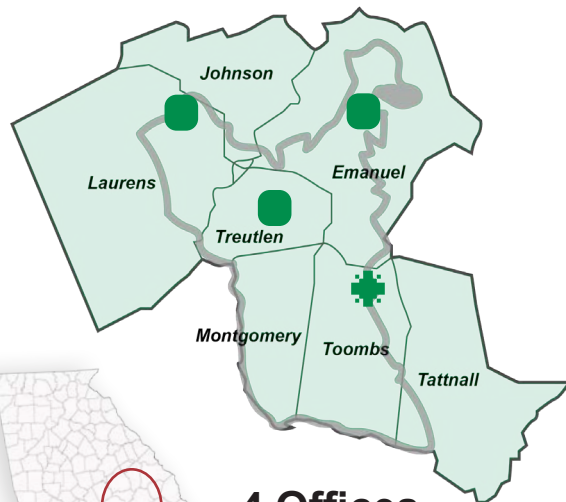# How IntegriCom® and Altamaha EMC optimized security and operations

Altamaha EMC was determined to maximize operational and network security. With the potential for cyberattacks constantly in the news and on their minds, they reached out to IntegriCom® for subject expertise to bolster their small IT department.

Going beyond general IT knowledge, IntegriCom® leverages extensive contacts and experience in the electric utility industry in the Southeast.

ALTAMAHA
EMC | FIBER

Johnson

Emanuel

Laurens

Treutlen

Montgomery

Toombs

Tattnall

4 Offices
7 Counties

IntegriCom®
Reliable IT Services

- 18+ Years experience at Oglethorpe Power

- Extensive contacts in the power industry (Georgia EMCs, OPC, GTC, GSOC)

- Installs & supports SEDC/Meridian, Milsoft, and Futura technology

- Metering, SCADA

- Cybersecurity, Office 365, Cloud platforms

- Networking, phone systems, device support

IntegriCom Co-Managed IT

"The vast amount of knowledge that you get with IntegriCom is unmatched.

And they will treat you like a friend, not just a client."

*Trenton Fountain, Altamaha EMC IT Technician*

Maximum Security and Uptime

Each of Altamaha EMC's four offices had its own Internet circuit, with one office in particular having poor Internet options that prevented office-to-office connection. Working with the independent phone company, IntegriCom was the first IT group to get the fiber link working from that remote office to the main office. They were also the first to make Altamaha's mesh Wi-Fi system work properly.

"Joel Thain drew a visual schematic of our whole IT system, for each office and network. He laid out a clear security plan in a way that non-IT people can understand," says George McLendon, Assistant General Manager and 34-year employee. "It's impressive to see the volume of things IntegriCom prevents from entering our network."

Ramona Dowd, Manager of Accounting and Finance, made security her top priority. "I've watched the EMC work on security issues since the 1980's. We had basic backup processes. IntegriCom improved and streamlined everything so smoothly," says Ramona. "We've added fiber, and while keeping up with usage growth we have built a ring for communication that includes all district offices and handles failover in multiple ways. We keep our IT and Operational systems separate to enhance security."

Now, production almost never stops, and is always back up promptly. Altamaha has multiple Internet providers, currently with eight layers of Internet. IntegriCom has personalized solutions for Altamaha's needs, including technology that works around the local weather.
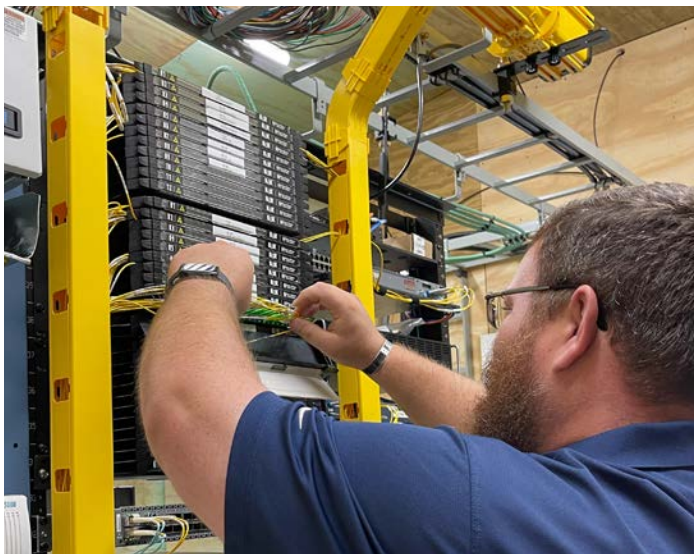
"We believe it's a best practice to employ a third party from outside of the co-op," Ramona adds, "so we don't become complacent, and so no single employee has their hands in everything.

> ## "Altamaha EMC has developed a complicated system—in a good way! It's a tough system."

Savings

Management quickly figured out that IntegriCom could do anything needed without being after the dollars.

Ramona: "IntegriCom isn't pushy about money. They actually changed our contract to optimize our contracted hours in order to keep our costs down. Our downtime has largely gone away, and our increased ability to work is well worth the money.

"One thing I key in on in IntegriCom's reports is their projection of how much we need to budget for improvements to our operating systems, like replacement of aging servers before issues arise. This is very important for high-cost items. We know they will find the best price for us. One example is a firewall system they sourced at a cost we could afford—that firewall was just as good as the top-of-the-line, 'popular' one."

George: "IntegriCom's prices are competitive with anyone else. Their numbers definitely aren't high when compared to their expertise, and to avoiding all the pitfalls they prevent.

> ## "We get instant answers. Problems solved or prevented. That's what we pay for!"

Train and Promote Within

IntegriCom's teaching-heavy style has helped utility-specific knowledge grow in-house. Altamaha previously was frustrated that the local colleges could not teach courses that would help a student learn about these types of systems. Now linemen, dispatchers, and others have successfully transitioned to play greater roles in the company. In the process, management is freed to focus on the job of managing the overall business.

IT Technician Trenton Fountain was a lineman who moved into the IT department in 2018, just prior to IntegriCom's arrival. "Our previous vendor left wires everywhere—he might not respond to us for weeks—and never taught us anything. We worked all the time just to keep things up and going." says Trenton.

"It helps a ton that IntegriCom has power experience. Their specialists respond when we create a ticket, and they actually get on the phone. They know who to contact for solutions and often can provide a fix even when our vendors cannot—sometimes they even explain the fix to the vendor!

"We started cautiously with them, but we've grown to know IntegriCom well enough that we've built a strong trust, kind of like the bond we feel with our own staff.

[**"We tell IntegriCom what we need, and they make it happen."**]

Andrew Hill is another lineman turned IT technician. "I've had to learn on the go, and IntegriCom has been very good at explaining the technology and showing me the processes behind it.

"We're out in the field frequently, and IntegriCom will cover for us remotely if there's an issue. I can watch the remote interaction and learn. On the dispatch side, the outage system shows the exact location of the outage and predicts where to look for the issue — that and the alerts have saved Altamaha EMC a ton of time and money."

"Our employees are highly satisfied," says Assistant GM McLendon. "But we know our jobs will become more technical and automated.

"For example, our dispatchers can control downline breakers. We will need continued training and support for such roles."

[**"We wouldn't change a thing about IntegriCom."**]

3

How IntegriCom and Altamaha optimized security and operations

Before

After

Max Security and Uptime

Before:
- Sluggish Local Area Network (LAN)
- Data IP network spikes 100% CPU usage
- Operational Technology (OT) not isolated
- Single Internet path
- Single location of servers and data
- Inefficient firewalls
- Poor Backup configuration
- Consumer-grade wireless routers

After (Max Security and Uptime):
- 10-20x faster, Optimized gear
- Segmented data, video, voice
- OT isolated for greater security
- Multiple paths, fully encrypted, 20-40x faster
- Multiple locations, redundant servers & data
- Configured firewalls with subscriptions
- Strategic disaster recovery
- Commercial, fully meshed wireless network

Savings

Before:
- Investing big money without a plan
- DIY approach
- Procurement struggles

After (Savings):
- Monthly fixed fee = Predictable IT cost
- Co-Managed IT Support Staff
- IntegriCom sources all Microsoft licenses, rugged laptops, and other equipment at lower costs

Train and Promote

Before:
- Lack of network documentation and understanding
- Untapped potential of industry control programs
- Previous vendor never taught the techs

After (Train and Promote):
- Fully referenced, documented network that is kept up-to-date
- Deepening knowledge of electric utility operational technology, including SCADA
- Teach techs so they can do more themselves

IntegriCom®
Reliable IT Services