

Correctional NEWS

design+construction+operations

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High-Tech Help Protects the Perimeter

Cutting-Edge Tools Avoid False Alarms and Prevent Escape

CN recently touched base with Southwest Microwave's Director of Sales & Marketing, Maira Zanrosso, to gain some insights on the current perimeter security landscape.

CN: What is the greatest challenge or concern right now with correctional institutions in terms of securing their perimeters, and how is your company helping address it?

MZ: Correctional facilities have unique perimeter security needs, from preventing inmate escape to deterring outsiders with contraband from gaining access. Protecting the fenceline is critical, particularly when a facility is located near public or residential areas. Developing a perimeter intrusion detection system should include early warning strategies to give personnel enough time to react and execute appropriate protocols. We work with engineering firms, integrators and end users worldwide on customized designs for correctional facilities to address site-specific needs ranging from perimeter fence protection with fence mounted detection systems, to fortifying the sterile zone between fences with stacked microwave sensors or buried cable detection systems, and securing critical inner areas, gates and sally ports with microwave or infrared technologies.

As in other sectors, correctional institutions struggle with high nuisance alarm rates, which can result in Operator desensitization and increase risk. Regardless of claims to the contrary, many perimeter intrusion detection systems trigger false alarms due to environmental disturbances.

To address this challenge, Southwest Microwave developed MicroNet™ II fence detection system. MicroNet II can be installed on various fence fabrics and toppers to reliably detect cut or climb attempts, and employs a Sensitivity Leveling™ feature that compensates for variations in fence tension or fabric in 1 meter increments or "cells." This unique calibration process sets an alarm threshold for each cell along the cable to achieve precise detection performance (within 10 feet). To filter out environmental disturbances, the system has the unique ability to differentiate between "point impacts" - legitimate egress attempts that affect a small number of cells — and distributed disturbances — such as severe weather or vehicle traffic - that affect a longer linear distance. MicroNet II also enables the user to set precise system parameters, such as the number

of events that pass threshold within a specific timeframe or range of cells. We have been serving the correctional sector for more than 40 years, and our customers report that these features consistently ensure high probability of detection and low nuisance alarm rates even after decades of operation.

CN: What do you think is the biggest trend right now with perimeter security, particularly in the field of correctional institutions? And what is your company doing right now in that area?

MZ: Network-based and Power over Ethernet (POE) systems are becoming commonplace for the perimeter security market. These systems reduce infrastructure wiring requirements, decrease install time, minimize connectivity errors, and therefore, lower overall costs to operate. Southwest Microwave offers the Model 336-POE IP-based digital microwave link to support integrators and end users in protecting their sites cost-effectively while also enabling sites to leverage mobile devices to enhance local or remote real-time site monitoring and management and to increase the potential for integration with third-party IP/POE devices.

CN: What do you think has been the biggest change or advancement with perimeter security over the past 5-10 years?

MZ: Artificial intelligence, facial recognition, thermal imaging and video analytics technologies continue to expand in the security industry. These technologies have advanced quickly over the past decade, but are still fairly new and have undergone many iterations. While accuracy and reliability continue to be refined, leveraging multiple technologies, including physical perimeter protection, is necessary to ensure appropriate protection is in place given the critical risks facing correctional facilities.

CN: Does your organization have a particular focus or philosophy when it comes to perimeter security?

MZ: The layering of perimeter intrusion detection technologies offer correctional institutions with the most robust site security program. We always suggest that sites utilize

multiple security solutions and to ensure technologies can integrate seamlessly with one another before investing in them. For instance, video analytics and radar devices can track an escapee or intruder once they are detected by a perimeter detection sensor. These systems can be integrated with CCTV and through a software interface or Video Management System for management and monitoring. Southwest Microwave

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Modern fence detection technology adds another layer of security.

Pennsylvania DOC Facilities Ban Tobacco

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Secretary John Wetzel recently announced that the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) will make all state prisons tobacco-free beginning July 1.

“Last year we made SCI Graterford tobacco-free prior to relocating that facility to the new SCI Phoenix,” said Wetzel. “Based on that successful transition and on the fact that several other prisons already are tobacco-free, we have decided to make all state prisons tobacco-free. Doing so promotes a healthier environment, which benefits both employees and inmates and increases facility safety through the elimination of black-market tobacco sales inside the prisons.”

Beginning July 1, tobacco products will no longer be permitted inside the secure perimeter of any Pennsylvania state prison. Tobacco products discovered or used inside the prison after July 1 by inmates or staff will be considered contraband. The DOC identifies tobacco products as cigarettes, cigars, tobacco (smoking and smokeless), tobacco substitutes, lighters, pipes, pipe cleaners, filters, rolling papers, roller aprons and rollers.

Both inmates and employees will be permitted to use DOC-approved disposable/non-refillable e-cigarettes in

designated areas.

Inmates will be provided with smoking cessation programs, educational materials and support services to assist them with this transition. Inmates, working with the prison’s medical department, may purchase nicotine

replacement therapy patches through an approved outside vendor.

Educational materials and resources for smoking cessation are available to employees through the State Employee Assistance Program and the Pennsylvania Employee Benefit Trust Fund.

SCIs Chester, Phoenix, Pine Grove and the Quehanna Boot Camp already are tobacco-free facilities.

The DOC is responsible for the overseeing and operations of 24 state correctional institutions, one motivational boot camp, 14 community corrections center and oversees contracts with nearly 50 contract facilities, and one training academy.

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partners with a range of technology partners offering complementary technologies to provide our clients with comprehensive perimeter security solutions for optimal risk mitigation and long-term benefit.

Southwest Microwave, Inc. produces and supports the world’s broadest range of integrated outdoor perimeter security systems for the protection of critical infrastructure, high value assets and personnel. With over 45 years of experience and more than 70,000 systems in 100+ countries, Southwest Microwave detection technologies perform reliably in harsh external environments and fortify many of the world’s highest security sites in the government, military, utilities, industrial, transportation, correctional and VIP residential sectors.

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