

ON ALERT

Clark County tracking access to controlled substances

By Andy Hilverda



Clark County has the largest fire department in the state of Nevada. They provide emergency services to an area encompassing 7,910 square miles that includes the Las Vegas Strip, a large portion of the Las Vegas Valley and neighboring resort townships.

The department also maintains one of our nation's urban search and rescue teams. This busy fire department's 29 paid fire stations and 13 volunteer fire stations responded to 122,111 incidents in 2008.

GAINING ACCOUNTABILITY

"We are required to have a system of checks and balances in place that would provide an account of the handling of all controlled substances on medical calls," said Jeff Reagor, Clark County Fire Department EMS supervisor. "It's imperative we provide accountability for the drugs we use. Clark County F.D. needed a system that would allow them to know when their narcotic safes were being accessed and by whom."

After researching available products, they found that CyberLock offered the best solution.

"With CyberLock, we could gain tight key control and the ability to track how many times and when our narcotic safes were being opened," Reagor said. "We saw this as a good way to have accountability with our narcotics handling."

Deputy Chief Russ Cameron, chief of the department's Fire and EMS Training Program, obtained the funding for the CyberLock system, and in May 2008, they began installing CyberLocks on their narcotic safes.

"We worked closely with A&B Security, a Las Vegas access control and security company," Reagor said. "Their people came on site and gave us the support we required to install and manage the CyberLock system."

Each time Clark County F.D. gets a new rescue unit, their mechanics install a narcotic safe on board. The safe is secured in the unit with titanium hardware and fitted with a CyberLock in a matter of minutes. The unit number, a unit identifier and the fire station it is assigned to are entered into the CyberLock system software before delivering the rescue unit to the appropriate fire station. Extra electronic keys are stored in a secured centralized location so a key can be activated whenever the department receives a new rescue unit.

To date, Clark County has installed CyberLocks on safes in the fire stations,

on rescue unit safes and on safes in engine company vehicles. The department's reserve fleet of five rescue vehicles, eight engines and two ladder trucks also is equipped with a narcotic safe that has been fitted with a CyberLock.

"In the event we need to use one of the reserve fleet vehicles, the CyberLock software allows us to quickly program an electronic key on-the-fly to access that particular unit's safe," Reagor said.

When a rescue vehicle is taken out of service, involved in an accident or disabled in some manner, the narcotics are immediately removed from that unit's safe. They are secured in the fire station safe until the department receives a replacement rescue unit.

Imad Bachir, the department's systems specialist, was instrumental in interfacing the CyberLock software with Clark County's computer network. The integration of the two systems went smoothly, and they work together seamlessly. The CyberLock software runs on each fire station's office computer.

AUDITING AND OVERSIGHT


"The electronic locks and keys record openings and unauthorized attempts to enter, so at any time an EMS supervisor can pull up a log of events in the software and see when a narcotics safe has been opened and by whom," Reagor said. "The audit report the CyberLock software provides is of utmost importance to us."

Overseeing all of Clark County's EMS operations, Troy Tuke, EMS coordinator, also is involved in the audit process for the department's controlled substances. Each EMS supervisor is responsible for managing the CyberLock System for his or her assigned platoon.

One key is issued for each rescue unit that has a paramedic onboard, and one individual is assigned responsibility for that key. The EMS supervisor can look at the audit report to see if that responsible person is checking drug expiration dates, taking inventory and ensuring that the drugs have not been tampered with. This is done during morning shift changes every day. If the EMS supervisor sees that a safe has been opened any other time of the day, it must correspond with an emergency call. If there is a discrepancy, the EMS supervisor would immediately report this to the EMS coordinator for further action.

If an electronic key is lost, the EMS supervisor can access the system and deactivate the key. A new key can then be assigned to that rescue unit. If someone tries to open a safe without authorization, the safe's lock will not open and the key will alarm. Also, there will be a record of that person's key being denied entry to that safe.

The software generates a monthly report of narcotics safe and electronic key activity from all department units. If an individual is not compliant, the department takes aggressive steps to make sure they conform.

"Our QA director and medical director have been extremely pleased with the CyberLock system because it has reinforced accountability, and the detailed information it provides is invaluable," Reagor said. "We are always looking for effective solutions that allow us to expand and improve our services to the people who live in or visit our communities. Implementing CyberLock to more efficiently manage the handling of our controlled substances has been a great decision for us. As the Las Vegas area grows and the need for services and protection increases, Clark County Fire Department is poised to meet those needs." 

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