

## CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

# Edmonton Institution updates prison door control system with touch screens

Overhaul is part of an IT upgrade that will replace current push-lock system

BY NEIL SUTTON

Canada's prison system is undergoing an IT upgrade whereby certain institutions are replacing push-button locking systems with touch-screen technology to improve security. The most recent addition is the Edmonton Institution, a maximum security prison which houses more than 300 inmates. It's one of four facilities in Alberta that Delco Automation Inc. has been contracted to upgrade.

Based on Windows XP architecture, the touch-screen technology is tied into both the prison intercom system and door control system, said Grant Legimodiere, marketing and sales manager for Saskatoon-based Delco. The touch-screen system

is replacing "a console that's probably eight feet long and five feet deep that wraps around and takes up most of the control centre room. It's full of switches (and) LEDs," he said. By comparison, the Delco technology is "a smaller console with a flat panel monitor with a few other systems mounted on the console."

In the event of a power failure, the locks are fail-safe and will automatically close, he

added.

Established in 1978, the Edmonton Institution is observing its 25th anniversary this year. "As a result, you can imagine there's some upkeep that needs to be done to make sure the institution is running smoothly and has all the appropriate security features in place to ensure a

safe environment for both staff and offenders," said Tim Krause, regional prairie region communications manager for the Correctional Service of Canada.

"The biggest thing would be ease of operation for the security staff that are going to be operating all the different locking mechanisms," he added. "This is part of a standard operations and maintenance program that we're seeing in the prairie region that updates various systems to the modern-day technology."

Edmonton Institution inmates will be housed in an undisclosed location for a month to six weeks while the system is put into place.

The move away from push-button technology has been going on since 1993, said Krause. The most recent Prairie institutions to upgrade include the Edmonton Institution for Women and Grande Cache Institution in Alberta; the Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatchewan; and



Delco Automation's touch-screen technology keeps Edmonton Institution inmates behind bars.

Stony Mountain Institution in Manitoba.

Other facilities across the country are receiving the same treatment. For example, Delco recently completed an installation and a new institution in Brockville, Ont., called the St. Lawrence Valley Correctional and Treatment Centre. The centre, which was recently built, will begin housing inmates over the coming weeks. "That's a provincial facility. It's more integrated and it's got high-end redundant servers and a redundant fibre network. We designed all of the LAN for it," said

Legimodiere.

Julia Noonan, a spokesperson with the Ontario Ministry of Public Safety and Security, says one of the key things about the touch-screen system is that it's faster. "You can lock down very quickly or unlock very quickly in case of an evacuation. If for some reason the door isn't locked all the way it shows up on the computer."

The facility is now training staff to use the system. Older Ontario jails to be retrofitted with the technology include Penetanguishene and Lindsay.

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