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TransCOR Information Technologies Completes Installation of Rugged Computers for Maine State Police

Georgetown, MA (June 13, 2003) -- The Maine State Police force now drives rugged and ready following the recent installation of 300 rugged computer systems in the State Police vehicles. These ruggedized systems, provided by Georgetown, Massachusetts-based TransCOR Information Technologies, enable officers to remotely access critical information on-line, complete and print reports in-vehicle, and navigate and track incident locations via mapping and global positioning systems.

"We are looking forward to increasing the safety of our citizens and of our state troopers with the additional information we will have easily at hand through these in-vehicle rugged computer systems," said Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Harmon of the Maine State Police. "Remote connectivity now available in the state police vehicles helps officers access and deliver more timely and better quality information, enabling them to make better decisions," he said. Rugged computers equipped with wireless modems allow the officers to communicate via email, access the internet, and perform on-line inquiries to the National Crime Information Center enabling them to check license plates, vehicle registrations, and driver's licenses for wants and warrants, parole violations, and more. Simultaneously with the rugged computer installation project, the Maine State Police is upgrading its dispatching services and records management systems, and has installed a crash reporting system.

TransCOR Information Technologies is the Northeast's leading supplier, integrator and installer of rugged mobile computing solutions including leading manufacturers' computers and wireless gear for in-vehicle and field use -- allowing productivity in challenging environments, regardless of weather or conditions. The Panasonic CF-28 Toughbook, Pentax Pocket Jet Printer and AirLink Wireless Modem with GPS were key components of the Department's mobile configuration.

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“The durability of the rugged computer equipment is an important factor in our decision to install these systems,” said Lieutenant Colonel Harmon. “Any laptop would convert to in-vehicle use, but it wouldn’t survive the day-to-day hardships of the environment that a police officer works in. A non-ruggedized computer would not last for the required life-cycle of the applications we are using.” State police officers are most frequently called out on rainy and snowy days, and the vehicles frequently experience high speeds with accompanying high vibrations. “At times officers travel at high speeds, over unimproved roads and even off road situations such as across fields, over access curbs and railroad tracks. The rugged computer and mounting systems will take the abuse,” said Wayne Gallant, director of Information Services for the Maine State Police. “This project moves technology into the arena where officers spend their time. We don’t want them to have to worry about the safety or reliability of their computers,” he said

Rugged computers are designed and built from the ground up to withstand harsh environments that can impact sensitive computer hardware and software. “Improved gasketing seals out moisture and dust, and shock absorption properties protect the hard drives from the constant in-vehicle vibrations that can easily damage non-ruggedized systems. The outer casings and chassis are molded from magnesium alloy to minimize external damage,” said TransCOR President, Tom Haywood. “Rugged computers require much less maintenance and repair than other systems, reducing down-time and repair costs,” he said.

Convenience was key to the success of the project. “We could never have done this project if we had had to send our vehicles out of state or off-location for installation, and then wait for their return,” said Lt. Colonel Harmon. “It was a combined effort between our personnel and the teams from TransCOR. Our staff provided training on the software, while the TransCOR staff installed the equipment on-site and showed us how to use it,” said Wayne Gallant.

The rugged computer project with the Maine State Police also provides a service depot program. “If any malfunction or damage occurs, we can swap out the equipment, replace it with a unit from our spare pool, and send the non-working item off for repair,” said Wayne Gallant. “We don’t have to worry about being down several units for days on end while computers are out for maintenance. We don’t have to manage warranties or repairs, and that makes our lives easier.”

Some state police officers are stationed several hours away from a troop barracks, and may not make it in to headquarters for weeks at a time. The rugged computers allow them to file reports remotely. “Any time you can reduce the amount of down time that a trooper has to spend driving to a place to file a report, you are increasing the amount of time that trooper has available to be alert and on the job, improving public safety,” said Major Craig Poulin of the Maine State Police. The officers can also remove the computers from the cars and put them into docking stations in their home offices, as well as at State Police barracks. “Before implementing this technology, it



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could take weeks before an accident report was filed and available to the public. Now it can be completed and filed right from the accident scene,” said Lieutenant Chris Grotton.

Recently, the Maine State Police force had the opportunity to put the rugged computers to work. “While responding to a small town tragedy, officers were quickly able to file reports, access data, and correspond with headquarters electronically. This made a very complex situation much more manageable,” said Lieutenant Grotton. A command post was set up near the scene of the incident; rugged computers were undocked from the vehicles and set up at the post. Had the troopers not been equipped with rugged computers, they would have had to travel over an hour to access the same capabilities at a State Police barracks.

The size and remoteness of Maine can be challenging, particularly when it affects the time it takes a trooper to reach an accident site. The new in-vehicle global positioning and mapping capabilities allow troopers to determine the location of a crash site quickly, accelerating their response time to incidents. Officers can now locate an accident and arrive there more quickly than before.

Many commercial vehicles travel along both state highways and smaller roads on a regular basis. “Our in-vehicle reporting systems allow us to review safety standards on commercial vehicles, and to provide hard-copy reports to truck drivers requiring corrections reports and safety notices, says Lieutenant Colonel Harmon. “Our reporting capabilities will be even more widespread as new software becomes available, “ he said.

The response to the rugged computers has been overwhelmingly positive. “Our state police force is going through a lot of technological changes. The rugged computers are a long time in coming, and very well received,” said Lieutenant Grotton.

“Different applications will be available at officers’ fingertips to help solve crimes,” said Major Craig Poulin “Clearly, anytime you give police officers better crime fighting capability, you’re going to have a positive effect on public safety.”

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