



## St. Tammany Upgrades Connectivity in Rural Areas with TOUGHBOOK and Built in LTE



### CHALLENGE

Founded in 1995, the [Louisiana Ambulance Alliance \(LAA\)](#) represents ambulance services across Louisiana that serve citizens in the state with emergency and non-emergency care and medical transportation services. The LAA consists of a diverse group of providers that offer healthcare services and support to residents who need high quality health resources.

One of LAA's providers is [St. Tammany Parish Fire District #4](#), which serves a community of nearly 60,000 citizens and more than 100 specialists in fire suppression and emergency medical services. As most of Louisiana is rural, a major challenge St. Tammany's firefighters and EMS workers faced was a lack of connectivity. The tablets they previously used — before switching to TOUGHBOOK ten years ago — did not have built in LTE, so workers were using a third-party hotspot. This led to an inconsistent connection, which caused potential safety concerns because access to the patient's data was obstructed. A stable connection is crucial for quick and reliable access for both retrieving and inputting patient data.



### SOLUTION

St. Tammany was introduced to TOUGHBOOK devices with powerful in-built antennas to improve online connectivity in rural areas. LAA worked with trusted Panasonic partner, [Rugged Depot](#), to find a solution that would best address St. Tammany's requirements. After continued successful use of the TOUGHBOOK devices for 10 years, the workers of St. Tammany knew that TOUGHBOOK would be the best fit for their needs.

As part of the Electronic Rural Health Information Technology (E-RHIT) Network, the LAA provided St. Tammany with eight new Panasonic TOUGHBOOK 20 and TOUGHBOOK 33 2-in-1's because of the device's rugged and wireless capabilities. Each device was equipped with the hardware and software needed for EMTs to quickly collect and relay medical information from the field to healthcare facilities in real time.



### RESULT

With its wireless capabilities, the TOUGHBOOK devices increased network connectivity, allowing medics to easily pull up patient information and focus on the situation at hand. The day-to-day of an EMS worker is fast paced and they can encounter harsh conditions; the TOUGHBOOK devices are made to withstand these conditions with its rugged design. The mobile design also gives St. Tammany workers more flexibility with a detachable tablet, built-in kickstand and hot-swappable battery that supports the on-the-go nature of the job. Using the Verizon 4G LTE network, the TOUGHBOOK devices are able to connect securely and reliably.



The [Louisiana Ambulance Alliance \(LAA\)](#) was formed in 1995 by Emergency Medical Service (EMS) providers who deliver healthcare services to Louisiana's citizens. The LAA is the lead organization for the advancement of the needs of its members in the emergency and non-emergency ambulance and medical transportation industry. One of LAA's members is [St. Tammany Parish Fire District #4](#), which encompasses an approximate 70 square mile region in southern Louisiana. St. Tammany serves a community of nearly 60,000 citizens and more than 100 specialists in fire suppression and EMS.

Over the past decade, the LAA and St. Tammany have relied on Panasonic TOUGHBOOK devices due to their long lifecycle and rugged capabilities. Before using Panasonic TOUGHBOOK devices, the firefighters and EMS workers of St. Tammany lacked connectivity given that Louisiana is a very rural state, with approximately two-thirds of its residents residing in rural areas. This posed a challenge for fire and EMS professionals when moving from one place to the next, as workers were relying on a third-party hotspot to stay connected.

The LAA worked with trusted Panasonic partner, [Rugged Depot](#), to grant St. Tammany eight new Panasonic TOUGHBOOK 20 and TOUGHBOOK 33 devices as a part of the Electronic Rural Health Information Technology (E-RHIT) Network. E-RHIT was established in 2011 to help areas of rural Louisiana where, because of limited internet, ambulance services are often unable to connect and relay medical information to the destination facility in a timely way.



Workers have liked using Panasonic devices because they are familiar with them and don't need to learn a new program. Panasonic devices also support the emsCHARTS software workers need in the field, so the TOUGHBOOK devices aren't slowed down with extra software that goes unused. The flexibility of the TOUGHBOOK devices allows this customization for the configuration of the device, including the software.

The devices not only streamline workflows and increase connectivity, but they also improve situational awareness for firefighters and EMS workers. The ability to mount the device in a vehicle gives workers a virtually hands-free experience, while the large screen size makes it easy to read and record patient data accurately.

"Everybody seems to enjoy the TOUGHBOOK devices," said Ken Salzer, Chief of EMS, St. Tammany. "The devices go everywhere with the medics, and so far we haven't heard any complaints about battery issues or damage to the devices."

Thanks to the wireless capabilities of the TOUGHBOOK and Verizon 4G LTE network, the devices have increased network connectivity for the firefighters and EMS workers of St. Tammany significantly. The connection to the Verizon 4G LTE network helps to enhance the performance and productivity in the day-to-day. A strong wireless connection is essential – especially for public safety workers, who need mobile solutions that can stand up to rough handling and stay connected reliably, regardless of conditions.

With Verizon's award-winning 4G LTE network, workers get fast speed and strong device performance. Workers are now able to maintain a strong connection whether in a vehicle or at a destination facility. The devices have also been reliable, as medics can pull up, record and share patient information easily, all while focusing on the situation at hand.

By investing in Panasonic solutions, St. Tammany is able to continue their important work of providing citizens with access to primary and preventive care as well as trauma and emergency services. Panasonic customer support has also made the implementation seamless, ensuring a positive user experience wherever in the field a worker may be.

“When we were given a grant to purchase mobile devices and were deciding on what we wanted, Panasonic's TOUGHBOOK 20 and TOUGHBOOK 33 stood out as having the best features and functionalities to support the job at hand. We were able to get everything we needed, and we could see the devices fitting well into whatever situation our crew finds themselves in.”

—Annie Wilson  
Communications and Marketing Manager, LAA.

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CASE STUDY

