

Dragon[®] Law Enforcement

2018 Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork annual report

Key documentation issues facing law enforcement professionals specific to incident reporting and other essential documentation tasks.

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Introduction

The **2018 Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork** annual report, commissioned by Nuance Communications, examines key documentation issues facing law enforcement professionals specific to incident reporting and other essential documentation tasks.

As the demands for quality, timely and increasingly standardized police incident reporting continue to rise, cumbersome reporting processes can impact productivity, efficiency and officer safety. The report, resulting from a survey deployed to more than 12,000 police chiefs and their command staffs, will track over time how departments are using technology to improve reporting processes, and which systems are poised to improve documentation workflows in the future.

Key findings

Law enforcement professionals are overwhelmed by documentation demands

- 39% of law enforcement professionals we surveyed indicated spending 3-4 hours, per day, completing incident reports and other police-paperwork
- Of these respondents, 13% spend over 4+ hours a day on reporting duties, which would mean that over 50% of an average 8-hour shift is spent on paperwork
- With high documentation demands overwhelming law enforcement professionals, a majority are completing incident reports back at the station
- In fact, 29% of respondents reported spending 20-25% of their time at the station completing reports, while 31% spend at least a quarter or more of their workday on reporting duties at the station

Time spent on incident reporting takes time away from other-police work

- With a significant amount of the workday spent on incident reporting, most law enforcement professionals in our survey indicated that reporting duties take away from other police work
- 96% of survey respondents either “strongly agree” or “agree” that heavy reporting demands keeps them away from higher-value tasks, such as being visible in the community

CAD/RMS systems central to police documentation can be easier to use

- Over two thirds of departments surveyed indicated using both CAD and RMS systems as part of their documentation workflow
- Departments say these systems are helpful and essential, however, getting to and entering data takes multiple clicks and can sometimes prove uncomfortable due to ergonomic issues, according to 52% of officers we surveyed

Police technology both helps—and distracts—if not deployed well

- Most all respondents—or 96%—“strongly agree” or “agree” that technology packed into today’s patrol cars is cause for distraction, such as the impact on situational awareness when heads-down entering data into CAD systems

Over
50%

of an average shift is spent on paperwork.

39%

of law enforcement professionals spend at least 3-4 hours on reporting duties.

52%

of respondents cite navigation and ergonomic issues with CAD/RMS systems.

- Over 77% of these same respondents indicated they would be interested in exploring new technology to help them complete police paperwork in a more efficient manner
- 58% of law enforcement professionals surveyed say they currently use a combination of mobile and digital tools to help them complete incident reports, including digital voice recorders, mobile phones, or tablets
- Despite widespread use of mobile technologies, 31% of these same respondents are either “very dissatisfied” or “dissatisfied” with their department’s use of police technology to help them do their job

60%

of law enforcement professionals say they spend 25% of reporting duties at the station, limiting community visibility.

Transcription usage is a timely, self-service affair

- Only 12% of departments responding to our survey use transcription tools or services to complete incident reports
- Of the respondents who do utilize transcription as an incident report documentation process, 50% undertake this task themselves – manually transcribing notes for incident reports
- Approximately 37% utilize in-house staff to help with transcription
- And only 16% outsource their transcription needs
- Half of all departments surveyed indicated they do not utilize any transcription tools or services, opting to rely on manual incident reporting only

Use of mobile technologies and voice assistants growing for personal use

- When it comes to using personal assistants or smart speakers, such as Google Home, Amazon Echo (Alexa) and Apple Siri, 20% of law enforcement professionals we surveyed say they use them in their daily lives at least once a day
- 14% say they use them 2-3 times a week
- Over 56% of respondents, however, said they almost never use personal assistants

2017 survey implications

The **Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork** report reaffirms what we hear when meeting with law enforcement professionals around the country: they are spending a significant portion of their workday completing incident reports and on other police paperwork, resulting in an inefficient, less productive and safe documentation process.

These high reporting demands, while a necessary part of police work, are impeding several key elements of law enforcement, with high stakes: productivity, safety and efficiencies. And with officers spending a significant amount of their time back at the station completing paperwork, the impact to community visibility and other-active police work cannot be minimized.

Documentation workflow platforms, such as CAD and RMS systems, although in wide use, create their own set of challenges for law enforcement. Designed for the express purpose of systemically capturing and organizing information to comply with mandated documentation requirements, respondents cite issues with interacting with these systems – from time required to enter a record (likely due to “hunt and peck” keyboard entry), to the ergonomic constraints of manually typing a report while in the patrol vehicle. Finally, the potential for distractions created by technology packed vehicles is nearly universally acknowledged by our survey respondents.

The survey finds that mobile technologies have very much found their way into law enforcement reporting and documentation processes, as they have within other document-intensive industries. At the same time, the survey findings also suggest these tools may be introduced in an “ad-hoc” fashion, and are not necessarily making officers more efficient in performing their requisite documentation tasks.

While the use of tools—like digital recorders—to capture accurate details of an incident are valuable, not all departments are utilizing them, and completing “the last mile” to make this information truly useful in written form for incident reports and other documentation can be cumbersome. This is evidenced by only half of all respondents stating they transcribe digital dictation themselves when back at the station. This is hardly efficient, and it is not hard to imagine how this could lead to less than complete, timely or accurate documentation; all of which is required to move criminal proceedings along.

Perhaps because of these high reporting requirements, it’s not surprising that more than 75% of the law enforcement professionals we surveyed indicated they would be interested in exploring new technology to help with their incident reporting and documentation process.

Methodology

The **Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork** report was conducted via a national survey to Police Chief’s and their Command Staff, including Patrol Officers, Detectives, Commanders, Sergeants, Lieutenants, as well as those responsible for IT and Records Management (RMS) systems within the department.

The survey was deployed to over 12,000 law enforcement professionals in our national database and include current customers, interested parties we have met with from law enforcement trade shows and other industry events, or those who have responded to our marketing campaigns, such as webinars.

Survey questions were selected to solicit the role technology plays in completing incident reporting and other documentation in the day-to-day life of law enforcement professionals. The survey was administered via a leading commercial software platform.

Over
77%

of law enforcement professionals surveyed are interested in technology to help with incident reporting.

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