



Beaver County Courthouse

– Beaver County, Pennsylvania



Profile:

Beaver County, Pennsylvania, located 20 miles northwest of Pittsburgh, recently built a brand new courthouse to accommodate expanding county offices and courts. The new courthouse provides county services to its more than 181,000 residents. Protecting its large staff and the population that frequented the courthouse became an important priority for the sheriff's department. County officials seized the opportunity to install an electronic security system in the new building. Automating security in the four wing, three story, \$20 million building proved a wise investment. The new security system automates security practices, eliminates key distribution, and implements a badge program to better protect employees, the public, and control traffic within the courthouse.

Upon completion, over 70 cameras monitor more than 40 doors and 500 badge holders on three floors. The public

enters the building through two main entrances. Although the public enjoys free egress, they pass through a manually guarded magnetometer (metal detector). CCTV captures all activity at both entrance points. Once through the magnetometer, a person can roam the public areas of the courthouse.

"Access control was seen as a means of improving security within the new courthouse by limiting the number of public entrances into the building and controlling the flow of authorized employees and visitors," said Sheriff of Beaver County, Felix Deluca and security project coordinator for the courthouse. "The need to improve or increase security was necessary due to the changes in risk within the county, the state, and across the United States."

Minimizing risk to both employees and visitors, as well as damage to county property remained a priority. Nationwide reports about the rise of disgruntled employee attacks heightened awareness of potential problems. An automated access control system and elaborate CCTV coverage would help prevent problems if they occurred, and eliminate physical key distribution management issues.

"They had no way of controlling keys after 50 years," said Jack Hershberger, commercial sales consultant for Vector Security. "Taking control of that situation was one large aspect of security they wanted managed."

- Felix Deluca
Sheriff of Beaver County

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Vector Security received the contract because it introduced and proposed GE Interlogix, InfoGraphics' Sapphire Pro access control system.

"The access control system has eliminated the need of providing security personnel at all new doors, both interior and exterior," said Sheriff Deluca. "What dollar amount can be assigned to the safety and security of persons within the courthouse if we did not secure the building and someone encountered an incident? Our safety and security comes first."

Specific Needs

Prior to the new building, security was handled manually through policies and procedures. The new security system allowed the courthouse to electronically control individual access by cardholder, entrance point, day and time. Deluca chose proximity technology for the access cards because of its durability.

The prisoner holding area, courts, judges chambers, an evidence storage room, sheriff's department and several county administrative offices reside in the courthouse.

A control room monitors all cameras and access points. Civilian employees man the control room, and deputies respond to alarms.

Sapphire Pro provides an Internet browser look and feel, making the software immediately familiar to new users. The familiarity made the software easy to learn

and use. The data entry screens allowed system managers to enter data quickly. The system was up and running fast, providing instant security.

"The software is user friendly and the operators have caught on fast," said Sheriff Deluca.

"The product meets their needs, and is very easy for them to operate and use," said Thomas Griffith, design consultant for Vector Security.

High Secure Areas

Beaver County created a high secure area using card readers and an intercom system in the vestibule where prisoners get transported from the holding area to the courtroom. Deputies escort prisoners from the holding area to a controlled elevator. The elevator only goes to designated floors (where prisoners are expected to go). Once off the elevator, a deputy speaks into an intercom system to the control room. The control room remotely opens the designated door (a courtroom door, for example) and they proceed. The entire escort process is videotaped with CCTV cameras. Access cards do not work to open doors in this vestibule, preventing prisoners from escaping with this procedure. Deputies cannot leave the designated area themselves without using the intercom system and having the control room unlock a door.

The highly secured evidence storage room uses a keypad along with a proximity reader. Users are monitored by two cameras outside the room, and must not only have a proximity

card with access to enter, but must also know a pin number to enter the room. Sheriff Deluca monitors every person who enters the room, and utilizes Sapphire Pro's detailed history report feature to manage and track users.

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Eliminate key distribution and manual security.

Solution: Automate security with the Sapphire Pro access control system and implement a badging program for employees.

Challenge: Provide additional security to highly sensitive rooms such as the evidence storage room.

Solution: Authorized users enter a pin number at a keypad reader along with swiping their proximity card.

Specifications:

Sapphire Pro access control system
Over 70 cameras
40 readers, 500 badge holders

