

POLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE UTILIZES LIVE911'S ADVANCED GEOFENCING CAPABILITIES

PCSO uses Live911's polygonal map overlays to configure geofence territories within its 2,010 square mile jurisdiction area.

Polk County in central Florida is the fourth largest county by area in the state. The Polk County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) employs over 1,700 full-time staff (sworn, certified, and civilians), 300 part-time, and over 3,000 volunteer members. PCSO has earned ten professional accreditations in various areas of the agency.

The Sheriff administers patrol and investigative responsibilities in a vast primary service area that includes the unincorporated regions of the county, as well as six municipalities that have contracted with the PCSO to provide law enforcement services. These include: Frostproof, Polk City, Eagle Lake, Fort Meade, Dundee, and Mulberry. The patrol area is separated into two divisions and five districts.

An evolution of communication services for multiple communities

The Polk County Sheriff's Office administers dispatching services for all police, fire, and emergency medical services in the county, with the exception of three cities that have their own Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). The service area for the Emergency Communications Center (ECC) has expanded in the past several years, due in part to the municipal partnerships. Last year, the ECC received 671,042 emergency and non-emergency calls; of those, 281,585 were calls for service that required dispatching deputy sheriffs and providing critical information to them in the field.

Polk County's Sheriff Grady Judd was first elected in 2004 and has been re-elected every term since.



Judd has also served as president of the Major County Sheriff's Association, as well as the Florida Sheriff's Association. He has an acute understanding of answering emergency calls, having started his career working for the PCSO in 1972 as a telecommunicator.

Kim Riggall also has a long history with PCSO and currently serves as the Application Support Supervisor in the Information Technology Division. Riggall's role has grown from managing the CAD and RMS systems to overseeing all of the other technology applications used by the organization.

In early 2020, Sheriff Judd heard about a new technology being developed that could livestream 911 calls directly to first responders and asked Riggall to investigate. She reached out to HigherGround and signed up for Live911.

"The Polk County Sheriff's Office has always strived to embrace cutting edge technology, to see how we can do things better, and to get accurate real-time information to our officer's in the field. Live911 allows us to do that."

CAPTAIN GREG GORECK



“In the first 30 days we saved 3 lives. We saved a child who was choking because we got there before fire or EMS. We also saved two people with our AED who were having cardiac arrests. Live911 is a remarkable tool that has helped us to arrive at emergencies quicker and saves lives. It’s a game changer!”

SHERIFF GRADY JUDD

The first Sheriff’s Office in the U.S. to deploy Live911

“I have worked with a lot of technology companies in my 25 years, and the customer service that we receive from the team at HigherGround is impeccable,” said Riggall. “We’re getting immediate responses to issues and that should be praised. In the technology world, it’s not common.” PCSO signed on for an evaluation and testing period to range from six months to one year using 10 licenses in the Southeast section of the county.

There were some minor issues in the beginning, such as upgrading half of the deputies’ laptops from a Windows 7 environment to a Windows 10 version so Live911 could be installed. Also, the mobile application the deputies use has an externally USB-connected GPS device. “HigherGround’s team had to program Live911 to allow it to share the port while still allowing our mobile application to maintain that ABL/GPS connection for our officers’ safety,” said Riggall. “Honestly, I was quite surprised they were able to do that because we’ve been trying to accomplish this with other software vendors and nobody else could.”

Another significant contribution from PCSO’s testing was advancing the software’s geofencing capabilities that allow officers to filter and hear only livestreaming emergency calls within their designated area. “We are a large scale organization with a large geography. When we first started the beta, our deputies were saying, ‘It would be easier to see my boundary, our sector, and the district beat boundaries,’” said Riggall.

HigherGround improved the geofencing feature from evolving a standard circle with distance radius to using polygonal map overlays – allowing the configuration of more specific geofence territories such as designated street borders or city limits.



Live911 geofencing and call mapping capabilities

Decreased Response Times

Captain Greg Goreck is the commander of the Southeast District and managed the beta testing and implementation of Live911 for the entire Polk County Sheriff’s Office.

“So far, we have caught four hit-and-run suspects. With calls that are in progress, law enforcement is sometimes hindered by the delays associated with the normal procedure of daisy chaining questions from the dispatcher, to the call taker, to the caller, and then awaiting the response back through the same chain,” said Goreck. “But with Live911, when a witness calls in and is following a suspect, we are able to hear the play-by-play, turn-by-turn, and are able to make the stop within minutes.”

In another example while monitoring Live 911, a deputy heard a call come in reporting a disturbance. Based on the agency’s 911 protocol, the call taker had immediately asked the caller for the location of the incident, which was approximately 1 mile from the deputy’s location. The deputy was able to self-dispatch, arriving on scene in 73 seconds and intervening before a crime was committed.

After the initial program in 2021, the PCSO deployed 180 concurrent licenses to deputies and plans to expand even further after presenting the solution to its city partners in the community they serve.