



## MISSOURI SHERIFF USES CELLULAR TECHNOLOGY TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY AND DECREASE COSTS

Partnering with UScellular®, Samsung and Visual Labs, the Monroe County sheriff has leveraged technology that not only saves his department thousands of dollars but that also helps to protect the residents he serves.

### Customer Profile



#### BUSINESS TYPE:

County sheriff's office with 9 full-time officers serving 8.700 residents

#### LOCATION:

Monroe County in northeast Missouri

#### CHALLENGES:

- Needed to spend more than \$5,000 per vehicle to equip it with technology
- Relying on manual and tedious process to record and store video evidence, including deputies using personal phones to capture evidence
- Old computers, worn out body cameras, limited GPS capability and no in-vehicle computing
- The need to streamline equipment and connectivity while lowering costs

#### UScellular® SOLUTIONS:

- Samsung Galaxy S21 phones for every deputy for work communications and photographs, audio and video recordings
- Samsung DeX system that allows deputies to communicate and complete reports from the field
- Smartphone body camera evidence saved to the Cloud and GPS phone tracking
- Arlo security cameras connected in areas with no Wi-Fi
- Personalized service from local account manager Jacob Neeley

#### RESULTS SINCE 2021 LAUNCH:

- Saved more than \$3,000 per vehicle in equipment costs that they can reinvest in protecting the community and purchasing vital technology
- Enhanced video evidence obtained from smartphone body cams eliminated the need for many costly court trials
- A single slimline device serves as a computer, GPS, hotspot and body cam for a deputy on duty

Monroe County, Missouri has a small but mighty sheriff's office which, like departments dozens of times larger, sought ways to leverage modern technology to protect the community. But with a small budget, the department looked to longtime partner UScellular® to improve its connectivity and stay within budget.

"We're a small agency so we could not afford to put ruggedized laptops in every vehicle," said Sheriff Joe Colston. "We hadn't had that capability until now to be perfectly honest. And it wasn't until last year that every deputy had a smartphone."

Colston, who joined the Monroe County Sheriff's office in 2006, had been researching phones and solutions for months. When he became sheriff in January 2021, he worked with UScellular to review pricing, quickly got his budget approved and, by the middle of March that year, had all devices and applications installed with the service that he needed to get the ball rolling.

### ***The Mobile Computer***

He worked with his UScellular local sales rep plus vendor partner Samsung to purchase Samsung DeX systems, which convert smartphones into computers that connect with a keyboard, trackpad and monitor in each vehicle. Deputies can create reports directly from their car on the scene during an incident.

"I personally tested one of these units and I have to say I'm very impressed," said Sheriff Colston. "We are able to communicate via text, utilize our email, login to our report management system, share locations, log evidence, etc." In addition, when an officer returns to headquarters, they simply plug their smartphone into a dock and continue seamlessly with their work.

Colston says DeX is less bulky and expensive to install in every car, compared to a traditional rugged laptop. "The phones are now something that we assign to each officer anyway, so it's one less piece of equipment where we don't have to buy a laptop. Tough books are right around \$5,000 each whereas a screen and keyboard costs about \$1,100 each for mounting brackets and everything needed to set it up," he said. "Also, with laptops in the cars, we would have to also get a hotspot to have any kind of Internet capability." Now they use UScellular to connect all equipment through the smartphone.

"We also were running separate GPS devices in the cars, so that was another fee and through the apps that we're using on the phone along with DeX, we've combined that all into the one device," Colston said.



"I like UScellular's customer service first of all. If I make a phone call, I'm going to get a phone call back or somebody is going to answer when I call. I deal with many companies where that's not the case, so I appreciate that very much. Devices are reliable, but I know if we have issues, we're going to make a call and we're going to get those issues resolved."

— **Sheriff Joe Colston**  
Monroe County Missouri



*Testing the in-vehicle Samsung DeX system.*



*Visual Labs turns a smartphone into a body camera. Photo courtesy Visual Labs.*

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— **Sheriff Joe Colston**  
Monroe County Missouri

Savings are significant—more than \$3,000 per vehicle...“at least, and probably more than that. It’s hard to determine exactly because we don’t have to have a hotspot or GPS in the car anymore. Plus, we already have the (smartphone) that we’re carrying with this. So, if you’re comparing a laptop to the DeX unit ... we’re looking at about one-fifth of the price.”

### ***Using Smartphones as Body Cams***

Colston also worked with partner Visual Labs to add body cams to their smartphones. “I began by issuing Samsung Galaxy S21 phones to every deputy for work communications, so they weren’t using a personal device for photographs, audio and video recordings,” Colston said.

Visual Labs’ application turns the cell phone into a body camera and adds cloud storage, as well as security and a chain of custody so the video is suitable as evidence. “It also allows us to track the phone’s GPS location when the deputy is on duty.”

Colston says the new solution is more convenient. “Before, we had to manually download the video, tag it and then burn it to multiple disks for evidentiary purposes whereas now there’s a chain of evidence in the software. We can email links to videos to the prosecutor’s office without having to burn anything to disk.”

The Sheriff added that they are using UScellular to connect videos to the Cloud, and that video quality is much better than the solution they were using previously. “Once we deactivate the camera, the video automatically uploads instantaneously” for ease of use.

The body camera solution makes prosecuting cases more consistent, Colston said. “The guys are able to review their video and determine what’s happening...then we’re able to utilize that video in court. It’s hard to deny you did something wrong when you can sit there and watch it play out in front of you at court.”

He added that body cam evidence reduces costly trials that don’t necessarily need to happen—saving community funding.

### ***Needs for the Future***

In addition to smart phones, the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office uses two Arlo wireless cameras connected through UScellular for security monitoring in areas with limited or no Wi-Fi access. And he may look to expand.

“Right now, we’re evaluating this project. It’s working great for us, so we’ll see what the future holds,” he said. Possible tools may include push-to-talk two-way communication, and Land Mobile Radio (LMR) interoperability to integrate smartphones with existing radio systems. “That will let you transmit and receive traffic that you normally would just hear if you had an issued radio either in your car, on your person.”

He’s also now working with his UScellular local sales rep Jacob Neeley to add data priority and preemption for public safety.

“I felt his passionate excitement when I talked to Sheriff Colston about these solutions,” said Neeley. “The reality is, with Visual Labs and UScellular, you have a GPS and body camera on the officer versus being left in the car. It’s a safer product and I think the Sheriff is being really creative in implementing this solution.”

### ***The UScellular Difference***

The county’s relationship with UScellular predates Colston’s 16 years at the sheriff’s office, but he’s happy with the collaboration. “It’s been great to partner with UScellular. For the longest time, UScellular was the only provider that had coverage in our area—for our entire county. And we’ve had no issues. When we had questions about products, they’ve been very informative.”

There are other options now, “but with the coverage and our long-standing relationship with UScellular, we opted to stay with them during this project,” he said.

“I like UScellular’s customer service first of all. If I make a phone call, I’m going to get a phone call back or somebody is going to answer when I call. I deal with many companies where that’s not the case, so I appreciate that very much. Devices are reliable, but I know if we have issues, we’re going to make a call and we’re going to get those issues resolved.”

Colston is pleased with his new tools and connectivity and would recommend them to other public safety departments. “We have so many things that distract us from what we do. I think the simplification of combining several tools into one device helps us to concentrate on the job at hand. The device is always there and we’re able to utilize it for many different things,” he said.

“UScellular is great to work with.”



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— **Jacob Neeley**  
Public Sector Account Manager,  
UScellular

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