

MAIL:

The Journal of Communication Distribution

V.16 N.3

MAY/JUNE 2003

\$10.00

MAIL SECURITY

New Security Measures Bring Better Mail Service

Security concerns arising from the anthrax attacks in the fall of 2001 prompted a Fortune 500 energy firm to rethink its mail security system and the results are a streamlined acceptance and delivery operation.

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11th, the company took a closer look at how mail and packages traveled within, and between, their four high-rise buildings in the Dallas area. From this analysis they determined their organization was vulnerable to attack because too many outside agents were walking freely around their offices delivering packages and office supplies. Whether it was a FedEx courier or a private delivery person, the company determined it needed to stop the flow of non-company personnel throughout their buildings.

The energy firm turned to its mail outsourcing vendor, the CRC Group, and asked it to help design a mail security program to protect both its 4,000 employees and its facilities.

The CRC Group made this happen by finding a 5,000 square-foot warehouse near downtown Dallas and turning it into a centralized off-site receiving center. Established in March 2002, this receiving center uses a variety of security systems to screen all USPS mail, overnight envelopes, ground packages, and office supplies.

"Our goal with this off-site receiving center was to give employees an added sense of security. What we ended up with was the added benefits of increasing services and streamlining the entire receiving and delivery process," said Robert Castillo, CMDSM, operations manager for the CRC Group, Inc.

Setting up this receiving center went well beyond just locating a building; it involved working with vendors to redirect the delivery of incoming material and installing an x-ray device. Mr. Castillo explained it also meant: working with the customer's design and construction department to craft an efficient flow of mail and packages; obtaining



CRC Group President Patricia Rodriguez and Operations Manager Robert Castillo drafted a plan to improve mail security that included building an offsite mail center for their client.

certification from the Texas Department of Health Bureau of Radiation Control (a certificate of registration for industrial radiation machine); working with the customer's Employee Communications Department to communicate the new mail security program to all staff; communicating the new receiving address and receiving schedule to couriers and suppliers; and selecting mail security technology.

"Moving to an offsite receiving center required us to look at the entire incoming and internal mail system and to communicate these changes with all parties, including our customers, our mail staff, and our vendors," said Patricia Rodriguez, CRC Group President.

The CRC Group selected the PerkinsElmer SYS208 and SYS107 X-ray security screening system, a handheld VTEX VaporTracing System, and Pitney Bowes Arrival Software.

The PerkinsElmer SYS systems

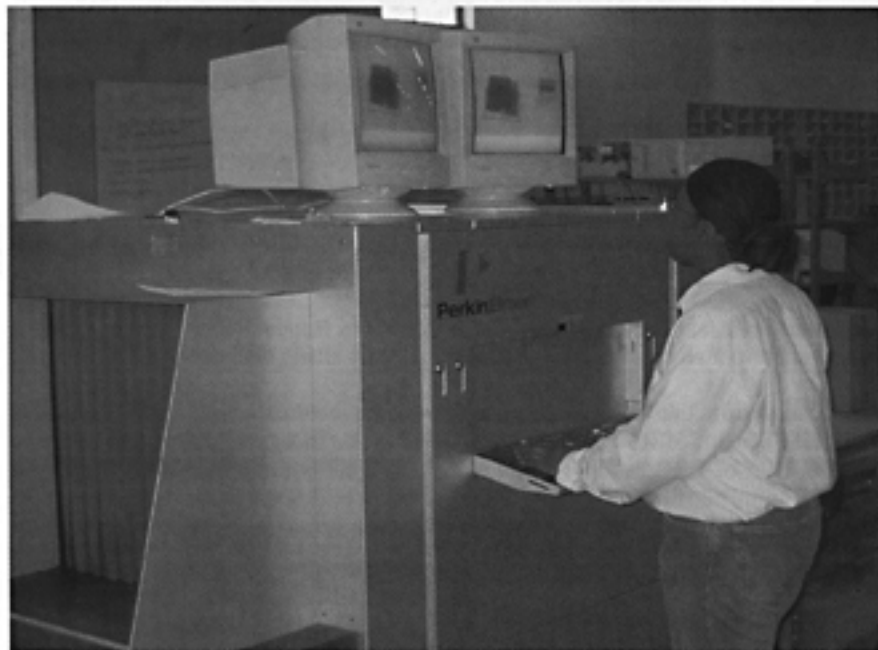
include features such as edge tracing, organic and inorganic stripping, automatic hazard alerts, and image archiving. Individual packages are run through this system, as well as trays of USPS mail. Once the packages are cleared through the system an associate stamps "scanned" on the items as a way to further ease customer fears.

The VTEX VaporTracing system is the process of detecting potentially hazardous materials through ion tracing. According to CRC officials, the VTEX device is a leading-edge technology that can detect and identify potentially explosive vapors and particle samples.

CRC also added Pitney Bowes Arrival Software to the technology mix as a way to give the company an automated system for logging and tracking all deliveries. A receiving associate uses the system to record and store all deliveries, while internal couriers use a PDA to get an electronic signature from the recipi-



All incoming packages are scanned and recorded prior to delivery to employees.



In addition to using the latest technology, the CRC Group brought representatives from the Dallas Bomb Squad and Fire Department to train staff on identifying suspicious materials.

ent, so as to ensure a full-loop delivery management system. Additionally, the packages are marked with a special stamp to communicate with the customer that the package was scanned by the receiving center.

A key step in gaining control of all incoming material was establishing a receiving and delivery schedule. On the receiving side, this schedule gives couriers a time window whereby they make their daily deliveries. CRC representa-

tives receive and deliver USPS mail, overnight envelopes, and special packages during the morning hours. Ground packages and office supplies are received and delivered during the afternoon hours. Mr. Castillo praised this delivery schedule for giving an added level of security and efficiency. The receiving associate now knows exactly what courier is due to arrive and has an educated guess on the number of packages set to arrive.

New technology without a corresponding training program can turn a useful piece of equipment into nothing more than an expensive dust-collector. The CRC management team understands this reality, and as such it set out on an extensive training program for all mail center staff.

"We brought in the Dallas Fire Department, Dallas Police Bomb Squad Consultants, equipment manufacturers, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service to help train our employees on how to identify suspicious material, how to use the technology, and what to do when they detect a suspicious package," said Mr. Castillo. "We also wrote a procedures booklet, attended local Mail Systems Management Association meetings concerning mail security, networked with mailing industry associates, and even toured the shipping hubs of our overnight couriers so we could see how they handle security."

With mail, packages and supplies now coming into a centralized, off-site location rather than directly into each building, the CRC team also needed to add internal courier operations to its portfolio of services. With CRC representatives assuming the responsibility of the movement of interoffice mail between downtown offices and the offsite center, the company needed to purchase a Ford F350 Bob-tail truck for mail and packages and a Ford Ranger Truck for hot-shot deliveries.

"We now sort and deliver all incoming packages. This is a new service and it is working so well that our customer is now looking at our proposal to handle all outgoing material," explained Ms. Rodriguez.

Ms. Rodriguez said the move to an offsite receiving center required the customer to incur the additional costs of screening technology, delivery vehicles, mail equipment, and staffing. This added cost was offset by an increase in services and security.

"Although the move to a centralized offsite location means slightly higher costs for our customer, if they decide to use this operation to move and prepare outgoing mail and packages they may actually be able to save money in the long term, while still getting the added benefits of better service and tighter security."