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STORAGE SOLVED

Police Storage Suspect

Illinois Police Headquarters Gains Efficiency by Installing Spacesaver® Storage Solutions



The Skokie Police Department's goal is to proactively and professionally deliver law enforcement services to residents of Skokie, IL. And it's a promise fulfilled with the help of a new \$20-million police station that relies on public safety storage systems precisely designed to match every function within the department – as well as the distinct organizational and personal needs of virtually every person who works there.

Whether stored materials involve property and evidence, uniforms and gear, or even parts for patrol vehicles, the bottom line for Skokie Police Chief Barry Silverberg is efficiency. If a police department is working efficiently, says Silverberg, good things happen.

"Employees truly appreciate it when you do what you can to make their jobs easier, and our storage systems definitely play a role in helping us do that," Silverberg says. "What it often boils down to in law enforcement is time savings and productivity. Both ultimately lead to higher morale and a higher level of service to the community."



Major facility makeover

Although the Skokie PD has always earned high marks for service, doing so became increasingly difficult when operating out of the former police station built in 1957. A building analysis showed the department had outgrown the 27,000-square-foot-facility. It also revealed inadequate storage areas and systems to support a modern police force. Given the situation, the Village of Skokie moved ahead in 2008 and converted an abandoned bottling plant into a 79,300-square-foot, state-of-the-art police headquarters facility. The construction project was completed in 2010.

Designed by SRBL Architects of Deerfield, IL, the new police station supports the department's goals for efficiency as well as promotes environmental responsibility. The new station is home to 111 sworn officers and a full range of all law enforcement areas, including patrol, investigations, victim/witness assistance, evidence management, tactical intervention, traffic, and administration.

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“The lockers represent the only private space for most of the people who work here,” he says. “We didn’t design the locker rooms as a country club, but the lockers certainly needed to be big enough and functional.”

When planning the new building, decision-makers went to great lengths to make space within the facility work for the people who use it. The attention to detail brought together police department leaders, user committees, SRBL Architects, and Bradford Systems, the local Spacesaver® representative and a member of the nationwide Spacesaver Group of independent contractors. Together, the team analyzed the overarching facility and budgetary goals, key functions within each law enforcement discipline, and the role storage systems play in helping users succeed in day in and day out. The up front work identified a number of key areas that needed significant improvement.

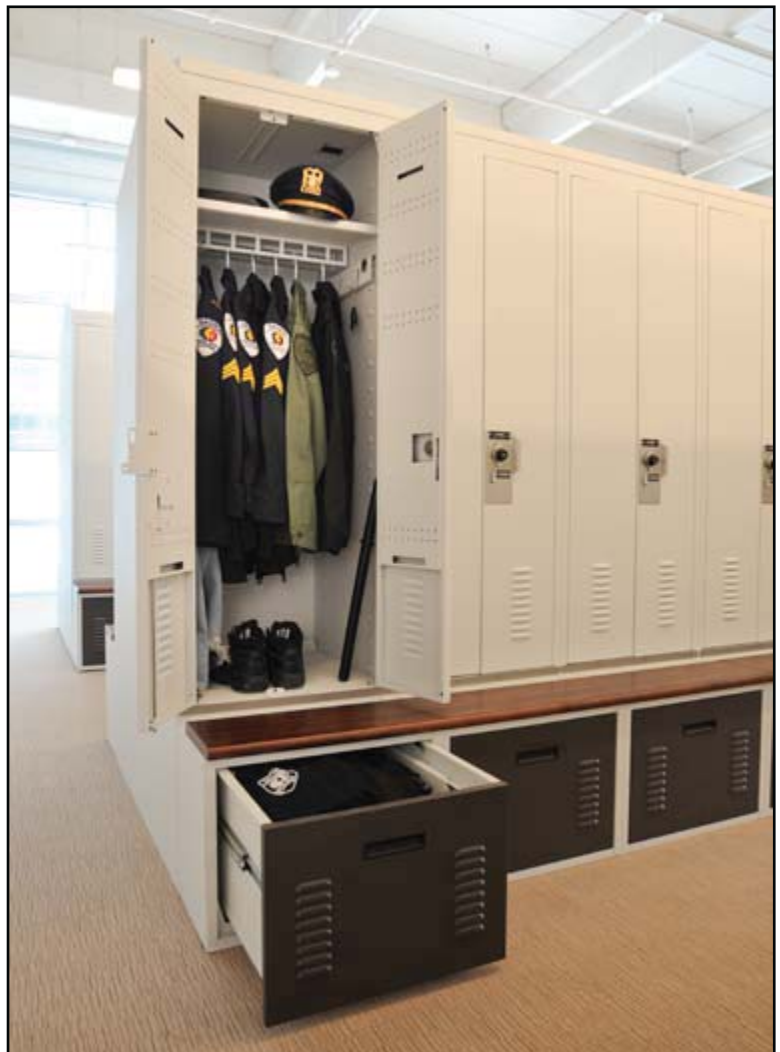
More than meets the eye

A top priority from the start was the department’s most valuable asset: its people. That drove the desire to pay particular attention to personal storage lockers, which every person at the PD describes as “home base.” At the old facility, there weren’t enough lockers for all. Additionally, the basic school lockers were designed for students – not law enforcement personnel.

Based on criteria developed by the department’s locker committee, Bradford Systems designed a solution for the facility’s locker rooms in the form of 142 Spacesaver’s FreeStyle™ personal storage lockers. The lockers are specifically engineered with a host of options and interchangeable features that allow users to easily customize them to their needs. At Skokie PD, each two-foot-wide locker includes:



ADA Lockers by Spacesaver®



FreeStyle™ Lockers by Spacesaver®, a cherry-stained, heavy-duty bench made out of hardwood that doubles as a drawer. The 36-inch-deep, sliding drawer offers ample room for storage. It also gives officers a place to sit, something officers dearly missed at the old facility.

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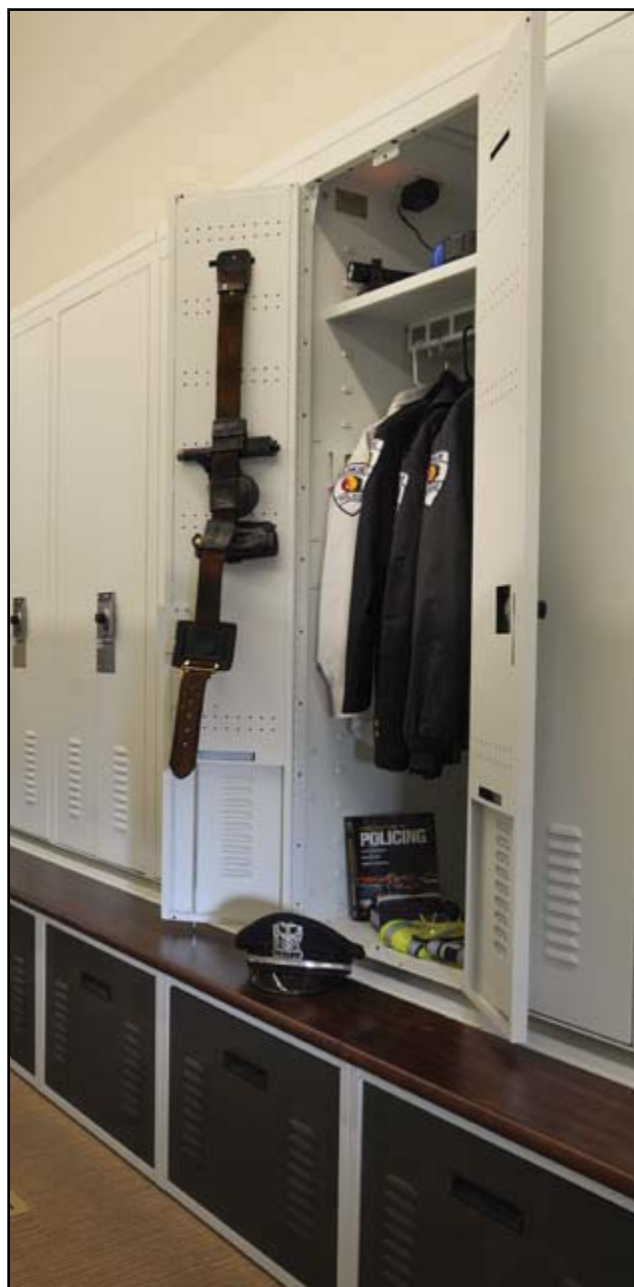
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“Bradford Systems met all of our requests and built the lockers just for us. We’re extremely pleased with how they turned out. The lockers have a huge impact on morale and the attention to detail has paid off,” replied Silverberg.

- A cherry-stained, heavy-duty bench made out of hardwood that doubles as a drawer. The 36-inch-deep, sliding drawer offers ample room for storage. It also gives officers a place to sit, something officers dearly missed at the old facility.
- Double doors that open from the middle, along with adjustable, full-width shelves with an integral garment hanger so that officers can hang up their civilian clothes, uniforms, winter coats, rain coats and anything else they want to hang up.
- Modular electrical components with duplex outlets for powering and charging electronic devices, such as flashlights, chargers, shavers, and laptops.
- A notch on the inside of each locker door where officers can easily hang duty belts, each of which can weigh up to 20 lbs.
- A three-hook bracket assembly on each side of the locker interior for even more areas to hang garments, or accessories. The bracket can be repositioned in the locker as needed without tools.

The bottoms of the seven-foot-tall lockers are painted with a dark finish to better hide scuffmarks. The units are equipped with combination locks and a bench drawer that automatically locks and unlocks with the door. Each locker features a welded cabinet with reinforced corners, along with a double-wall, welded box door design that provides structural integrity and strength.

The ability to match the FreeStyle™ lockers to the needs of the user scored high marks, according to Silverberg. He says a properly designed locker goes a long way toward the creation of a positive working environment.



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Rapid response: the primary objective

Other examples of attention to detail are storage systems for the Tactical Intervention Unit (TIU), as well as patrol and community service officers.

The TIU's mission is to rapidly respond with specially trained and equipped personnel to special circumstances, such as hostage situations and barricaded subjects. Given the need to maintain a state of readiness, TIU team members must move quickly – dictating the need for organized and easily accessible gear.

Rather than personal storage lockers, Bradford Systems fashioned 23 large lockers out of heavy-duty four-post metal shelving – essentially creating large cubbies without doors for each team member. The storage systems feature a variety of shelves at varied heights and provide immediate access to TIU gear – just some of which includes tactical vests, boots, coats, gas masks, helmets, weapons, radios, batteries, shields, tactical entry tools, and other specialized equipment. Also included in the lockers are electrical outlets and heavy-duty garment hangers. The hangers allow officers to hang fully loaded tactical vests, each of which weighs 130 pounds.

Readiness is also critical for patrol and community service officers. Toward that end, planners decided to put the corridor to good use that connects the roll-call room with the parking garage. They did so by lining the corridor with 47 lockers designed specifically to store gear bags. Officers bring the bags with them when their out in the community and store them inside the PD after each shift. A gear bag contains everything from ticket books to extra ammunition and can weigh up to 30 pounds. The heavy-duty lockers, each of which is two feet wide by two feet tall, are stacked two and three high along the corridor.



Tactical Intervention Unit (TIU): Also included in the lockers are electrical outlets and heavy-duty garment hangers. The hangers allow officers to hang fully loaded tactical vests, each of which weighs 130 lbs.



Forty-seven lockers with combination locks designed specifically to store gear bags were installed for the officers use after each shift.



“The idea for gear bag storage came out of the end-users meetings,” Silverberg says, adding that there really was no place for gear bags at the old facility. “Now, they’re right outside the parking garage and having them there adds to productivity and morale.”

Readiness also applies to evidence gathering. Toward that end, Bradford Systems installed three-tiered lockers inside the parking garage. The lockers hold specialized tools and equipment used in evidence collection, eliminating the need to walk into the building and back to get it.



“Maintaining the chain of custody is paramount in the prosecution of criminal cases,” Silverberg says. “We wanted to go as high tech as we reasonably could go at the new facility for evidence storage.”

Securing the chain of custody

Property and evidence storage was another major priority when designing the new facility. Skokie PD employs a total of 23 evidence technicians who are trained in the latest evidence management techniques. Evidence is processed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

At the old police station, inefficiencies were a reality since the Property & Evidence Office and storage areas where property and evidence was kept were in separate locations. The evidence and property room itself was a converted janitor’s closet. Space was so tight that technicians sometimes had to use the floor to package large pieces of evidence. Property and evidence was stored on fixed shelving and standard lockers, making space even tighter. Refrigerated evidence was kept in a refrigerator secured with a padlock. Despite the antiquated storage situation, Skokie PD made the old property and evidence storage work. However, the old way of doing things was no longer acceptable given the longer periods required for holding some evidence and the need to protect the integrity of evidence throughout the entire chain of custody.

At the heart of the evidence processing area at the new police station are Spacesaver’s DSM™ pass-through evidence lockers, which are designed to secure the chain of custody during the critical short-term evidence storage period. The lockers are built into the wall that separates the evidence drop-off



area from the property and evidence room. The locker system at Skokie PD was designed around the department’s exact needs. It features a bank of 34 lockers of various sizes, including 14 by 7 inches for smaller items, 33 by 36 inches for bulky items and 14 by 74 inches for taller items. Smaller compartments are located the top of the system to meet the department’s request to ensure heavier items are stowed in lower compartments. The system also includes four double-walled refrigerated compartments with the plug-in securely inside the property room.

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To deposit packaged and labeled evidence, an officer chooses an open locker and places the evidence inside it. He then pushes a button to lock the door. At that point, no one can open it from that side – custody of the item passes definitively to evidence technicians on the opposite side of the wall.

A single panel opens to expose all compartments in the storage system. A mechanism releases the locker buttons on the drop-off side of the system when the single panel is opened. After the evidence technician removes evidence, it is bar-coded and placed into long-term storage where it stays until it is sent for further analysis at the state crime lab, retrieved for a court proceeding, or eventually destroyed.

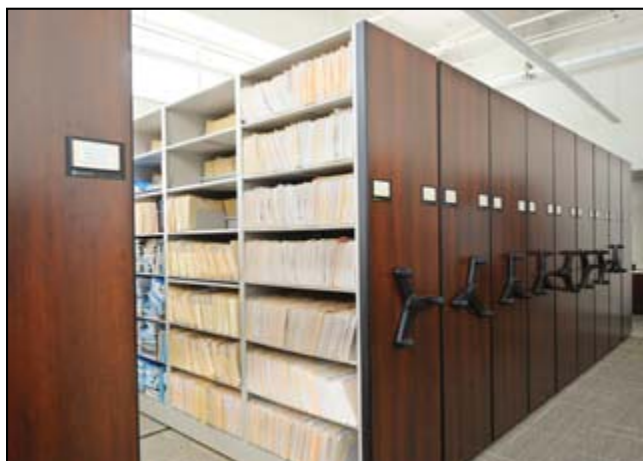
In the past, long-term storage was a significant concern for Skokie PD since the department was out of space – despite the need to hold some evidence for as long as 18 months, if not longer. Additionally, the Village of Skokie is a busy shopping area near Chicago and the department processes and stores large volumes of stolen merchandise.

To help overcome the challenge, Bradford Systems designed and installed a High-Density Mobile Storage system in the new property and evidence room. The 10-foot-high mobile system features 10, 18-foot-long carriages that move side to side on rail systems. Only one aisle on the system opens at a time to provide full access to needed materials. Remaining aisles stay closed, eliminating wasted aisle space. The system opens with minimal effort, thanks to an ergonomically designed handle and a mechanical-assist drive unit on each carriage. Moving aisles are also book-ended by stationary shelving for additional storage capacity.



The carriages on the mobile system are outfitted with a diverse range of shelving heights and widths. Several carriages are designed with drawers, including a lockable unit specially designed for pistols and guns. The lockable system eliminated the need for a separate room to securely store weapons, resulting in significant cost savings.

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Major efficiencies, major cost savings

Another area of the Skokie PD where a large volume of materials creates organizational and productivity challenges is records storage. The number of hard documents involved, says Silverberg, continues to increase despite ongoing efforts to digitize documents.

"There's always the need to keep hard copies of documents," he says. "Just one arrest file, for example, can lead to multiple reports and forms whether they're police reports, arrest reports, strip search consent forms and many others – plus you have to have multiple copies of everything. And as much as we try to get away from paper there's always something new with mandates and information we need to log."

Bradford Systems designed and installed another mechanical-assist mobile system in the records storage area to make the best use of available space and help improve organization. It features eight, 10-foot-tall moveable carriages. Each carriage is 12 feet wide and provides seven levels of shelving. Stationary carriages

bookend the movable carriages and one of them is lockable to protect sensitive files.

Silverberg says the mobile system is key to the efficiency of the Records Unit.

In addition to helping the Skokie PD achieve optimal efficiency, the mobile systems at the new police station contributed to the architect's goal of designing an environmentally friendly facility with a small footprint. SRBL Architects estimates the systems saved 900 square feet in the property and evidence room and 480 square feet in the records area. At the cost of \$268 per square foot, the mobile systems saved the Village of Skokie \$369,840 in new construction costs to accommodate the space requirement for conventional fixed shelving systems.

The building efficiencies, along with a host of sustainability measures, has the station on track to receive LEED Gold Certification – exceeding the Village's original goal.

Like night and day

Looking back, Silverberg wonders how the department managed in the tight confines of the old facility and processes that relied on antiquated storage systems. He says the difference between storage systems used at the old facility and the new way of doing things at the headquarters building is like night and day.