Missoula (MT) Emergency Services, Inc.

Supervisor Jeff Welch doesn't mince words when he talks about life at Missoula ES before Aladtec.

"Paper schedule. Excel program. Awful," said Welch, who has worked in EMS for 24 years.

"I wouldn't call myself tech-savvy, but once I get into a program, I can usually figure out how it's working, change things, work things through it. And if I don't, that's why there's a support line, and it's been a great help to me."

Aladtec has streamlined the process of swaps and trades for Missoula ESI.

"People would have to come in on their day off if they wanted to do a shift change. They'd fill out the paperwork, and contact the person they'd want to trade with. They'd have to come in and sign it as well. The manager who was doing the schedule would have to obtain that paperwork and either approve it or deny it, and let those people know verbally, or via e-mail, phone call, text, whatever. (Aladtec) has changed the whole dynamic of how we do that," said Welch.

"You can do it from your home, from your phone, wherever you're at. You can submit time-off request forms, ask for a trade, do a swap with someone you've already made pre-arrangements with -- so from the crew's standpoint, from the ease of management, I don't have to come into the shop to authorize a trade."

Bob VandenHeuvel is a paramedic and also serves as an assistant manager at MESI. VandenHuevel left MESI for several years, served as a fire chief, then rejoined the staff.

"When I left, three years and seven months ago, there was no Aladtec. It was the old-fashioned scheduling system. It was a busy program for him, and if you didn't have your schedule in by a certain time, it was really rough on him. When I came in and saw (Aladtec), I was like -- This is the way to go. This was a good decision. I guess Jeff did all that, but it was really smart."

"I would say, yeah, if you weren't born and raised in the time that I was -- starting this in '84 -- (younger staffers) don't have any of that background to look back on. They kind of expect this," said, referencing the Millennial generation.

MISSOULA, MT

Billings

Boise

Idaho Falls

Casper

Salt Lake City

Department Info:

Roster: 62 employees.

Calls for service: 10,555 in 2017.

Service area: City of Missoula and Missoula County, about 109,000 people, 2,593 sq. miles. Also, MESI provides mutual aid for Granite, Powell, Ravalli, Lake, and Mineral Counties when weather or call volume demands prevent the use of a medical helicopter.

Apparatus: Five ALS ambulances, custodians of a State of Montana mass casualty trailer, staged for a regional response.

Special challenges: Back Country Emergency Response Team assists area search and rescue with medical and traumatic calls; frequent stand-bys for many special events.

Aladtec users since 2017

Neighboring agencies also using Aladtec:
Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital, Hamilton; Great Falls Emergency Services, Great Falls; Shoshone County Fire Protection District #2l, Kellogg, ID; Bonner County EMS, Sandpoint, ID; and Bonner County Communications, Sandpoint, ID.

"To be able to get on your phone and look at this stuff, that's huge. Like you can do that any time that you want. And I don't ever forget my shifts, because I use the program to switch it into my schedule and everything else. It doesn't hurt to get that notice and especially for our people that are on-call, because if you're scheduling your life, you're going to take your full-time job and your part-time job. Your on-call stuff is kind of off to the side," said VandenHeuvel.

"We don't have very many times when we page someone and they don't show up, whereas, in the old days, when I was young? We had that happen quite often where like, 'Oh right! I traded that shift with you, and I was supposed to be on-call. In this business, you can't have that."

It didn't take Welch long to figure out how to build schedules. He started with the five main truck assignments, then created slots for a host of special events MES must staff throughout the year.

"What do we have going on in October that would require a schedule? So I took all these things -- high school football games, the Grizz games, all these things that might be on -- and those are the things I put in there, except for our main schedules.

"What this was designed for, was to eliminate crew heartburn, but in the process, it also eliminated schedule-writing heartburn," said Welch. "For me, I can be anywhere and write the schedule."

While Welch might be an early-adopter when it comes to technology, not everyone in at MES has been as quick to climb onboard. He wants to use forms in the Member Database to track licenses and certifications, so both he and the employee get a warning well in advance of expirations.

Welch has integrated many e-forms into daily routines.

He created a Controlled Substance Usage Form that tracks call data, what drugs were administered, how excess was disposed, and whether the med was restocked. There's an End of Shift report, Incident Report, Patient Care Concern, Time Edit form, a New Hire Checklist, and more.

"There's some annoyance from folks of having to get online to do (truck checks), but that's where technology is. People are just adjusting to that. Change is change. Change is difficult for some, but in the end, change happens whether we all agree or not."

Welch is pleased to see staff using the Discussion forum.

"That's really starting to get really in good shape now. The biggest thing for me is the communications between managers," said Welch. "If you have a shift and something happens, you need to put it in there and send us a text that there's a required message, to let us know we all need to get in there ... to encourage consistency of policies between leaders.

"The owner is investing $6 per member, per month. This is the best program on the market, and we need to use it to the full extent," said Welch.

Overall, he likes facets of Aladtec that provide tools for accountability.

Welch says he's had a half-dozen or more jobs -- retail, food service, and EMS -- over his several decades of work experience. He usually winds up in some aspect of management.

"I'm a firm believer (in the axiom) you should inspect what you expect," said Welch. "If your expectation is this, you better get down here and (verify it), otherwise you can't hold people accountable for it.

"If I have an employee that in my perception -- which is my reality -- dumps most of their shifts and they don't pull the shifts that they say they're going to, now I can run a report on that person. Before, we had a paper trail that I'd have to go back and sort and tried to figure out 'Is this where they traded? Is this where they traded?' I don't know. Now, that's really defined for me.

"I can pull that and say -- 'Look. In the last year, you signed up for eight shifts, and you only took one of them. You dumped seven of them. Is this really where you need to be as an employee?'

Those are things that are definitive, measurable, invaluable things for me. If I'm going to inspect what I expect, I need the tools to do it properly, not willy-nilly."

Jeffrey Welch

Jeffrey Welch joined Missoula Emergency Services, Inc. in 2008. He also picks up the occasional medic shift with the nearby Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital ambulance service.
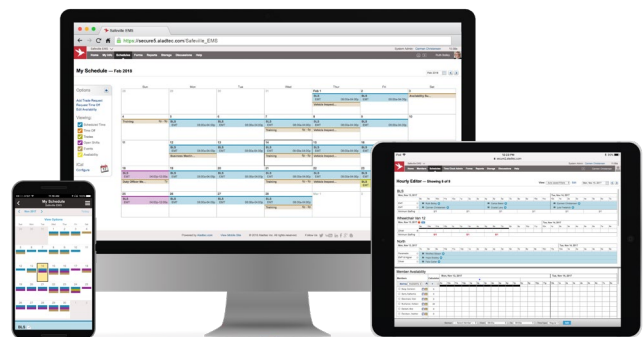
Aladtec provides online employee scheduling and workforce management software to 2,000-plus organizations, primarily within the Public Safety Sector. Customers count on Aladtec constantly to help save time, improve efficiency and enhance communications. The company is headquartered in River Falls, WI. For information about our affordable platform or to try a free demo, please visit: www.aladtec.com