reporting is just a phone call away



Located in the center of Iowa, Des Moines is a hub of government action, business activity and cultural affairs with a population of approximately 200,000. This thriving Midwest city has gained national recognition as a major insurance center with nearly 60 life, health, and casualty companies while its climate-controlled skywalk system serves as an important link to many other businesses, restaurants and several tourist attractions. Even though its metropolitan population may soon reach 500,000, Des Moines has managed to keep the atmosphere of a small town.

Iowa's capital is a city of low crime and its police department has successfully embraced the concept of community policing, combining the resources of the police department with those of the neighborhood groups, social services agencies and other city organizations. The Des Moines Police Department employs a total of 483 people, including 364 sworn police officers and the records department processes over 55,000 police investigation reports each year. To provide a smooth reporting process, the police department has implemented a completely automated dictation system. "Our officers have access to a phone-in dictation system at any time, day or night," says Robert Carlson, Senior Police Officer. "With this convenient solution, officers can file their reports directly from the crime scene, using a regular phone to dictate all their reports."

### Key Figures

- 364 police officers
- 55,000 investigation reports processed a year



### FASTER REPORT FILING

As speech is the fastest means of communications available, dictating their reports to a computerized system reduces paperwork and gives officers more time to focus on their case loads. Using the digital dictation system, police officers on patrol can list all crime details at a fraction of the time needed when hand writing or typing them. Most dictations at the Des Moines Police Department come from the criminal investigations, vice and traffic divisions. As officers reporting on an incident do not even have to be present at the department, they can stay available for service in the city while filing their reports.

"We had already been using a dictation system for several years when we felt it was time to upgrade. The system we were using at the time didn't seem very reliable anymore and two years ago we decided to move to a state-of-the-art dictation system," explains Robert Carlson. When **DigiScribe-XL** from Crescendo was recommended to the police department by long-time Crescendo Iowa distributor Wahltek, Inc., they found that it clearly met all their requirements and decided to implement this feature-rich and secure digital dictation system.

### DIGITAL IDENTIFICATION

"During the initial training, Crescendo gave us little cards with basic instructions which helped us to quickly get used to the dictation solution. We didn't require a lot of training as it is a very easy system to use," continues Robert Carlson. To dictate their reports, officers simply dial a specific number and are immediately connected to the dictation system. Once they have provided their identification number as well as a case number, they can start recording. "Officers can not only record their dictations but they can also stop at any time to listen to what they have just recorded. They can also easily suspend a recording and come back to it later. It's much more convenient than typing or using a tape-based dictation system," insists Robert Carlson. While officers at other police departments using a micro-cassette recorder have to physically transport their dictation tapes to the transcription department, **DigiScribe-XL** will immediately provide the typists with electronic files. In addition, voice files are kept safe from duplication and accidental deletion and can be retained long after they have been committed to paper or stored in a records management system.

The Des Moines Police Department has three typists on the payroll for the report transcription and they usually type up each report either on the same day or the next, depending on their workload and the report's priority. The typists will transcribe and finish reports on a major crime like homicide before they start working on the report of a burglary or a traffic incident. Once a typist has transcribed a report, the final document will be archived in the section's Police Report Computerized Information System (PRCIS). Based on the case number, each report will be stored in the respective case file and the distribution of reports throughout the police department is handled electronically via the PRCIS.

### AS EASY AS PICKING UP THE PHONE

"We implemented **DigiScribe-XL** two years ago and since the very first day we have not encountered any problems whatsoever. It's a really good system, it runs smoothly and it's extremely reliable," concludes Robert Carlson. "Since the new system has been installed, more and more officers have been using the phone-in functions. This digital dictation system is so easy to use that you would not want to go back to producing your reports on paper again once you have done it over the phone."

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