Panasonic
CONNECT

TOUGHBOOK®

Transitioning to Rugged: TOUGHBOOK® G2 Helps STAR Ambulance Enhance Operational Efficiency

CHALLENGE

Operating out of seven locations spread across five counties in the West Central Indiana area, Statewide Transfer Ambulance & Rescue (STAR) provides award-winning ambulance transport for emergent, non-emergent, special event, bariatric, and critical care situations. They employ 120 staff, the majority of whom are field personnel, and transport 20K people per year (60-70 per day on average).

Completing charts and paperwork following a transport is critical for the company's revenue process. STAR implemented digitized EMS charts 5 years ago and had been equipping EMTs with consumer-grade tablets ever since. Device issues and downtime prevented EMTs from completing necessary tasks. Device repairs became increasingly challenging as the company doubled in size and crews serviced new locations. STAR found itself constantly replacing consumer-grade devices that couldn't handle the tough requirements of EMS workflows.

To make matters more challenging, any new devices they introduced to the fleet often differed in form factor, meaning they couldn't share the same external protective casings, power adapters and keyboards as their predecessors. When repairs were required, they often had to send devices to the manufacturer instead of working with local IT support services. Similarly, software updates required them to take the devices out of service, which heavily disrupted their daily operations.

STAR needed a reliable solution that could keep up with EMT demands and help workers complete tasks efficiently.

STAR
AMBULANCE

CASE STUDY

SOLUTION

STAR Ambulance chose to equip its ambulances with the TOUGHBOOK G2 because of the device's durability and reliability. Ready to use out-of-the-box, the 2-in-1 design was the perfect solution. This design gives EMTs the mobility and flexibility they need as they can use the device as a tablet outside the ambulance and use it as a laptop when docked inside the vehicle with the keyboard. EMTs can easily charge the device without needing multiple cables. Its rugged design also allows workers to operate reliably in challenging environments and adverse weather conditions from rain to extreme sunlight. The G2's 5G compatibility also supports workforce connectivity needs and digital workflows.

Above all, STAR is pleased that its IT team can remote into the device or work with Panasonic ProServices to resolve any issue that arises, minimizing device downtime and improving productivity.

MIL-STD-810H and IP65 ruggedness means STAR can operate the TOUGHBOOK G2 in adverse weather conditions.

RESULT

The TOUGHBOOK G2, equipped with Traumasoft – EMS management software, enables STAR Ambulance's EMTs to achieve increased productivity, from clocking in and conducting rig checks to completing charts after each scheduled and unscheduled transport. The team's enhanced efficiency has a direct impact on the level of patient care STAR is able provide.

Since the deployment of the TOUGHBOOK G2, STAR has seen drastically fewer IT service calls thanks to the solution's durability and reliability, and fewer delays within the workday, improving the employee experience. Operating in a mission critical industry where time is of the essence, the productivity and efficiency STAR Ambulance has been able to achieve with the TOUGHBOOK G2 is valued.

The TOUGHBOOK G2 is already on pace to deliver lower TCO than seemingly less expensive consumer-grade devices thanks to fewer repairs, replacements and accessories required.

Statewide Transfer Ambulance & Rescue (STAR)

- *Founded in 1982, STAR now has seven locations spread across five counties in the West Central Indiana area.*
- *Provides award-winning ambulance transport for emergent, non-emergent, special event, bariatric, and critical care situations.*
- *STAR employs 120 staff, the majority of whom are field personnel*
- *Transport 20K people per year (60 – 70 per day on average)*

PANASONIC CONNECT AND STAR AMBULANCE

STAR provides award-winning ambulance transport for emergent, non-emergent, special event, bariatric, and critical care situations. They currently employ 120 workers, the majority of whom are field personnel, and transport 20K people per year.

In the last five years, STAR switched to digitized EMS charts to streamline operational processes. Since then, they have equipped ambulance vehicles with consumer-grade tablets. Using the tablets, EMTs can clock-in digitally, conduct rig checks, and complete and submit charts and required paperwork following a transport. The team's ability to efficiently and accurately complete charts is a critical step in the company's revenue process.

As STAR doubled its size and devices became stressed in the field, its fleet began posing more hardware and software issues. Repairs also became more challenging with crews spread to diverse locations.

STAR's key challenges centered on device durability and functionality issues. Workers need to be able to operate devices whether outside, in a moving ambulance, at the hospital, or in a patient's home. Despite purchasing third-party accessories, such as casings, to help protect the company's consumer-grade devices, STAR still encountered frequent issues. Further, replacement devices often differed in form-factor from the originals, meaning STAR had to buy new accessories, adding to the upfront cost.

While replacements were costly, repairs were time-consuming. Device restrictions often prevented local IT from servicing a malfunctioning device. They had to turn to the device manufacturer, which added to operational costs and lost time, hindering productivity. Software updates also required STAR to take devices out of service. It then required a different password for each device. With devices spread across seven locations, the IT team couldn't conduct all updates in person. Instead, the team had to give out admin passwords, which wasn't preferable.

Transporting 60 – 70 people per day on average, STAR needed a reliable solution that would allow teams to complete operational tasks consistently and efficiently from any location.

When seeking out a new device fleet, STAR looked at Panasonic Connect's rugged device family. It chose to deploy the TOUGHBOOK G2. Ready to use out-of-the-box, STAR didn't have to search for extra accessories, such as a keyboard or rugged casing, to make the solution operational.

Each of STAR's ambulance vehicles is now equipped with a TOUGHBOOK G2 docked inside. Teams appreciate the mounting capabilities. They can use and charge the device in the ambulance without needing multiple cables for charging the keyboard separately, which was required with their consumer grade devices.

The G2 is designed so that the glare from extreme sunlight doesn't impact readability, and raindrops don't interfere with the device's touch sensitivity. 5G compatibility also supports STAR's connectivity and data transfer needs, future-proofing STAR's investment.

> " *When the need for servicing or updating does arise, having a device that the IT team can log into remotely is key.* "
>
> — David Peck,
>   Operations Director for STAR Ambulance.

Device support has become simpler now that the IT team can remote in to a device or contact Panasonic ProServices if any issues occur. STAR also experienced a streamlined deployment process with their IT provider. It worked directly with Panasonic Connect to ensure STAR's EMTs could use the devices as quickly as possible.

Since deploying the TOUGHBOOK G2, the STAR Ambulance team has seen fewer IT service requests and an increase in efficiency.

EMTs use the TOUGHBOOK G2, equipped with Traumasoft, to complete their daily workflows. This provides increased productivity, allowing EMTs to spend less time on operational tasks and more time with patients.

When crews arrive, they clock in digitally, many with the TOUGHBOOK G2. They also use the G2 to conduct rig checks, making sure the ambulance is stocked and well-equipped for the upcoming shift. With the TOUGHBOOK G2, crews can also complete reports following both scheduled and unscheduled transport. For required paperwork that's not digitized, workers can easily take pictures of the documents and upload them. And, because it's rugged built, EMTs can easily clean and sanitize the TOUGHBOOK G2 between shifts.

Overall, the STAR Ambulance team has seen the TOUGHBOOK G2 positively impact the speed, productivity, and efficiency of individuals, teams, and services. Peck says this is "so important in this business, as there is never a shortage of customers." So far, there have been fewer IT service calls thanks to the durability and reliability of the devices. This minimizes delays within the workday and improves the worker experience. STAR's business operations benefit from more consistent charting processes and record management.

Despite the initial upfront cost of replacing consumer-grade devices, the TOUGHBOOK G2 is already on pace to pay for itself, with fewer repairs, replacements, and accessory requirements. "Even though the TOUGHBOOK G2 was more expensive than our consumer-grade models, the costs came pretty close when factoring in the device replacements and extra accessories we often had to purchase to make our previous devices suitable for EMS workflows," says Peck.

> *We make up for any increased costs with the productivity and efficiency our teams are able to achieve with the TOUGHBOOK G2.*
>
> — *David Peck,*
> *Operations Director for STAR Ambulance.*