INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

Before Your Agency Moves to the Cloud

By **Rohan Galloway-Dawkins**, *Chief Product Officer, Versaterm*

Cloud technology is reshaping public safety infrastructure across North America, and most agency leaders are already seeing the impact firsthand. Not long ago, moving to the cloud was viewed primarily as a technology decision. Today, it touches nearly every part of an agency, from policy and budgeting to workforce planning and risk management. Conversations with their IT directors, at industry conferences, in questions from city managers center around cost savings and modernization timelines. Whether your agency is actively evaluating a transition or simply trying to stay informed, understanding what cloud means for public safety operations has become a core leadership competency.

The challenge is that "cloud" is not a single thing. It describes a broad range of deployment models and architectural approaches that can vary by vendor. The differences between them have real operational consequences for how your dispatchers and telecommunicators work. You also have to consider how your data is protected and your system performs in extraordinary situations, such as large events or natural disasters. Understanding those distinctions prepares you to approach the cloud conversations thoughtfully and confidently.

§ SECTION ONE

Mission-Critical Availability and Operational Resilience

Uptime is non-negotiable in public safety. A reliable system should perform consistently not just on an average day, but during major incidents and peak call volumes. These are exactly the moments when technology is most likely to be stressed. Cloud environments introduce variables.

If connectivity at your PSAP is disrupted, dispatchers need to keep working. That means the system requires failover capabilities that function regardless of how the outage originated, not just in the most common scenarios.

System performance under these conditions reveals a great deal about whether the underlying architecture is built for mission-critical reliability. This is typically why government cloud architecture is the backbone of cloud-based CAD and RMS because of its additional resilience and security.

> *"Will your CAD support AI-assisted workflows, such as AI-assisted dispatching?*
>
> ON BUILDING FOR WHAT'S NEXT

§ SECTION TWO

CJIS Compliance in the Cloud

Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) compliance is a baseline requirement for any public safety technology, but cloud environments may introduce variables that on-premises systems don't face in the same way. Data residency, user authentication, audit logging and access controls all behave differently when infrastructure is distributed.

Understanding where your data lives and who has access is important. Agencies also need a way to track user activity, such as who is logging in where and when. Essentially you need digital keycards for secure online areas like you do for evidence lockup.

It becomes an ongoing operational and legal responsibility that belongs to your agency regardless of what system you run. Any cloud environment your agency operates in should be able to answer these questions clearly, and your team should know who is accountable internally for ensuring compliance doesn't fall through the gap between your agency and your technology.

§ SECTION FOUR

Scalability as Your Agency's Needs Change

One of the genuine advantages of cloud infrastructure is the ability to scale but only if the platform is developed to do it. The platform should support regional dispatch consolidation and multi-agency deployments, as well as gradual expansion or reduction.

§ SECTION THREE

Building for Where Public Safety Is Heading

CAD has evolved significantly from its origins as a dispatch coordination tool. Today's leading agencies expect it to function as a true decision hub. These platforms are where information captured at call intake flows automatically to field personnel, records systems, analytics and supervisors without manual reentry or workarounds. The question worth asking of any system, existing or new, is not just what it does today but how it's designed to grow.

The platform should also connect with drones and real-time crime intelligence, as well as professional standards and wellness tracking. These capabilities that are becoming expectations, not extras.

The agencies best positioned five years from now are running platforms that treat those capabilities as a roadmap, not an afterthought. This is why it's helpful to have vendors who are true partners to share what needs to change.

If your county is considering consolidating PSAPs, will this platform support that without a full re-implementation? A modern system should give your agency flexibility to grow and adapt instead of locking you into a fixed deployment model based on initial configuration.

> *If your county is considering consolidating PSAPs, will this platform support that without a full re-implementation?*
>
> ON SCALING WITHOUT REWORK

> *Is there 24/7 access to technical support after launch, and who answers that call?*
>
> ON THE PARTNERSHIP AFTER GO-LIVE

§ SECTION FIVE

Implementation and Training

Going live on a new CAD system is one of the most operationally demanding things an agency can undertake. The transition itself deserves as much scrutiny as the technology itself.

On-site training for telecommunicators and supervisors should be standard, not an optional add-on. Day-to-day go-live support matters as much as launch readiness—the first weeks after cutover are when agencies most need a partner who is present and responsive.

Is there 24/7 access to technical support after launch, and who answers that call? Ideally, support should come from individuals who understand public safety operations, not just the software. Implementation problems rarely announce themselves in advance, and how that support is delivered in the critical first weeks or months after will tell you a great deal about the long-term relationship.

§ SECTION SIX

Reporting and Performance Measurement

Chiefs are increasingly accountable to city leadership and public oversight boards for measurable performance outcomes. Your CAD system should support that accountability with built-in analytics and reporting tools. If leadership can't trust the information coming out of the system, then it isn't doing its job. A system that requires external tools or manual exports to produce reliable reporting is already creating an unnecessary challenge between your data and your decisions.

The cloud conversation isn't going away, and for many agencies it represents a genuine opportunity to update their infrastructure that reduces the maintenance burden while building toward a more integrated public safety ecosystem. But like any decision that affects how your people work and how your community is served, it deserves careful thought. It's not simply a technology decision; it's an operational one as well.

These considerations are worth revisiting whether your agency is actively evaluating a transition or simply trying to understand what you already have better. ◆

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rohan Galloway-Dawkins

Rohan Galloway-Dawkins is Chief Product Officer at Versaterm, where he leads product strategy across a platform of solutions that helps public safety agencies improve operations and deliver better outcomes for the communities they serve. He brings more than 20 years of experience in public safety communications and software. Before joining Versaterm, Galloway-Dawkins held leadership roles at Motorola, where he was instrumental in developing the Command Central public safety platform.

Versaterm