

Keeping Healthcare Diagnostics secure worldwide

Having recently expanded its global operations by making a series of major acquisitions, Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics found that diverse electronic security systems were being used at the various sites making up its organization. Since this made central management of the systems difficult and time consuming, it decided to standardize worldwide on a single system – SiPass integrated from Security Products, a business segment of the Siemens Building Technologies Division.

The system has been introduced on a rolling basis, and currently covers twelve locations in the USA, where it has more than 14,000 registered cardholders, plus two further sites in the UK, where there are another 1,000 cardholders. Further expansion, to cover sites in Ireland, South Africa and other locations around the world will take place in the near future.

“It would be easy to assume that we chose SiPass integrated because, like Security Products from Siemens, we are a Siemens organization,” said Valerie Davies, Senior Manager of Disaster Recovery & Business Continuity and Corporate Facilities at Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics, “but that’s actually not the case. We were given an entirely free hand to choose the system that was the best match for our requirements, irrespective of the supplier. And we did, in fact, carry out extensive evaluation of several systems before concluding that SiPass was right for us.”

Several important factors influenced this decision. The first was the proven expandability of the SiPass integrated platform, which can cope with a virtually unlimited number of cardholders, something that is particularly important in the light of Siemens ambitious plans for future growth. In addition, SiPass integrated has

been designed from the ground up for multi-site operation, and to deal with the challenges of providing effective security for sites in multiple countries and time zones.

Healthcare Diagnostics was also particularly impressed with the central reporting and management options offered by the system, which allow it to be easily administered from a single location. The high-security encrypted GID encoding on Siemens PKI smartcards was a further attraction, as it makes it much more difficult for access cards to be copied, cloned or faked and meets Siemens Corporate IT standards.

Finally, while SiPass integrated is primarily an access control system, it has provision for easy integration with other electronic security systems, including CCTV, and plans are in place to make use of this option in the near future at several sites.

Dedicated server and hot-standby

The new access control system at Healthcare Diagnostics is centered on a dedicated server at the organization's facility in Deerfield, Illinois, which is also home to the worldwide administrative center for the system. To ensure continuity of operation under all conditions, the server is shadowed by a hot-standby unit to which a bumpless transfer can be made in the event of a critical hardware failure.

SiPass integrated is being installed at Healthcare Diagnostics sites in the USA and around the world as the existing systems on those sites come due for replacement or major upgrade. Currently, in the USA, the system incorporates two control panels in Deerfield, plus a further 36 panels at eleven other sites, which between them control over 500 doors. In the UK, the system incorporates eight panels controlling more than 100 doors at two locations.

Because of the nature of the work carried out by Healthcare Diagnostics, security requirements are stringent and, at several locations, the new system is required to deliver access control provisions that meet tough DEA and FDA requirements. These include, for example, the ability to produce instantly and on demand detailed audit trails with full information about personnel entering and leaving controlled spaces.

While SiPass integrated can, according to customer requirements, be configured to provide a high degree of autonomy to individual sites, in this application control is retained centrally. All data needed to encode new cards, for example, is sent from Deerfield to the individual sites via secure network connections. The sites have no facilities for cloning or issuing their own cards. This arrangement ensures consistency of operation across the whole organization, and makes it easy to maintain accurate records of the privileges granted to specific individuals.

“SiPass integrated is fully living up to our initial expectations,” said Valerie Davies, “which were, in truth, very high. The system is incredibly versatile. It can be programmed to do almost anything and we have received outstanding support from the Security Products team in configuring it to suit our exact requirements.”

“It also offers excellent reporting – better than any other system I’ve seen – which again is very important to us. Finally, it’s proved to be completely reliable in operation and that, after all, has to be the number one requirement for any type of electronic security system. As you may be able to tell, I’m very committed to SiPass and I believe that the dependable and manageable security it provides is one of the cornerstones of our business.”

Contact for journalists:

Siemens AG, Media Relations

Catharina Bujnoch, phone: +41 41 724-5677

E-mail: catharina.bujnoch@siemens.com

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