CASE STUDY

primestream

PROJECT: City of Boca Raton Emergency Remote response via Broadcast & Webcast

LOCATION: Boca Raton, Florida

GOAL: To provide remote emergency information to the residents of Boca Raton

SOLUTION: FORK Citycaster™, an end-to-end solution, which upgrades the City's infrastructure into an advanced IT-broadcast and media management platform that increases the City's ability to respond to an emergency

BocaTV provides local interest, government programming and municipal interest updates for the City of Boca Raton, Florida. Boca Raton has a population of over 350,000 people, most of whom have access to BocaTV either as a free cable channel or website. BocaTV recently underwent a complete overhaul of its post-production department, switching from analog, tape-based linear editing and broadcasting to tapeless digital production and playout with FORK's Production Suite and its Citycaster module for government.

According to Mark Witzner, a video producer for BocaTV, the upgrade to FORK was critical to supporting the channel's ongoing operations. "We were using an S-VHS tape-based playout system that was very inconvenient because we only had so many recorders to playback our content," he recalls. "It was a big hassle with all the manual tape changing required to broadcast important announcements and city council meetings."

"We were also looking for a solution that could handle everything we needed – from remote viewing to remote playback in a system that could take care of itself," adds John Wallace, a producer and multimedia specialist for the City of Boca Raton. "We wanted something that was not too intense, but rather user friendly and easy to operate."

Live city council meeting

"Our mission is to provide emergency information to the residents of Boca Raton. The CityCaster solution helps us broadcast at all times, whether is for daily operations or during emergencies from our remote Emergency Operation Center (EOC). During a hurricane, CityCaster enables us to remotely tape the mayor and communicate with our residents over the air and through the internet, just as if we were at City Hall."

Mark Witzen,
City of Boca Raton's Video Operator

The producers decided to look for a Mac-compatible production and playout system, which ultimately led them to B4M. "We discovered we could use our existing Apple systems and that FORK was priced comparably if not less than competing solutions," says Witzner. "We also wanted to improve the quality of our station with new content that people would want to watch, so we needed something to improve our overall efficiency."

FLEXIBLE SYSTEM FOR NOW AND THE FUTURE

BocaTV's programming schedule and playout is now completely automated by FORK. City council and town hall meetings are also simulcast live to BocaTV's cable channel and web stream using Primestream's encoders and FORK. The upgrade almost helped enhance an additional feature of the channel – as a live disaster information center with more local targeting than national news channels can provide. As the region often has a major annual hurricane season, those citizens now can rely on the channel and its live web stream for inclement weather warnings, emergency announcements as well as city government disaster instructions.

DIGITAL SCHEDULE PLAYOUT LIST

Being able to schedule the whole playout list for a few days or weeks at a time is a major improvement," says Witzner "We still shoot on HDV tape out in the field, but we edit everything file-based and send completed content to our servers for playout digitally. It's really been a great experience coming from the old, tape-based post environment."

FORK INTEGRATED WORKFLOW

"Building 4 Media made it possible for us to cover every aspect of production and playback," says Wallace. "We're not limited and we don't have to go to a specific piece of software for any one task. FORK has everything integrated and working together, which keeps our workflow more user-friendly and easier for everyone to control."
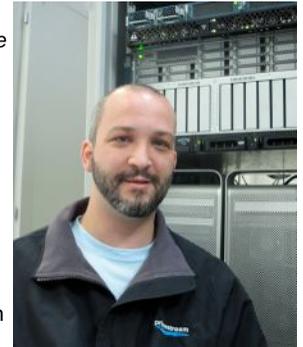
REMOTE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The production team at BocaTV also utilizes FORK's extensive remote management capabilities to both improve efficiency and make the daily workload easier. "Both John and I live outside the city limits, so we used to have no way of viewing the station from home," says Witzner. "With FORK, we're able to get online and monitor, control and program our playout system over the internet off-hours, instead of driving 35 miles just to come in and see what the problem is. That's really convenient and saves us a lot of time."

For its other critical role as an emergency information news channel, FORK has improved BocaTV's workflow. "Whenever an emergency occurs, we have to move to our offsite emergency operation center," explains Witzner. "We can manage FORK and Citycaster remotely, allowing us, for example to tape the mayor at the EOC with an emergency message to residents. With this system we can then send that file to playout on air remotely and control our station without even being in City Hall."

"We gave the City of Boca Raton an all in one solution by advancing their IT infrastructure and media management as well as increase the City's ability to respond to an emergency."
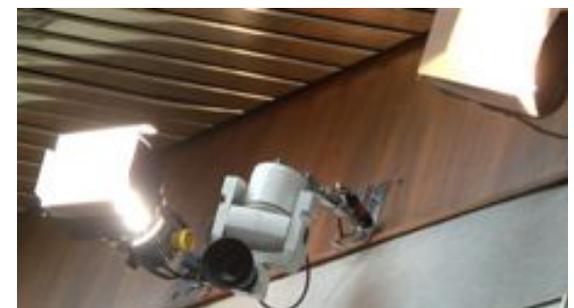
Daniel Formica
VP of Engineering,
Primestream Corporation

Citycaster™ Broadcast IT rack

FORK's video sources

Robotics cameras feeding FORK

CASE STUDY

In addition to production and programming efficiency, FORK has also markedly increased the overall production value BocaTV delivers to viewers. "Being able to play all our shows, put bumpers and PSAs in and schedule a lot more content than before has made a major difference," says Witzner. "Before, we only had so many tape machines available, which meant limiting what we could broadcast at any one time. Now with FORK, we can play back an unlimited amount of content all at once."

MANAGING COMPLEXITY

As an automated system, FORK works well because we're a small staff and need to be able to work on multiple projects and broadcasts simultaneously," observes Wallace. "The system doesn't require an operator to constantly be on-site playing all the events and files. Once you schedule a playlist, you don't need to be there watching it every second of the day – FORK just takes care of itself."

TOOLS & EXPERIENCE TO EMPOWER COMMUNICATION

With its cost-effective solution and intuitive user experience, FORK empowered the City of Boca Raton to thoroughly modernize its local news and disaster information channel, providing a greatly improved public service for its citizens. FORK, together with Primestream's proven system architecture is the next generation answer to disaster aid response and recovery coordination.

FEMA - USING TECHNOLOGY FOR FASTER RESPONSE

In response, FEMA developed the National Shelter System. Federal Emergency Management Agency administrator David Paulsen recently described the system. "The National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System and National Emergency Child Locator Center are designed to help displaced people find their loved ones," he says "We also have a new policy to help those with pets and we're focused on streamlining and improving the housing and individual assistance programs."

FEMA is also working to update and further utilize aerial imagery for disaster response and recovery operations. The Department of Homeland Security is developing ways for emergency officials to quickly receive aerial images of disaster areas in a format easily integrated into their GIS. New GIS applications are making it considerably more cost-effective for city, county, and state governments to utilize GIS data. Even the best GIS software can not work without base maps, images, and other data. FEMA's decision to release the information and in a readily acceptable GIS format helps ensure government agencies have the raw data necessary.

When asked about the role of technology in disaster response, an experience rescue worker said the following, "Technology will not rescue people from a burning building, pull them off of a roof surrounded by water, or protect them from a tornado. However, technology can provide systems that give emergency management and response professionals the information they need to act faster."

"We were looking for a very user friendly system, and we found FORK to be the perfect software to accomplish that"

John Wallace
Video Producer and Multimedia Specialist
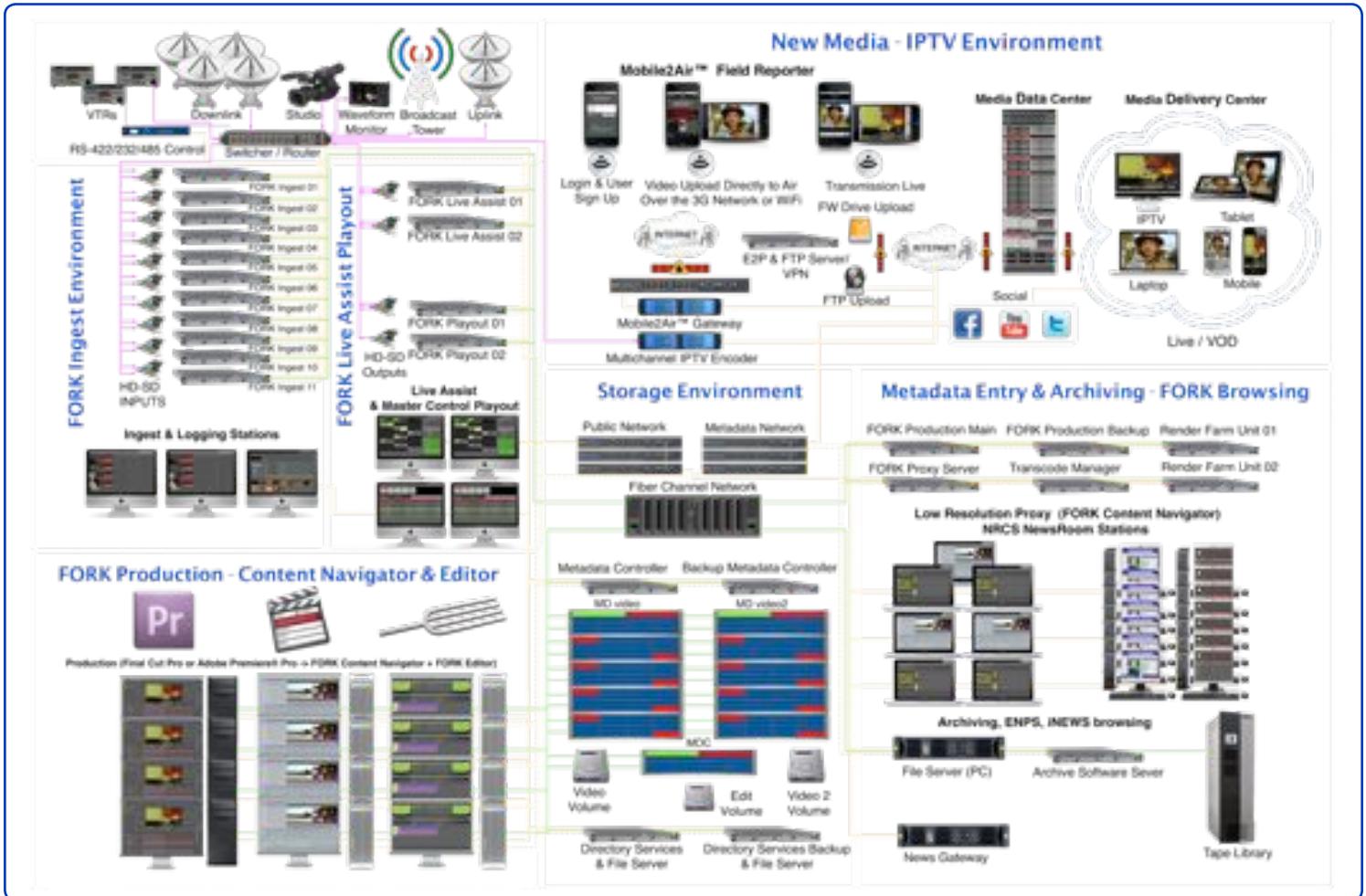**City of Boca Raton**

FEMA READIES I.P.A.W.S HIGH-TECHNOLOGY ALERT SYSTEM

As government agencies and emergency responders strive to improve their methods for keeping the public informed, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is seeking the best way to implement an integrated emergency alert system that uses the latest information technology called Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) . IPAWS will use mobile media, including cell phones, pagers, computers and other personal communications device, to warn people through live or pre-recorded messages in audio, video and text and in multiple languages, including American Sign Language and Braille.

Technology is playing a increasingly important role in emergency management. Technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS) allow emergency management professionals to quickly see damage, maps of the affected area, and data analysis.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is increasing its use of technology. Hurricane Katrina highlighted the importance of tracking people as FEMA and the Red Cross had issues tracking where displaced persons were transported to. This made it very difficult for family members to reunite.

CASE STUDY

TYPICAL WORKFLOW SOLUTION

ABOUT US

Primestream, is a leader in the design and implementation of broadcast automation solutions that feature the FORK suite of software products. FORK Production™, FORK Playout™ and Mobile2Air™ deliver an end-to-end production platform that includes digital acquisition of live and file-based content, media asset management, editing, archiving, streaming, and pushing content to multiple screens and devices. The Primestream platform is currently providing news, sports, entertainment educational and emergency broadcast services to clients in more than 40 countries and over 300 on-air channels, including media giants such as CBS Sports, CNN, NYSE, NASCAR, NFL, CNBC, Liverpool Soccer Club, Reuters, L.A. Dodgers, Star News India, SunTV, RTL and MountainWest Sports Network at the Comcast Media Center.

What happens when you convert your facility to FORK™ automation? You reduce costs, reduce complexity and optimize human contributions. By automating processes and controlling hardware, you free your staff to do what humans do best–create. FORK automation supports open hardware architecture, and provides native integration with leading video server and editing system manufacturers including APPLE®, ADOBE®, OMNEON®, SONY®, GRASS VALLEY®, HARRIS®,CISCO® and many others.

For more information about Primestream solutions and services: