



Brightmetrics Helps The City of Santa Rosa to Reduce Wait Times by 90% During a Major Crisis



Client
City of Santa Rosa

Industry
Emergency and
Local Government

Location
Santa Rosa, CA

Website
<https://www.srcity.org/>

About the City of Santa Rosa

The City of Santa Rosa, nestled in the heart of California's wine country and known for its stunning natural beauty, serves over 170,000 residents. The municipal government is committed to promoting economic and cultural development while providing high-quality public services. The city's IT department plays a critical role in this mission, managing a complex technical infrastructure that supports over 1,280 network connections across 60 locations, providing help desk support to city employees, and overseeing the operation of over 1,200 government phones. This ensures the city's operations remain efficient, transparent, and responsive to the needs of its citizens.

Challenge

In October 2017, a devastating wildfire swept through Santa Rosa, California, consuming 160,000 acres of land and over 7,000 structures. Local officials quickly established an emergency hotline to provide critical information to residents, but the service was soon overwhelmed, receiving more than 3,500 calls in a single day. Wait times soared to over 10 minutes, and call abandonment rates reached 50%.

With over 170,000 citizens needing immediate assistance, the city had to act fast. Initially staffed with only four agents, the call center required rapid expansion to at least 30 agents to manage the surge. Accurate information about evacuation zones was essential, which meant quickly scaling the city's Geographic Information Services (GIS) team. Even after ramping up staff, the city needed real-time insights into call metrics to ensure optimal staffing at all times.

Outcomes

- ✓ Wait times dropped from 10 minutes to less than a minute, a 90% reduction
- ✓ The call abandonment rate fell from 50% to less than 1%
- ✓ The Emergency Operations Center ensured optimal staffing levels at all times

“The city was fully focused on the safety of the community and preventing further loss of life and property damage,”

Ari Piotrkowski, Network Systems Analyst, City of Santa Rosa IT department

Solution

The City of Santa Rosa needed to rapidly scale its call center, knowing that every second could be critical for residents in the fire's path. The IT team swiftly mobilized volunteers and reassigned city employees to staff the hotline, ensuring they had the necessary hardware and credentials. However, staffing alone wasn't enough.

The next crucial step was leveraging Brightmetrics' powerful analytics, particularly its automated call volume reporting, to manage the overwhelming demand. While the city had already been using Brightmetrics for routine call center operations, its capabilities proved invaluable during this emergency, providing real-time insights vital to effectively coordinating the response.

Implementation and Results

The City of Santa Rosa and its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) began using Brightmetrics to closely monitor call traffic on the public emergency hotline. This enabled the automatic generation of hourly and daily reports on key metrics, such as:

-  Inbound call volume
-  Abandonment rates
-  Call duration
-  Call outcomes

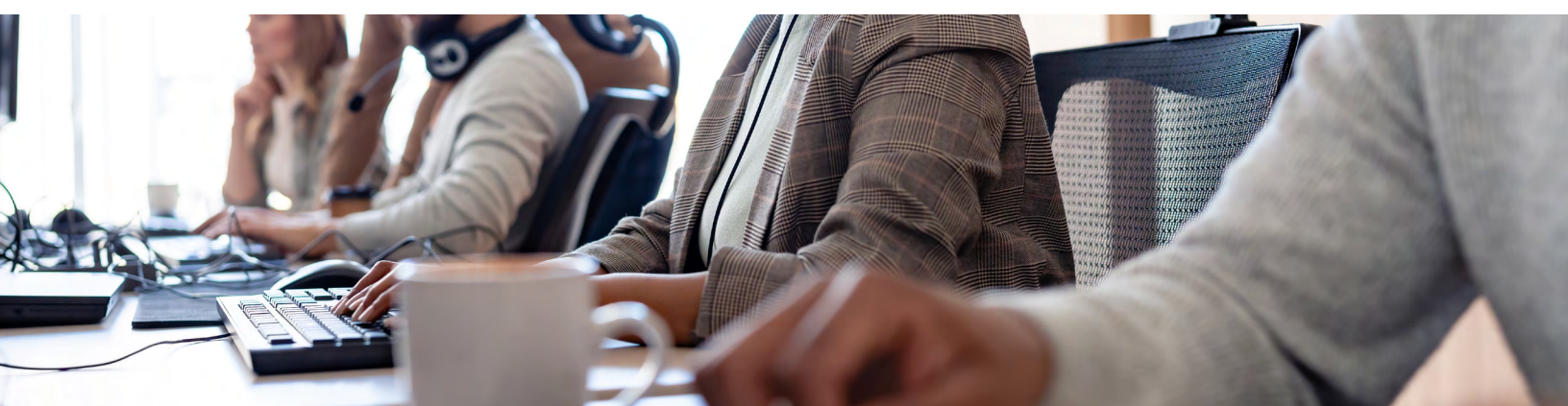


These insights provided critical data for making real-time decisions, allowing EOC leadership to adjust call center staffing levels as needed. This ensured the hotline was adequately staffed without being overstaffed, enabling team members to handle peak call volumes while remaining available for other emergency duties when call traffic subsided.

The results were immediate and impactful. Wait times dropped by 90%, from an average of 10 minutes to under one minute, and call abandonment rates fell from 50% to less than 1% within just 24 hours. These improvements were vital in such a high-stakes situation, achieved through the dedicated efforts of city employees and emergency volunteers.

"The city was fully focused on the safety of the community and preventing further loss of life and property damage," says Ari Piotrkowski, Network Systems Analyst for the City of Santa Rosa IT department. As the crisis evolved and call volume gradually decreased, the Santa Rosa IT team used Brightmetrics' reports to plan for off-peak hours. This enabled them to transfer some responsibilities to the Sonoma County emergency team, ensuring both teams made the best use of their resources. "The county needed to understand the call volume to prepare for the transition, and our Brightmetrics reports provided clear insights into the situation and the number of calls we directed to them," Ari explains.

Brightmetrics also helped the EOC monitor network traffic and trunk utilization, ensuring swift handling of high-priority calls—such as those for the fire department and police. This enabled the city to maintain ample capacity while prioritizing resources where they were most needed.



Santa Rosa Moves Forward

After the wildfire was contained and recovery efforts began, the City of Santa Rosa continued to rely on Brightmetrics as a vital tool for its operations. Today, the Santa Rosa IT team uses Brightmetrics to analyze phone extensions and systems, identifying unused resources that can be eliminated to reduce costs. This detailed insight enables more effective budgeting by clearly identifying which departments use specific systems, allowing for better expense allocation.

Brightmetrics also offers insights into individual contact center agent performance. These analytics enhance training and improve business processes, ensuring agents perform at their best. In one instance, the team noticed an agent frequently logging off after each call to take notes and complete reports. Once identified through analytics, the contact center introduced a new process that allocated dedicated time between calls for post-call wrap-ups, leading to greater efficiency and happier agents—ultimately improving customer satisfaction.

Additionally, the IT team finds Brightmetrics invaluable for diagnostics and troubleshooting. Whether investigating call quality or retrieving caller ID information, Brightmetrics provides the data they need to resolve issues quickly and enhance customer support.

“As the departments realize the actual costs of running their systems, delivering detailed reports provides them with clear visibility into which aspects of the system they are utilizing,” says Ari Piotrkowski, “It’s been incredibly helpful.”

Ari Piotrkowski
Network Systems Analyst
City of Santa Rosa IT department

Conclusion

The City of Santa Rosa and its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) had to respond rapidly during a crisis, mobilizing resources, creating processes, and establishing a communication center that ultimately helped save countless lives. The City of Santa Rosa team successfully managed this challenging and valuable learning experience.

The city’s IT team and EOC worked tirelessly to protect their community, ensuring that their call centers were adequately staffed and that citizens in need weren’t left waiting. With critical support from Brightmetrics, they could monitor and manage call traffic effectively, even in the face of overwhelming demand.

For other municipalities that may face similar emergencies, Ari offers three pieces of advice:

Call reporting is essential: Understanding call volume is crucial for proper staffing and ensuring your equipment can handle high demand. Brightmetrics’ analytics empowered Ari’s team to monitor how their systems managed call volume, while automated reporting allowed them to focus on other critical tasks.

Plan for extra equipment: One of the team’s biggest challenges was securing phones, headsets, and laptops. Ari advises keeping extra supplies on hand, working with technology partners on emergency support plans, and establishing mutual aid agreements with nearby communities and vendors.

Practice your contingency plan: Although the EOC was housed in a disaster-resistant building, there was no guarantee it would remain functional if the fire reached it. The team developed a contingency plan for evacuation and transferring hotline operations, ensuring they were prepared to re-establish communications in a new location if necessary. Ari recommends running drills so teams can execute these plans during a crisis.



Brightmetrics equips contact centers and enterprises with intelligent analytics and reporting solutions to convert data into actionable insights. Our platform supports real-time and historical analysis, improving customer experience by driving strategic decisions and operational improvements. With Brightmetrics, businesses achieve smarter decisions, enhanced efficiency, and sustained growth through comprehensive data insights.