

# Case Study: Acadian Ambulance

GDS delivered a fully managed WAN and communications solution with the highest levels of availability and 24/7/365 responsive support.



# Acadian Ambulance Service was founded in 1971 in Lafayette, LA., to fill a critical need for medical transportation services in Lafayette Parish.

Today, Acadian Ambulance has more than 4,000 employees and a fleet of more than 550 ambulances, helicopters and airplanes serving 74 parishes and counties in Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi and Tennessee. The company provides emergency, nonemergency and special needs transportation, in-home patient care, offshore and industrial healthcare, neonatal care, medical alert systems, medical education, business and home security and automation.

## About Acadian Ambulance Challenges

Acadian Ambulance is one of six divisions of Acadian Companies, a dynamic and rapidly growing organization with a nationwide footprint. Other divisions include Acadian Air Med, Executive Aircraft Charter Service, Acadian Total Security, National EMS Academy and Safety Management Systems.

Because of the critical nature of the services it delivers, **Acadian Companies requires a highly reliable communication system.** In addition, Acadian Ambulance serves as a secondary public safety answering point (PSAP) in jurisdictions where it's the sole provider of emergency or nonemergency ambulance services. The company operates three PSAP communication centers, which must have the highest levels of availability to ensure that 911 and nonemergency calls go through without fail.

## GDS Delivers Solutions

**Global Data Systems (GDS)** worked with **Acadian Ambulance** to architect a wide-area network (WAN) and communications platform that would meet these stringent requirements. Lafayette-based GDS delivers these services through its Network Operations Centers (NOCs) backed by expert support from the GDS team. Acadian Companies receives one easy-to-understand bill for all telecommunication services and the peace of mind that comes from partnering with a highly responsive local provider.

### Company Stats

**Size:**

4,000 (across all divisions)

**Location:**

Lafayette, LA

**Industry:**

Healthcare

### At A Glance

**Challenge**

- Outdated phone system
- Multiple bills & invoices

**Solution:**

- Implement hosted communications in GDS data centers
- One bill for all services

**Results**

- Reliable, rock solid communications with 24/7/365 support

## Challenge **Acadian Ambulance had an on-premises phone system that was more than 20 years old.**

It had been expanded over the years to meet the company's growing requirements, and included a mix of analog, digital and Voice over IP (VoIP) technology. The system had been very reliable, but it was a single point of failure and the backup systems were antiquated.

Acadian Ambulance needed a fault-tolerant phone system that would provide the highest levels of business continuity and coverage across its expanding geographic footprint. The company wanted a hosted solution with a

redundant architecture supported by a highly available WAN. "We didn't feel that it was in the best interest of our business and operations to have on-premises equipment anymore," said Joey Branton, Director of Technology, Acadian Ambulance.

"We had been doing business with Global Data Systems for many years in different areas, including compute, storage and data center services. They had begun offering hosted, fully managed communication services, so we began discussing various options with them."

## Solution **GDS proposed a highly reliable system hosted in the GDS data centers in Lafayette & Dallas for geographic redundancy.**

Either location can fully support all the voice communication needs of Acadian Companies, with three tiers of availability. Tier 1 locations, which include the Acadian Ambulance PSAP communication centers, are connected to the GDS data centers with a primary multiprotocol label switching (MPLS) connection, a secondary MPLS connection and a broadband Internet connection. **Tier 1 locations are ensured 99.999 percent uptime.**

"If we were in a disaster situation in which we lost two of those legs, we still have a third leg that can at least carry voice traffic. We might not be able to handle all of the data traffic over that third connection, but we can still maintain voice capability, which is the lifeblood of our ambulance operations," Branton said.

"At the same time, we had a business need for phone service independent of the PSAP piece of it. GDS was able to propose for us exactly what we needed to support our operations as we continue to grow." The technology hosted in GDS data centers is only one component. **The GDS team monitors and manages the system around the clock and provides world-class help desk services and tiered engineering support.** Acadian Ambulance has a dedicated number to call for support 24x7x365 should any issue arise.

"Our automated systems will issue an alert if something goes wrong, but nothing's perfect — there will always be some gaps," said Branton. "My staff can call that number

and know that somebody's going to answer the phone who understands the critical nature of our business. The issue will get escalated to the appropriate people immediately. We could never get that kind of service out of a major carrier."

In addition, **GDS presents Acadian Companies with one bill for all of its WAN and communications services.** The service is based upon a three-year contract but has the flexibility to accommodate the company's growing needs.

"With our old phone system, which required circuits from a variety of carriers, we were managing 200 or 300 different bills a year," Branton said. "You could never unravel the bills, and if there was a problem with a bill it was a headache to try to dispute it. There was an operational inefficiency and ineffectiveness and also financial inefficiency and ineffectiveness. "I get one bill from GDS, and I can understand it. Our company is still growing, so of course the bills increase, but they increase in a predictable fashion."

## "...We could never get that kind of service out of a major carrier."

- Joey Branton, Director of Technology, Acadian Ambulance

# Results

## The resilience of the communication system was proven recently when the city of Baton Rouge, had an underground fire that literally melted fiber-optic cabling.

This brought down services for a major backbone carrier, which in turn impacted several of the large voice communication providers. Because of the redundancy and self-healing capabilities built into its network, GDS was able to reroute traffic during the incident & avoid disruption to Acadian Ambulance's services.

"We could tell from network diagnostics that there was a problem, but when I walked into one of our primary dispatch centers the phones were ringing off the hook," said Branton. **"There wasn't a negative impact on our ability to get 911 calls. And for that matter, even our business calls were not disrupted. We were delighted that the phone system was able to survive that event."**

Had there been a disruption, Acadian Ambulance could count on GDS to work diligently to address the issue. **By delivering a fully managed, end-to-end service, GDS eliminates the finger-pointing and red tape Branton had faced when working directly with carriers.**

"Carriers are big machines and it's hard to work through the tiers of support. You're waiting for this engineer, and they have to escalate to that engineer, and they have to escalate to yet another engineer. Plus, you're never exactly sure whose network you're dealing with," he said. "Now we have immediate access to a hometown NOC, 24x7, and a single point of contact if an issue arises."

Moving from a decades-old phone system to a modern, hosted platform was a major step for Acadian Companies. GDS helped the organization unravel years of contracts with other carriers and migrate to the new system over the course of a year. The carefully planned migration minimized business disruption and helped end-users transition to the new system. Most importantly, Acadian Ambulance gained a local technology provider that understands its goals and objectives and is able to craft a solution that achieves the right outcomes. **GDS serves as a true partner, providing value and integrity rather than simply selling a product.**

"Local people care about local people," said Branton. "GDS takes our life and safety business very personally because they have friends and family who live in our coverage areas. If their family member doesn't get an ambulance because something happened in the GDS NOC or systems, that's personal to them."

### For More Information

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#### About This Solution:

- [getgds.com/services/connectivity/managed-secure-sd-wan](http://getgds.com/services/connectivity/managed-secure-sd-wan)

**"It's a marriage and sometimes a marriage has rocky spots. But they are committed to us and we're committed to them. I think that's the best relationship to have."**

**- Joey Branton, Director of Technology, Acadian Ambulance**