

Mukwonago Fire Department

A Simple, Affordable Solution for Answering EMS Inventory Questions

The Mukwonago Fire Department serves approximately 16,000 people in southeastern Wisconsin, with two stations responding to an average of 1,800 calls a year. And it was facing a challenge all too familiar to public safety agencies: Providing access to critical items used by its EMS teams while maintaining visibility into who's using what, where and when.

According to Lieutenant Matt Sura, the department had previously kept supplies in a storeroom with a push-button door lock. This provided basic security, but no control over what or how many items any person could take. Roughly 50 people had access, and once someone entered the room there was no way of knowing who took what. If the door was propped open or wasn't closed all the way, the security was gone.

The problem became clear when supervisors realized that some items were simply "disappearing."

"We had a real problem with tourniquets," said Sura. "They're roughly \$40 each, and we were going through them like candy. There was no way for us to say 'this was taken out at this time.' I couldn't justify my expenses back to the chief, and it was very frustrating."

Sura looked into putting a drug box in a locked cabinet. But he realized that every time someone opened the cabinet they'd have to do a self-audit of the item they were taking. With a manual process, there's always room for human error. You have to trust each person to always get it right. If one person slipped up in their count, all the counts that followed would be wrong.

Finding a Better Way

Sura had seen information about pharmaceutical dispensing devices for fire and EMS, and started investigating the options. He looked into a brand that seemed promising, but found that the ongoing monthly service cost was surprisingly high.

Then Sura discovered automated dispensing solutions from Apex Supply Chain Technologies®. After consulting with a sales representative about the types of items he wanted to manage, he chose



EDGE™ 5000

"We had a real problem with tourniquets...we were going through them like candy."

Lieutenant Matt Sura

the Apex EDGE™ 5000, an affordable solution that's easy to implement and easy for his team to use.

It provides a high degree of control by dispensing one item at a time, and offers full visibility into who used what, when and where, 24/7. EMS team members simply swipe their key card and enter the item code. The EDGE 5000 relays all transaction data, including restocking or dispensing, to Trajectory Cloud™, a powerful data and analytics platform. This gives the department insights into supply usage trends, helps track unusual usage, and sends notifications and alerts when critical items are running low.

**The impact of accountability:
In the first six months following
implementation, they didn't have
to purchase a single tourniquet,
a savings of more than 90%.**

Restocking the device is simple. Each shift's supply manager can easily configure the EDGE™ 5000 to handle medications and supplies in a wide range of shapes and sizes, often in their original packages. When any item reaches a minimum stock level, Trajectory Cloud™ sends an alert by email or text so that critical medications or supplies can be quickly restocked.

"The Next Logical Step"

"We have drug locks on our drug drawers and coolers that require entering a key code for access," says Sura. "If someone goes on an ambulance run and supplies are used, we know who used it. We couldn't do that in our supply room. So for us, this was the next logical step."

Today, Sura can view real-time reports in Trajectory Cloud and see who's using each medication, angiocatheter or nitroglycerin IV bag. He can also look at reports over time to see product usage trends that can guide future purchasing. With the EDGE 5000, the department also gets valuable documentation for every item taken, which provides a legal safety net in case of misuse or theft.

"By managing critical supplies like tourniquets in the EDGE, I can now tell when it was stocked, when it was removed, who took it out, and at what time... that's a huge benefit," said Sura.

A Big Leap in Control – and Accountability

The increased accountability brought an immediate decrease in the use of certain high-cost and high-use supplies, including tourniquets. In the prior calendar year, the department had purchased two to three times what was actually used each month. In the first six months following installation of the EDGE 5000, they didn't have to purchase a single tourniquet, eliminating excess inventory for a saving of more than 90%.

Based on this success, Sura is looking to implement another Apex device in the coming year for items such as OB and IV kits and other high-value supplies.

To Sura, the financial savings these devices often bring aren't the biggest win. What matters more is bringing greater accountability to supply management. He knows that the new level of control will deter anyone from taking supplies that could put the department in legal or financial liability.

And that peace of mind is priceless.

Gain Control and Visibility of Your Supplies

To learn more about the full line of automated dispensing solutions from Apex Supply Chain Technologies®, visit ApexSupplyChain.com, email us at info@apexsupplychain.com or call 1.800.229.7912.

