

► SUMMARY

ZipBridge provides communications with the people you want when you need it.

► MORE INFORMATION

www.zipbridge.net

ZIP BRIDGE COMMUNICATIONS



▲ Although ZipBridge is not a program that can be downloaded as an app, it works just like an app on your smartphone. You can find instructions on ZipBridge's website on how to get a "bookmark icon" on your home screen that looks and functions like an icon app.

NEW CONFERENCE CALL SYSTEM MAKES COMMUNICATION CLICK.

► By Yesenia Salcedo

Communication, and sometimes miscommunication, has always been an issue for police officers and other first responders. With such dangerous jobs, good communication and access to your team is key for successful and safe operations. Also, good communication is necessary all of the time—not just in emergency situations.

Getting information to and from the right people in a timely and clear manner contributes immensely to the successful resolution of any incident. Unfortunately, most post-incident reports site better communication as an area for improvement, according to Larry Glick, director of emergency response services for ZipBridge, a conference call program that can be launched from a smartphone or tablet.

ZipBridge is a new service, but it already has a lot of police management interest. "The interest comes from the simplicity of the service in bringing a team together instantly for secure communications at the outset of and during an incident," said ZipBridge President and co-founder Leidy Smith.

"However, law enforcement also has a need for routine, secure operational conference calls that are easy to launch—and its ease of use assures it's not something that sits on a shelf waiting for an emergency to happen," he said. "It's always there on your smartphone ready to be used for routine operational calls, short-notice command staff meetings, or during critical incident response."

ZipBridge was designed to serve as a virtual command post during an incident, according to Glick. Once you launch the call, it will stay up as long as at least one person is on the call.

Smith said the service was created to fill a need expressed by a college campus security client who experienced a situation with a shooter on campus. The client didn't have a good way to communicate with the response team at the outset of or during the incident.

The university had a mass alert system, but the client needed to talk to the various college emergency response teams, such as the board of trustees and college operations management, in real time to share information and determine the next steps—but there was no system in place to be able to do that.

ZipBridge outbound conference calling is easy to set up and allows the call host to instantly connect with key personnel via landlines or via cellular phones. ZipBridge is mobile optimized for the iPhone, Android, Windows phones, and BlackBerry for one-tap access.

How it Works

ZipBridge is a conference call system, but it's different from the conventional conference call systems where you call into a number and have to enter an access code or pin to join a call. With ZipBridge, you launch the call for a group you've set up from your smartphone, tablet or computer and it calls the pre-entered members of the call group simultaneously and then connects everyone on a conference bridge call when they answer.

When you are ready to launch a call, log into ZipBridge from your smartphone, tablet or computer and select the call group you want on the call. You also can change and add members and groups anytime from your smartphone or computer.

To launch the call, you tap the call group you wish to call. Then you have the option to record the call if you want or need to (if you're responding to a major emergency and you're a higher ranking officer, you might need to record the call for the police department's records or for future training purposes). Then you can tap "Launch Call" to place the call.

Once the numbers are dialed, there the members of the group simply need to answer the call. One of the most functional aspects of ZipBridge is that the members of the call group that the account owner is calling are all connected into the conference call without needing to call into a conference call number and entering an access code or PIN.

"But what really makes ZipBridge great is the total operational control and security it offers—the ZipBridge client has total control over the conference call number and who is allowed to be part of a call," Glick said. With ZipBridge, the client creates call groups and when the call is launched, only those members are called and invited into the conference call. This keeps unwanted individuals from participating in the conference call.

"Specialized units, such as investigations, crime scene, hostage negotiations, and SWAT like ZipBridge because unit commanders can brief all unit members quickly and simultaneously on the way to the incident," Glick said.

When the members of a call group answer, they will hear a recording inviting them to attend a conference call in progress and they can press 1 to join or 2 to call in later. And if a member can't join the call at



▲ Logging onto ZipBridge is quick and easy and takes seconds.

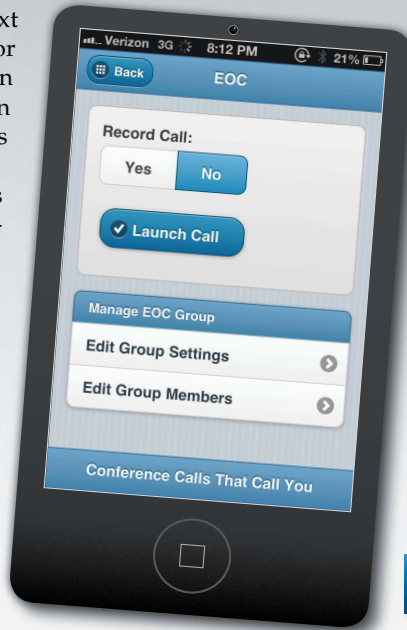
▲ Setting up multiple emergency groups is possible with ZipBridge.

the time it is launched, he/she is sent a text message and/or e-mail with instructions for how to call in later. The call is active when the first two people join and taken down when the last person hangs up. A tone is heard when people join or leave the call.

Another great feature of ZipBridge is that users can hang up, check out something on the ground, and then call back in to report as needed without needing a pin to get back onto the call.

ZipBridge is in its early launch phase with about half of the subscribers being made up of emergency response and law enforcement users and the other half business and commercial users.

There is a fee for the service. ZipBridge service is available under three different annual plans, which differ by the included monthly minutes. Fees range from \$249 per year for five call groups with 250 minutes per month to \$999 per year for 15 call groups with 1,000 min-



▲ Before you launch a call, you have the option of recording the call.

utes per month. All the plans offered with specific details are available on the company's website. You can upgrade to a higher level plan during the year and there is full refund available within the first 30 days if you are not happy with the service for any reason. See how it works at: www.zipbridge.net/service/emergency-response.

Yesenia Salcedo is a Chicago-based writer and the former Managing Editor of *LAW and ORDER*, *Police Fleet Manager* and *Tactical Response* Magazines. She can be reached at senny_x@yahoo.com.

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