

Delta Police Department locks down evidence chain of custody using Pitney Bowes smart lockers.

Client profile

Delta Police Department

deltapolice.ca

- More than 130 years policing the Vancouver suburb of Delta, British Columbia
- “No Call Too Small” philosophy increases engagement with residents and enhances community safety



Overview

Delta, British Columbia, is a suburban community located south of Vancouver, Canada at the delta of the Fraser River. Responsible for community safety, the Delta Police Department (DPD) improved short-term, temporary evidence storage processes by working with Pitney Bowes to install ParcelPoint™ Smart Lockers. Now, the system automatically notifies the exhibits department when items are ready for long-term storage and alerts supervisors if evidence overstays the smart lockers' time limit. DPD leaders have visibility into evidence storage — and have peace of mind, knowing there is no room for mistakes in the evidence chain of custody.

Business challenge

Delta's parks, islands and wildlife attract residents who want proximity to nature within commuting distance of Vancouver. The Delta Police Department keeps the family-friendly community safe through a “No Call Too Small” philosophy.

A couple of years ago, the DPD saw an opportunity to further enhance community safety by strengthening chain-of-custody tracking for evidence. “Evidence continuity is paramount in any criminal investigation,” explains David Schaefer, the DPD Inspector who is responsible for support services. “We need to know exactly where an exhibit has been.”

The DPD's exhibits department efficiently manages long-term evidence storage. But for short-term storage, officers would place items in a locker and padlock it shut to process later. This new system centralizes exhibit continuity information by providing a dashboard for supervisor review and follow-up. The customized workflow provides the agency confidence that exhibit handling procedures are being met.

“If, at any point in time, the continuity of an item is questioned, we have evidence of when it was put in the lockers and when it was picked up by the exhibits officer. The full electronic tracking logs are available.”

— David Schaefer, Inspector, Delta Police Department

Technology used

- ParcelPoint™ Smart Lockers

“Part of my responsibility is to make sure exhibits are processed in a timely manner. Now I have the data to do that.”

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“Police have a lot of competing priorities,” he points out. “Processes need to be simple to ensure they are always completed correctly.”

Solution

The DPD began evaluating smart locker solutions that could automate evidence-storage processes. Pitney Bowes ParcelPoint™ Smart Lockers made the shortlist because the department had used Pitney Bowes postage meters for years. “Our experience with them has always been fantastic,” Schaefer says. “Pitney Bowes produces solid-quality products that are made in North America. We did our research, and Pitney Bowes won our business.”

Pitney Bowes worked with the DPD to ensure the lockers would meet the department’s security needs and accommodate both workflows Schaefer envisioned. “One workflow involves a member putting an item in a locker and marking it for pickup by the exhibits department,” Schaefer says. “The other is when members ‘deliver’ an item to themselves, so they can retrieve it later and finish processing it.”

Shortly before installing the lockers, Pitney Bowes demonstrated those workflows, and Schaefer saw a chance to streamline the system’s identification of department members. Pitney Bowes worked with DPD to assign each member a QR code. Then, Pitney Bowes rolled out 20 smart lockers in the DPD’s south location. Pitney Bowes’ ability to provide two local installers accelerated the project, which finished ahead of schedule.

Benefits

Now, to deposit evidence, officers scan the QR code on their department-issued phone, scan the appropriate exhibit tag, and select the size of locker and who should retrieve the item. The system automatically emails the exhibits department or other designated retriever with a notification that the item is available for pickup.

Schaefer says the smart lockers were an “easy sell” for DPD’s 198 sworn officers. They eliminate the chance that evidence will stay too long in temporary storage; if an item is not removed within five days, the system contacts the member who deposited it and a supervisor. The system also gives DPD leadership a dashboard showing what evidence is in each locker, who is responsible for it, and how long it has been there.

The smart lockers proved so valuable in the DPD’s south location that Pitney Bowes soon installed another 36 lockers in the department’s north location.

“It is my responsibility to make sure exhibits are processed in a timely manner,” Schaefer says. “Now I have the data to do that. If, at any point in time, the continuity of an item is questioned, we have evidence of when it was put in the lockers and when it was picked up by the exhibits officer. The full electronic tracking logs are available if they’re ever required.”