

# Case Study

Ambulance company seeks paperless solution for collecting critical information in the field



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Care Ambulance Service began operations in the late 1960s in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. Four decades later, the company is the largest provider of ambulance services in Los Angeles and Orange counties, with 135 ambulances that respond to more than 190,000 requests for service each year.

**FUJITSU**

## Business Needs

After Care Ambulance emergency medical technicians (EMTs) have responded to the immediate medical needs of customers, they are required to fill out and collect important paperwork, including a patient's record and any pertinent billing documents, such as insurance information. In the past, the process for managing these paper-based documents was cumbersome and time-consuming.

**“We would have a driver go from station to station to pick up the daily paperwork and bring it back to headquarters,” says Ben Baker, Director of Communications for Care Ambulance. “Once the documents were collected, it took our scanning department at headquarters about eight hours a day to scan in the documents.”**

Along with the resources it consumed, the system led to delays in billing, and inefficient transfer of information. Each trip on a previous daily report had to be physically matched with the correct paper document to ensure each call was accounted for.

Because the point-of-care documentation was so important to the business, Care Ambulance decided to look for a scanning solution that could be installed inside the ambulances. It had to be easy to use and durable enough to withstand the rigors of riding all day over urban streets. Any solution would also have to accommodate custom software, which Care Ambulance would use to streamline the data input process.

### Solution: Fujitsu N1800 network scanners

Care Ambulance chose Fujitsu N1800 network scanners to form the core of its mobile electronic Patient Care Record—or “ePCR”—solution. The N1800 scanners are equipped with solid state drives that can handle the jarring environment inside an ambulance, and are equipped with advanced security and data encryption features to protect information.

The scanners include touch-screen data entry, and have features such as automatic page rotation, automatic color detection, and automatic blank page removal to streamline the collection of documents, which can vary greatly in size and appearance.

Care Ambulance used the Fujitsu Software Development Kit and Microsoft .NET Framework development tools to create a custom data-input screen for the EMTs. “We created a solution that would optimize the process used to scan documents at a scene,” says Baker. The scanning software is designed to capture just essential information, which is then transmitted wirelessly in encrypted form back to company headquarters. Regulations require the company to keep paper documents as backups, so those are collected about once a week and put in storage.

The solution is very easy to use, and includes a workflow that ensures that all required documentation is captured before the process is considered complete. For example, EMTs are required to include the “run number”—or daily trip number—of the ambulance when it responds to a request for service. If an incorrect run number is entered, the system will display an error message until the number is corrected. “This helps with data input and billing accuracy, allowing us to pull all documents related to a run number in case there is a question or discrepancy later on,” Baker says.

**With the Fujitsu equipment in every ambulance, the company estimates that the scanners are capturing more than 500,000 scanned documents annually.**

### Benefits: Fuller documentation, faster billing, easy to use

By going to a paperless solution using Fujitsu scanners in its vehicles, Care Ambulance has increased the amount and accuracy of information collected during service requests, and has improved the speed of its billing processes. Delivering the complete patient care report with the scanned documents to the billing department three days earlier (than the normal paper process) created a one-time bump in cash flow (equating to three days of revenue).

“We designed the touch screens on the Fujitsu scanners to be incredibly easy to use, and to appropriately route each scanned document to the correct destination,” Baker says. “It makes the EMTs jobs easier, and also helps us ensure that they are collecting all of the required information during a ser-

vice call. They will see prompts from the system if the wrong information is entered, or some key document is missing.”

Because the company now has fast access to digitized documents that are transmitted directly from the field, it has been able to redirect employees who used to spend eight hours a day scanning paper to other tasks.

The digital documentation also has led to an improved bottom line. “We have a faster billing cycle because the information is available a lot faster, and we are reducing a percentage of our bad debt.” Baker says. “We are also able to display any outstanding trips to the field user through the custom interface, letting them know when they are done with their assigned tasks for the shift.”

He adds that the scanners are very easy for the EMTs to use, and for the IT department to manage remotely.

“We chose Fujitsu because other scanners did not offer the combined features that we needed,” he says. “They are rugged, easy to use, can accommodate custom software, and can be managed remotely. They have enabled us to create a very clean process for managing vital information.”

**Care Ambulance benefit snapshot:**

- Scanners have rugged solid-state drives to handle tough working environment.
- Solution uses encryption and other security measures to protect confidential information.
- Solution includes custom software that makes it easy for EMTs to enter information, and to ensure that all required information is collected.
- Rapid access to digital documentation has reduced staff time needed in the past to handle paper documents.
- Digitized documents have led to faster billing cycles and reduction in bad debt.

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