What's New ...
Scout Version 4.0

Scout Version 4.0, released in mid-2015, introduces a new Scout architecture foundation plus a variety of other system enhancements.

Scout Architecture Enhancements

Enhancements in this Scout version lay the foundation for a new architecture that centralizes management, configuration, and troubleshooting for a multi-site Scout console system. For all customers, including those with a single-site topology, the new architecture provides streamlined, optimized operations.

Data Management Services to Provide Centralized Administration

Data Management Services (DMS), the central structure of a Scout system, includes three key components: Scout Manager, the Scout Data Store, and the Scout Central Distributor. These Scout components facilitate configuration, deployment, statistical reporting, and diagnostics and alarm reporting for a multi-site Scout system.

Project Manager Becomes Scout Manager

Scout Manager, the redesigned Project Manager, is a client-server application that saves all configuration details to a database called the Scout Data Store (SDS). While Scout Manager is the client, its server is the new web application, Scout Central Distributor (SCD). Scout Manager introduces the following new features:

Multi-Site System – One Scout Manager project can include multiple, diverse sites, each with its own Multicast Domain IP address. Sites have the capability to be designed as fully deployed, Scout console-only, VPGate-only, or Scout with Frontier.

Lock/Unlock for Editing – Scout Manager users with rights to edit the system use a menu command to lock Scout Manager for editing. The lock prevents other users from simultaneously editing the project.

Layout Tab – A new Scout Manager Layout tab provides a workplace for creating the topology of regions, sites, and Scout components in the Scout system.

Central Database to Store Configuration, Diagnostic, and Statistical Data

The database known as the Scout Data Store (SDS) is an SQL database that holds all configuration data for Scout Manager, data for statistical reports, and all diagnostic information for the Scout system components. When a Scout Manager user saves configuration changes, the changed information resides in SDS. When a Scout Manager user locks the application for editing, Scout Manager automatically downloads the latest configuration data from SDS. Additionally, all alarms and events that Scout components report to the Scout Central Distributor reside in SDS as well as the statistical data used for management reports.

SCD Manages System-Wide Alarm, Statistical, and Configuration Data

The Scout Central Distributor (SCD) is the server to the Scout Manager client. This dual-purpose web application features an intuitive, easy-to-navigate user interface. SCD collects alarm and statistical data and accesses the Scout Data Store (SDS) to deploy system configuration.

The Scout Central Distributor introduces the following new features:

Multi-site Diagnostics and Statistical Reports – SCD collects all events and alarms from Scout components in all sites configured on the Layout tab in Scout Manager. SCD also collects dispatcher, endpoint, and call activity for statistical reporting.

Dashboard – SCD opens to an alarm dashboard that provides at-a-glance information for new and active alarms, including alarm severity. The page also links to the Alarms webpage for easy alarm acknowledgment.

System View – An enhanced System View accumulates component details by site. Clear indications show which components need attention and one click provides access to component information including alarm details and details of the component itself.

Central Project Deployment – Clicking a Deploy button on the System View webpage sends new, saved configuration data from the Scout Data Store to the appropriate components. Visual indications show deployment progress, and data compression reduces deployment time and network bandwidth requirements.

Consolidated System Configuration to Reduce Configuration Entries

Previous versions of Scout required users to enter a System Multicast IP Address and System Multicast Port number for every instance of VPGate and Frontier and for every Scout console in the system. The new Scout architecture simplifies configuration by providing one entry point, per site, for the system multicast information. All components within the site retrieve the data from this one location.

New Security Infrastructure to Provide Broad Protection

This version introduces a new security infrastructure that is housed in SCD and manages security for Scout Manager and SCD. Users access the SCD User Administration webpage to manage passwords, authorize configuration activity, and create roles for users with identical authorization. Roles include authorization for Scout Manager tasks as well as SCD tasks, and roles can be customized to be as broad or narrow as needed. This security platform provides the foundation for future, additional user security for a Scout system.

MSI Installs

This version introduces new installation executables that use the Microsoft Windows Installer (MSI) engine to manage application installations. The MSI infrastructure provides a standard method for IT departments to manage applications for large numbers of computers.

Introducing Multi-Site Scout Reports

With this version, Scout's redesigned statistical reports provide operational information that encompasses all sites in a Scout system, including systems that use Frontier to connect with endpoints from across a WAN. In addition, the Scout System Administrator can generate a report that is specific to any one site.

The Scout System Administrator can generate a report from within the Scout Central Distributor, view the report on line, and export the report in a variety of formats, including Excel, PDF, and CSV (comma-separated values). The reports available with this version include a Dispatcher Login/Logout Activity report and an Endpoint Activity report which includes endpoint state change and PTT activity.

For customers who want to create customized reports, Scout includes a Web API that allows the Scout System Administrator to export raw data from the Scout Data Store for formatting as needed, using a third-party reporting tool.

Introducing Mobile Scout

Mobile Scout, a Scout console on a mobile device connecting with endpoints over a wireless network, is now available. By using a wireless network for connectivity, Mobile Scout releases dispatchers from the confines of a dispatching center and provides alternative dispatching locations such as a mobile command center. Avtec tested Mobile Scout on qualified laptops and on the Panasonic Toughpad tablet using various wireless connections over a virtual private network (VPN). Wireless networks available to Mobile Scout users include AT&T LTE, Verizon LTE, and Wi-Fi.

Enhanced Bluetooth® Support

To support Mobile Scout, Avtec qualified the Motorola Whisper Bluetooth headset to provide the flexibility that is required for a mobile device. The Bluetooth device works with Scout's Software Audio Package, the audio package that is available with Mobile Scout.

Connectivity Support

Enhanced Privacy Support for MOTOTRBO™ IP Site Connect

Scout introduces Enhanced Privacy support for Motorola's MOTOTRBO™ IP Site Connect endpoints. With Enhanced Privacy enabled for a MOTOTRBO™ IP Site Connect endpoint, the dispatcher's audio to the field is encrypted. The Scout System Administrator can configure transmit audio for the IP Site Connect endpoint as Clear Only, Encrypted Only, or Dynamic. The Dynamic mode lets the dispatcher toggle between clear and encrypted modes. Regardless of the configuration for transmit audio, Scout decrypts incoming audio for MOTOTRBO™ IP Site Connect endpoints if a matching key exists in the Avtec Encryption Key Manager application.

Support for AVL and Text Tools

Motorola offers NeoTerra™, a fleet management solution for MOTOTRBO Connect Plus radio systems that provides AVL (automatic vehicle location) and texting between the dispatcher and the radio users. Scout Versions 4.0 and 3.4 now support the NeoTerra™ application using a Scout embedded browser. The dispatcher can use AVL to locate technicians with Connect Plus radios, to send pre-configured or free-form text messages to the radio users, and to receive text messages from the radio users.

Telephony Enhancements

New Contact Display Tool

A new Contact Display tool simplifies adding and maintaining radio and telephone auto dial pads for a dispatcher. Before this version, when a dispatcher needed an automatic way to call a contact, the Scout System Administrator created an auto contact pad for each contact. If a contact had multiple numbers, the administrator created the auto contact pads one-by-one.

With this Scout version, the Scout System Administrator simply adds a Contact Display tool to a screen and all configured contact numbers display as tiles. The dispatcher uses the tiles, which are auto contact pads, to make calls. When configuring the tool for a screen, the Scout System Administrator configures options regarding how the tool displays for the dispatcher including contact group filtering, tile spacing, visual indications for the last tile pressed, and scroll bar visibility.

In addition, the Scout System Administrator has configuration options for the tiles themselves such as showing the contact name or name and number or changing the color or icon image of a tile to indicate the type of tile item, such as group, contact, or device. The Contact Display Tool is available as a standalone tool or as a configuration option for the Contact Dialer flyout.

Contact Dialer Enhancements

New Contact Dialer tool enhancements enrich the dispatcher's experience when using the tool.

First, when configuring contacts for the tool, the Scout System Administrator has the option to restrict the dispatcher's access to groups, contacts, and devices by configuring an Access Level as public or private. The Scout System Administrator manages filtering via an enhanced Contact Group Filter editor which can be accessed at pertinent levels within Scout Manager.

Next, the display area of the Contact Dialer now shows more information. Secondary digits such as those the dispatcher enters to transfer a call or navigate through an answering menu display on the tool and remain visible until the call ends. In addition, if the dispatcher's Contact Dialer configuration shows name and number for each contact, the name and number both show in the tool's display window, including when the dispatcher uses an Auto Contact pad to make the call.

Enhanced Auto Contact Pad Text Options

Before this Scout version, Auto Contact pads provided little flexibility in the way the text displayed on the pad. Auto Contact pad enhancements provide the Scout System Administrator an option to display multiple lines of text and to show the contact's name, the contact's number, or both the name and number.

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Enhanced Call Indications and Workstation Relay Options

This version of Scout provides enhanced indication settings that allow the Scout System Administrator to configure compelling indications that ensure the dispatcher's attention. The new indication properties apply to function pads and endpoint pads. In conjunction with the indication enhancements, Scout offers new settings for workstation relays.

For function pads, configuration options include flashing the pad itself, the pad text, or both; flash rate; flash color; and indicator bar size. These properties apply to the following function pads: Mic Mute, All Mute, Ringer Disable, Forward Calls, Simul-select, Headset Monitor, and Next Call. In addition, Patch and Transfer function pads include the option to configure the indicator bar size.

For endpoint indications, new navigation aids allow a dispatcher to work in multiple screens while monitoring the callback request or awaiting callback status of an endpoint pad on another screen. Callback request or awaiting callback icons display on the screen navigation buttons to direct the dispatcher to the appropriate screen.

In addition, the Scout System Administrator can configure endpoint pads with strong incoming call indications such as flashing the endpoint pad. Flash rate and flash color are configurable. The indications can also be configured stronger for calls configured with visual and audible indications than for those configured with only visual indications. For cross indications that appear on the third line of endpoint text, a new cross indication, "VOX," displays and all cross indications can be configured to flash the text.

One pad extender, the Redundant Controller pad extender, also features new configuration options for stronger indications. The pad extender automatically indicates that it transitioned to the backup radio resource with a text indication. To provide an even stronger indication that backup is in use, the Scout System Administrator can configure different colors for the pad extender: Preferred Background Color and the Backup Background Color. With both colors configured, the radio changes to the backup color to show the dispatcher an obvious indication that the radio is operating in backup mode.

To continue the option of providing stronger indications for calls with both visual and audible indications, Scout's workstation relays offer two new notification options: Emergency Call Visual and Audible and Regular Call Visual and Audible. These allow the Scout System Administrator to configure the workstation relays to engage only for those emergency or regular calls configured for both visual and audible indications.

New Operating System and Browser Support

Scout Suite products support Windows 8.1 Pro 64-bit operating system and Internet Explorer 11, which is the browser available on Windows 8.1. Scout requires a browser for all component configuration webpages, all VPGate drivers, and all online help systems.

Default Frequency Feature Modification

Several radio endpoints provide the Scout System Administrator the option to configure a Select Frequency and a Default Frequency. With both values configured, the endpoint uses the Select Frequency when the radio is in the Select state and the endpoint automatically changes to the Default Frequency when the radio is placed in the Disconnect state. In short, the Default Frequency can only apply to the Disconnect state.

Scout 4.0 introduces an enhancement for endpoints that use Default Frequency which provides additional flexibility for the Default Frequency. The Scout System Administrator can configure "Disconnect" or Unselect or Disconnect as the

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state to which the Default Frequency applies when the endpoint leaves the Select state. This enhancement allows the Scout System Administrator to configure a state for Default Frequency to match the Default State that is set in the Endpoint Profile.

The endpoints that offer Default Frequency configuration include Outpost radio ports, URC-200, Tait, Kenwood, MOTOTRBO™ IP Site Connect, iDEN, Daniels UIC, P25 DFSI, and IDAS IP. The Scout System Administrator has the option to use the new configuration option or to maintain the traditional Default Frequency behavior.