SUMMARY

Customer
Pasco County Fire Rescue
Pasco County, Florida

Partner
Silent Partner Technologies

Industry
Government

Challenge
Accelerate inventory and asset tracking in real time while ensuring first responders have the required equipment and medications for emergencies

Solution
- Zebra RFD8500 Handheld RFID/1D/2D Sleds
- Zebra FX9600 Fixed RFID Reader

Results
- Saves each stationhouse over $3,500 monthly, including supply and carrying costs
- Reduced carrying costs up to 50%
- More efficiently allocated resources needed by first responders, improving safety
- Provided 24/7 visibility of inventory
- Helped automate supply, equipment, and medicine tracking

Zebra RFID is Key to Asset Visibility at Pasco County Fire Rescue

Pasco County Fire Rescue uses Zebra RFID Handheld Sleds and Fixed RFID Readers as part of its extensive, cost-saving asset management solution

Transparency is vital to government agencies in an age of shrinking budgets and increasing accountability. Pasco County is ever-growing, and the responsibilities of the first responders hired to protect the county are always expanding. Comprised of 29 stations with 675 members, Pasco County Fire Rescue has one of the top 10 busiest stations in the country and covers 850 square miles of urban, residential, industrial, and agricultural areas.

Starting in 2019, Pasco County Fire Rescue was tasked with creating a better system for ordering products for its warehouse and distributing supplies to stations. The solution needed to provide greater transparency and accountability for the supplies, gear, and medications that first responders use to serve the community. Additionally, the new platform needed to help address new challenges for first responders—including increasing security and auditing for narcotics—to boost safety and reduce costs.

"We needed to have a better handle on asset management because expenses for supplies were continually increasing," says John Schmidt, Health, Safety and Training Chief at Pasco County Fire Rescue. "The first year I was here, we barely made it." So, he started contacting logistics professionals in his network and stations across Florida to find out what worked for them.

Some recommended technology systems they had customized to fit the needs of a fire department, but Pasco County needed a purpose-built solution. "I reached out to five or six fire departments, and they all pointed me to the same partner—Silent Partner Technologies," says Schmidt. "They also told me about their success deploying Zebra RFID solutions."

In addition to Zebra RFID technology, Silent Partner Technologies' solution included service and support, a quality demonstration for clear understanding of the technology, an enterprise solution, use cases, and flexible deployments.

"The joint Zebra-Silent Partner solution helps ensure that we always have clean gear on the truck to reduce individuals' exposure to dangerous materials, including diseases or chemicals," says Schmidt. "By keeping the cab clean, we're keeping our first responders and citizens safer."

John Schmidt, Health, Safety and Training Chief at Pasco County Fire Rescue

Better Inventory Management

Pasco County Fire Rescue primarily stores EMS supplies in its warehouse. This includes a three-month supply of medications, many of which are narcotics that require additional oversight to avoid shrinkage. "Day-to-day tracking of narcotics is one of those tasks that keeps a lump in your throat—there's a lot on the line and we need to maintain security and safety," says Schmidt. "We needed a 24/7 solution with automated tracking."

The fire department's previous manual system of logs and pick tickets allowed blind spots in the chain of custody—it was up to first responders to come in and sign out what they needed. There was no documentation for use, and no consistency with ordering. "There were no standards behind how stock for the warehouse was purchased beyond if a team needed something, we ordered it," says Schmidt. Pasco County saw the importance of knowing what they had, where they were getting it, from whom they were purchasing and in what quantities.

In response, Pasco County and Silent Partner deployed a combination of Zebra FX9600 Fixed RFID Readers in its warehouse and at fire stations, as well as Zebra's RFD8500 Handheld RFID/1D/2D Sled to support additional on-demand inventorying. Since implementation, the department has saved approximately $3,500 monthly per stationhouse on medications and other supplies by boosting control over stock levels—which translates into a 50% reduction in overall carrying costs. Most importantly, first responders have the exact resources they need and firefighter safety has improved, all of this while significantly increasing visibility.

The solution from Silent Partner Technologies helps eliminate the human error element at the station level, and it allows the department to automatically track medical items and gear whether they are in the warehouse or on the truck. It also enables personnel to focus more on core responsibilities rather than taking inventory while increasing accuracy in requests—knowing their actual needs versus perceived needs—and improves month-to-month forecasting accuracy.

Clean, Safe Equipment and Truck Cabs

Pasco County implements the Clean Cabins initiative, where firefighters change out of dirty gear into clean gear at the scene before entering the truck. As part of this initiative, its Decon 1 (bunker gear decontamination) vehicle carries 160 sets of gear plus another 100 pairs of gloves and 100 hoods, and the warehouse stores another 200-300 sets of gear that can back fill the Decon 1 truck.

Silent Partner's iOS application, utilizing Zebra RFID devices, tracks this inventory to support clean, safe cabs.

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Personal protective equipment (PPE) and other gear must be tracked when it's in storage, when it's being cleaned and repaired, and when it's decommissioned. While these processes can be performed with barcodes, as in the past, RFID has exponentially accelerated Pasco County's inventory management and cleaning, as well as automate tracking.

The RFID system allows decision-makers to know where everything is, 24/7, in real time without complicated manual tracking. "Visibility in the context of what we're trying to promote here is huge," said Ted Kostis, President, Silent Partner. "For a chief to be able to push a button and know exactly where everything is, as well as for an administrator to see how tax dollars are being spent and where financial savings are captured, is a big deal."

Partnering Up for the Future

Going forward, Pasco County Fire Rescue has a single scalable and extensible platform that can evolve as it needs grow, rather than continually having to adopt new point solutions. This makes converting more stations to RFID tracking relatively straightforward.

Adding to the county's capabilities, Silent Partner will also collaborate with Knox MedVault to integrate tracible lock box technology into narcotics tracking. Integrating Knox's secure storage solutions within its existing environment will help defend against controlled substance diversion and track its handling.

"Going through the COVID-19 Pandemic, we've been able to pressure test our new inventory management platform in an extremely challenging environment," says Schmidt. "We haven't had any issues and are extremely confident that we have the right partner and solutions in place to grow."

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NA and Corporate Headquarters	**Asia-Pacific Headquarters**	**EMEA Headquarters**	**Latin America Headquarters**
+1 800 423 0442	+65 6858 0722	zebra.com/locations	+1 786 245 3934
inquiry4@zebra.com	contact.apac@zebra.com	contact.emea@zebra.com	la.contactme@zebra.com