

TexCom Advantage® - A Must Have for Emergency Response Organizations!

■ **By David Purchase, Chief**
Norton Shores Fire Department

As an active member of the Fire Service community I have had the opportunity to attend many conferences, board meetings and planning sessions. At each of these events, individuals, organizations, speakers and vendors have all presented their ideas on how to better manage a fire department. As always some ideas are discounted immediately while others, which originally peaked special interest, seem to fade as one returns to the daily grind of administrative duties. I, however, like most other fire chiefs refused to admit defeat in the quest for the ultimate solution to simplification.

Victory for me came at what I initially thought was just another board meeting for the Western Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs. At this meeting I was introduced to a web based information management system that was promised to be the solution to an age old problem that has plagued almost every fire service organization, communication! Skeptical, yes, but I listened and I was impressed. The best part was the answer to my number one question, how much? The answer was one that should peak the interest of every chief, free.

Since that first presentation I have become a member of six different TexCom® organizations.

1. Norton Shores Fire Department
2. Muskegon Area Fire Chiefs

3. Norton Shores Underwater Recovery Team
4. Muskegon County Urban Search and Rescue
5. West Michigan Incident Management Team
6. Western Michigan Fire Chiefs Association

TexCom® has changed the way we manage information within our Department. SOGs are now distributed, acknowledged and accessed through the site. Employees are able to check schedules, training calendars and sign up for available shifts and assignments. Links to other fire service web sites can be easily added and accessed through the site. Apparatus status is tracked as well as employee availability.

The TexCom® site has become our primary tool for paging and emailing employees. Our Dive and Technical Rescue Teams have also joined the TexCom® family and utilize the site as the primary communication tool with team members. Additionally, with the information being available on-line Department members are able to stay in touch from virtually anywhere they can obtain an internet connection.

As with any product, service after delivery is always a critical test of any evaluation and once again TexCom® delivered as promised. When contacted through email or phone conversation I have found TexCom's® technical support to be both responsive to questions and receptive to suggestions for site

improvements. Don't expect to call their technical support often, as the system is user friendly and quick to get up and running without the need for a full fledged I.T. department. Truly they have grasped the idea that the site exists to serve its customers and as such should be shaped by the needs of those who use it.

Throughout our Department's history we have experimented with many different methods of communicating with employees. Some worked, many did not. It isn't often that one single idea or service has literally changed the way in which we operate in such a comprehensive manor. Visit the site, <http://www.TexComAdvantage.com> and try it, I believe you will find that the TexCom Advantage® will be just what is needed to improve your department's internal communication process. Did I mention the best part, IT'S FREE!

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