



AMERICAN RED CROSS

A SECURE TRANSFORMATION TO SAFETY

The American Red Cross Blood Services New York-Penn Region collects blood in 65 counties across Upstate New York and Pennsylvania, processing and distributing more than 720,000 units of blood annually to approximately 107 hospitals. Current medical technologies allow the Red Cross to provide local hospitals, large and small, with a variety of blood products, all while maintaining stringent safety standards.

Recently, the Red Cross completed their "Transformation" program, a \$287 million project that re-engineered their processing, testing and distribution system, established a new management structure, and positioned the Red Cross as a leading organization for blood collection and distribution.

As a result of the Transformation program, the Blood Services Division of the American Red Cross, of which Blood Services is a part, now has a standardized computer system, a network of nine, state-of-the-art National Testing Labs that test about 6 million units of blood collected by the Red Cross's 36 blood regions, a training and educational facility, a highly qualified Quality Assurance/Regulatory Affairs Department, which helps to ensure compliance with FDA regulations, and a centrally managed blood inventory system to ensure the consistent availability of blood and blood components in every Red Cross Blood Services region in the country.

Every drop of blood collected by the Red Cross in Upstate New York and the Wilkes-Barre, Scranton area of Northeastern Pennsylvania is transported to a main facility located in West Henrietta, N.Y., a suburb of Rochester. The facility also serves as the headquarters for the New York-Penn Region. The New York-Penn Region encompasses five districts, four of which have distinct facilities in Buffalo, Syracuse, Binghamton and Albany.

In 2004, the West Henrietta facility management evaluated their existing proprietary security system and found it to be outdated and unfriendly. Upgrades and enhancements were expensive, and improvements and obtaining new products always took longer than scheduled. Frustrating regulatory issues existed when getting the system to communicate with other facilities and to reside properly on a centralized server.

With an additional load of blood units arriving from Northeastern Pennsylvania for processing in the near future, the Red Cross needed a system that could grow and change with them. Affordable and easy upgrades were a must, and working with a company that stands behind their product and provides first-rate customer support was paramount. The Red Cross chose West Fire Systems, Inc.

The installation of an G4S Technology Symmetry Professional Security Management System in the Buffalo, New York building permitted five Red Cross sites throughout New York State to connect via the a centralized server.

"We wanted open, compatible architecture. We're highly regulated as a technical pharmaceutical manufacturing site, and we're regulated by the FDA [Food and Drug Administration], our national headquarters in Washington D.C. and our own in-house quality assurance department," said Red Cross Regional Facilities Manager, Mike Meath. "We wanted the system to control access, give full reporting and be user friendly to staff."

The five Red Cross buildings are secured by the Symmetry Professional Security Management System (SMS): Buffalo has 30 card readers, West Henrietta has 35, Syracuse has 30, Binghamton has 10 and Albany has eight. The security management system (SMS) and databases are controlled at the West Henrietta site.



“It’s important our buildings are secure and can be monitored from one site,” Mike Meath, Facilities Manager

G4S Technology S820 and S830 proximity readers and M2100 intelligent control panels help drive the system. Bosch’s DVar and cameras, Pelco color high resolution, 4-9MM lens integrate with the Symmetry Professional SMS to record activity. Cameras can be pulled up in real time to monitor events. Cameras are set to constantly record throughout the day and record on an event basis after hours. Events include motion, card swipe and alarms.

Security is designed in rings around the perimeter of the building. The main entrance allows the public access to use the lobby, canteen and donor room. A card swipe is required to enter the first level of security, entrance to the general office area and mail room. The public may enter this office area, but must be accompanied by an employee.

However, the general public is not allowed in the large temperature controlled manufacturing area where blood products are delivered, processed and distributed: the second level of security. Supplies such as bags used to collect blood and copper sulfate to test hematocrit or iron levels are housed in the highly secured area where only lab employees have access.

The third level of security is a vaulted area reserved for donors and those records kept according to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). “We store tremendous amount of personal information and health history collected from our donors, so high security is paramount,” said Meath. “When a truck comes in from a blood drive, just inside the door is a secured dumb waiter with a combination lock. The public’s medical records go in there and are transported directly to the second floor into a vaulted area where only authorized employees can unlock and access donor records.”

The highest level of security is inside the lab where production of blood products occur, requiring an intricate process with little to no room for error. Thus, the utmost discretion and strict security is necessary. Authorized employees use a card swipe and keypad with anti-passback to enter this area, in addition to having already passed through three layers of security.

A V-Pass biometric reader is used as a time clock for the evening cleaning crew, requiring them to present their thumb to punch-in for their shift. “Installing a biometric reader in the janitorial closet maintains the integrity of the night cleaning crew,” said West Fire Systems, Inc., Sales Engineer, Chuck Schramm. “Using the biometric reader makes each cleaning person present their thumb when they report to work – that way the Red Cross only pays those reporting for work.”

Each department within the Red Cross is unique and requires a different access level. For example, the Red Cross utilizes a substantial volunteer workforce that entails various access levels. Volunteers who transport blood require a higher access level than an administrative volunteer. Employees are granted a regular employee badge with more access rights. Volunteer and employee badges have distinct designs and access levels to distinguish them.

Security has improved for the New York-Penn Blood Services Region; they have better control over their facilities. Meath’s office workstation controls 400,000 feet of buildings – and all security systems communicate via the Internet.

“It’s important our buildings are secure and can be monitored from one site,” said Meath. “Connecting everything through the Internet was challenging, but the open architecture allowed our systems to talk to one another and saved us money on proprietary fees.”

“To our employees, it is definitely easier to get a badge or have an access level changed, and we can audit the system on a regular basis. We do it faster and more efficiently than before,” said Meath. “For our employees who are running the system, it is easier to change access, monitor and perform reporting functions.”



G4S Technology

www.g4stechnology.com