

Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC)



Customer

Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

Industry

Government, State and Local

Challenges

- > Current NEC UNIVERGE SV8500 phone system was end of life and did not provide the flexibility to meet their current needs.
- > Inability to immediately connect and gain control of all phones within an individual Department of Corrections facility and breakthrough for emergency communications.

Solution

- > Upgraded UNIVERGE SV8500 communications platforms to NEC's UNIVERGE SV9500
- > Custom software development through NEC's UNIVERGE Integration Platform (UIP) software, a key component of the UNIVERGE BLUE Smart Workspace solution suite, which met customers requirements
- > NEC Meeting Center Firebar Audio Conferencing

Results

- > The customized combination of UNIVERGE SV9500, UNIVERGE Integration Platform and NEC Meeting Center Firebar Audio Conferencing provided the ability to connect all phones immediately for use during emergencies.
- > Increased safety with the new ability for team to stay connected at a moment's notice.
- > Increased productivity and communications throughout their prison system with the upgraded communications platform.

www.cor.pa.gov



Responsible for caring for more than 40,000 inmates across 24 state correctional institutions and 14 community correctional centers, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC) is an extensive network of facilities.

Today the PADOC system, overseen by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, strives to reform the original penitentiary system. They work to reduce the inmate population through rehabilitation programs and recidivism by providing inmates with the skills and education they need to succeed in society after they are released. The system is also dedicated to providing mental health care to inmates, funding community-based services to prevent and reduce crime, as well as establishing preventative community measures to support public safety.

Challenges

In 2019, when the PADOC needed a flexible, scalable, and modern "Prison All Call" system across their prisons, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania began looking for a solution to replace NEC UNIVERGE SV8500 communications platforms that had reached end of life.

"We identified a growing need to connect all of our phones within individual Department of Corrections facilities, but there wasn't an option available with all the features to fit our needs. In many instances, we don't have the time to try and connect each individual phone, we needed a solution that would immediately gain control of all the 70+ phones in a facility and provide a breakthrough option for emergencies. And we needed a solution that is flexible and simple to roll out to our other facilities to meet their specific needs."

For over 25 years, PADOC has been a longtime customer of NEC's Channel Partner, Black Box, and NEC communications platforms. PADOC requested Black Box to create an entirely new, custom solution to solve their specific needs. Time is of the essence in many cases within a correctional facility, neither in-person nor conference meetings, or a traditional dial-up solution would suffice. The PADOC needed a new, reliable system that would connect all lines immediately and effortlessly. Jason Bearden, Telecommunication Services Supervisor for PADOC, spoke about why they chose Black Box, "Every five years we release an RFP for our PBX systems, and for the last 25 years, Black Box has

Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC)

won our business. We knew given the reliability of NEC products and support Black Box has given us over the years, this custom solution for the “Prison All Call” was going to be something that met our needs now and into the future.”

The new internal call system needed to be flexible, responsive, and able to quickly connect over 70 phones. The call system would also need to allow for phones to automatically join calls, connect in a bridge, and allow the heads of individual prison cell blocks to communicate with each other at all times. Most critically, the call system must allow for in-progress calls to be interrupted with emergency alerts or a live message when necessary. The majority of the various institutions have end of life communications platforms and they need to upgrade all eventually to one cohesive platform to strengthen their overall ability to communicate.

Solution

By upgrading to NEC’s UNIVERGE SV9500 on-premises communications platform and combining it with NEC Meeting Center Firebar Audio Conferencing and custom software development through UNIVERGE Integration Platform (UIP), a key component of UNIVERGE BLUE Smart Workspace solution suite, a unique internal call software solution was created to meet the needs of the client. PADOC was clear on what they needed: “When the control center picks up the phone to make an announcement, they have to know that every head of each individual cell block will hear the message and be able to react accordingly.”

Prison control center employees can engage the “Prison All Call” solution by picking up the designated telephone handset on a master phone or any other digital or analog phone on-premises. Once picked up, the handset will automatically connect to all 72 phones across the prison into a broadcast audio conference, interrupting any existing calls on any of the lines by “breaking into” the active call.

The client also has the ability to choose prerecorded messages and can have the message repeated for approximately 10 seconds or any other preconfigured time. After both live and prerecorded messages are completed, the connection for all dialed-in phones is severed, and the lines return to their previous state. During the broadcast, phones can be automatically muted, or two-way conversation can be allowed – all easily configured by the PADOC. The PADOC can customize notifications by location, allowing message flexibility and usage, including daily headcount, lunch calls, lockdown, and emergency announcements.

The solution met PADOC’s needs and exceeded their expectations. “Trust was a major factor here, and Black Box, along with NEC support and solutions, has delivered on that trust”, Bearden stated.

Results

The key with the PADOC UNIVERGE SV9500 solution was to deliver a customizable and reliable system that would tie in all critical lines and enable efficient emergency alert transmission. The solution was implemented across multiple prison locations in 2019, and PADOC has committed to adopting the UNIVERGE SV9500 customized solution at an additional 16 facilities in the future.

“The combination of the UNIVERGE SV9500, UNIVERGE Integration Platform, and NEC Meeting Center Firebar Audio Conferencing has been phenomenal. Our ability to connect all 72 phones immediately has been a huge lift to our productivity, and communications throughout our prison system. Safety is our number one priority and the integrations have ensured our team stays connected at a moment’s notice. We are so pleased with our customized “Prison All Call” solution that we plan to roll it out to our other correction facilities.”

Unlike with other clients, the goal behind implementing a new system, in this case, wasn’t to have a leg up on the competition or to drive an increase in revenue. For the PADOC, a reliable system means the prison control center can instantly communicate with every critical point of contact in case of an emergency. Instantaneous communication across the prison is important for the safety and security of both employees and inmates.

After a 25+ year relationship with Black Box and NEC, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections turned to us to meet their communications needs. In addition, a long-term relationship with the client was maintained by providing a customized software solution that meets those needs. The solution can be scaled and further developed and adapted as the client’s needs evolve.

For further information please contact your local NEC representative or:

EMEA (Europe, Middle East, Africa)
NEC Enterprise Solutions
www.nec-enterprise.com

North America (USA)
NEC Corporation of America
www.necam.com

Corporate Headquarters (Japan)
NEC Corporation
www.nec.com