



Storage

FOR JUSTICE

ADVANCED EVIDENCE STORAGE SOLUTION SOLVES SPACE PROBLEM FOR MAJOR SHERIFF'S FACILITY

When the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Department, West Palm Beach, Florida, recently underwent remodeling of its evidence storage areas, it incorporated mobile storage solutions to significantly extend its storage capacity. The Palm Beach County justice system tries 8,000 to 10,000 criminals a year and includes a massive county jail facility, the 13th largest in the country, as well as an extensive Technical Services Bureau, which oversees all evidence administration, among other things.

Ongoing advances in forensics science and DNA technologies have placed new demands on crime-scene investigations and evidence storage requirements. DNA evidence can be effective indefinitely in solving crimes and powerful federal databanks can trace DNA matches anywhere in the country. These new technological advances have extended requirements for evidence storage. Internal affairs cases now require evidence be stored for 55 years, sexual assault cases require 75 years of storage and homicide evidence for 99 years.

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Deputy Director, Technical Services Bureau

Dan McBride, Deputy Director, Technical Services Bureau of the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, responsible for the crime lab, crime scene investigation, finger print identification and evidence storage, explained that storage regulations have significantly changed in recent years. "New storage requirements have placed a significant burden on our evidence storage," he said. "We now take in more than 1,700 submissions a month and most of those will stay in storage for five generations."

Outside storage was not an option for increasing evidence storage. Ensuring proper offsite security would have been difficult and costly, requiring a retro-fitted facility for security and a separate full-time security staff.



Mobile systems solved storage crises in evidence storage for homicide and other property items.

Solved



"We really had no other option but to solve our storage problem onsite," explained McBride. "The mobile systems have extended our storage capacity in our existing facility by five-to-six years and allowed us time to explore a more extensive long-term solution."

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The local Spacesaver salesperson, **Chip Didden** of **United Business Systems** worked with the agency to solve their storage problem. Five mechanical assist mobile systems are used to store nearly 200,000 evidence items ranging from very small items to large, bulky items. Two systems are dedicated for the storage of crime scene items pertaining to homicides. Another large system stores criminal evidence and found or seized property. Two smaller systems, which are located in locked vaults, store seized weapons: long-arms and handguns.

"We quadrupled our weapons storage and doubled our evidence storage," McBride said.

Maintaining tight security and accounting for every item is also critical. Each item is bar coded, entered into a tracking system, and assigned a storage location. The entire inventory is reconciled annually through a rolling physical inventory.

"We don't know what the future holds for forensic science and DNA technologies," McBride explained. "Our job is to help bring criminals to justice and it is important to carefully maintain and document evidence for future trials. The Spacesaver systems have helped us to attain that goal."



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