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—Stephen Adler
Chief Engineer
Alton Mental Health Center

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Project Type:
Integrated (HVAC & Security)

Location:
Alton, Illinois

Number of Buildings:
25

Square Feet:
750,000 (69,675 m²)

Equipment:

- 3 Network Controllers
- 4 CyberStation Workstations
- 50 System Controllers
- 10 Local Controllers
- 13 Access Controllers
- 20 Intrusion Detection Controllers

Third-party Equipment and/or Drivers:

- Visonic RF personal panic system
- Motorola people finder paging system
- Burle CCTV
- Simplex fire system

Network:

Fiber Optic backbone between each facility utilizing TCP/IP protocol

Applications:

- Temperature and humidity control
- Access control
- Security monitoring
- CCTV monitoring and control
- Personal panic devices
- Fire alarm monitoring
- Alpha-numeric paging to personnel

Alton Mental Health Center Gains Both Security and Freedom with Andover Continuum™ Integration

Alton Mental Health Center, a residential psychiatric treatment center, was officially opened in Alton, Illinois in 1917. Known then as Alton State Hospital, this state-run facility located across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, has grown to become a rural 25-building campus. Patient count has fluctuated over the years. In 1955, when commitment of the mentally insane was more commonplace, the population reached 2,100. Today approximately 150 court-ordered “recipients” live at Alton in a facility that prides itself on providing quality mental health treatment in secure surroundings—rather than a secured facility that offers treatment. When the decision was made to install a security management system, Alton wanted discrete state-of-the-art protection that could be easily adapted to meet the special needs of their psychiatric patients and the hospital staff. Alton chose TAC®.

Alton Mental Health Center has been a TAC HVAC customer since 1989. Local TAC Representative, Eagle Energy of Maryland Heights, Missouri, installed a TAC AC256 system to replace a previous controls system that proved too inflexible for a facilities staff wanting to do more of their own programming. In the mid-1990s, the majority of the AC256 controllers were upgraded to TAC Infinity™. According to Eagle Energy, the cost-savings alone on the boilers is impressive—the TAC system saved 200,000 thermal units of gas in the first year of operation!

Following the success of the HVAC system, a TAC security management system was installed at Alton Mental Health Center in the late 1990s. And when Alton’s HVAC and backup generator controls were upgraded to TAC’s next generation product family Continuum, in the summer of 2004, so too was the security management system. Today, Alton’s Forensic Complex is an impressive showcase of access control, intrusion detection, CCTV, intercom, paging and alarm monitoring integration utilizing the same Ethernet LAN as the TAC HVAC system.

CENTRAL CONTROL

The hub of Alton's security control is the glass-enclosed Control Station in the Forensic lobby. Here, two dedicated Continuum CyberStation security workstations monitor more than 200 alarm points—65 perimeter and internal doors secured with ASR prox card readers, "press-to-exit" door locks, and PIN-entry keypads as well as microwave-based alarm inputs, numerous intercom inputs, and "man-down" personal transmitter alarms.

The Control Station was designed with ease-of-use as a top priority. Two 21-inch Microtouch touchscreens are built into the console. With a press of a finger, the operator can select a door icon on the building's floor plan graphic to monitor an area or respond to an alarm. When an alarm comes in to the Control Station, each is annunciated with a unique pre-recorded wav file, an alarm message displays across the bottom of the screen, and a blinking icon in the appropriate color appears on the floor plan. The operator simply presses the blinking icon, which in turn switches on the camera and activates the intercom at this location. The operator can view the location, communicate with the area, and unlock the door or take other appropriate action

within seconds of receiving the alarm. A 21-camera Burle-brand CCTV system interfaces with the CyberStation front-end via a TAC Plain English™ driver. Six video monitors above the console desk cycle at 10 second intervals as time-lapse videocassette recorders record real-time video from each camera in the system.

Outside the Forensic complex, escape prevention is both high-tech and invisible. Several cameras scan the grounds, which are surrounded by a 15-foot tall curved fence. In addition, a microwave transmitter on the roof of the building sends an infrared beam to sensors located on the fence. Any detected motion around the fence area sends an alarm to the CyberStation™ at the Control Station.

MAN-DOWN

Alton's "Man-Down" alarm system provides hospital staff with added, but discrete, personal security. All staff members wear Visonic-brand personal duress transmitters on their waist. If an incident occurs where they feel their safety is in jeopardy, they can either pull the cord or push the button on their transmitter. The device sends an infrared signal to one of many alarm receivers mounted in the ceiling. Using a Plain English interface to

the CyberStation front-end, the Visonic system sends an alarm to the Console Station describing the location of the incident and the employee number. In turn, via a Plain English interface to Alton's Motorola-brand paging system, the CyberStation can page specific staff members to respond to the incident. Staff members wear Motorola alphanumeric pagers that display actual messages, eliminating a public broadcast of a security incident.

ACHIEVING SECURITY, GAINING FREEDOM

Stephen Adler, Chief Engineer at Alton Mental Health Center, says TAC's "open systems" platform gives his staff the freedom to do some very creative things with other vendors' equipment. "Half of our monitoring points," Adler states, "originate from third-party equipment integration or comm port interfaces using Plain English drivers. We can hook just about anything up to this system. And Plain English lets us configure and run the system ourselves. We're not dependent on a vendor to come in here every time we want to add another door. When someone asks me what I like about our system here, the word 'freedom' always comes to mind first."

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