

Tracking Inmate Phone Records A Lock With File Magic 5 Series

Even incarcerated criminals have the right to “reach out and touch someone” via the telephone. Of course, if that right leads to an escape plot or other potentially illegal activity, authorities need a way to track the telephone activity of that inmate. Enter Sprint Communications, who now provides a telephone tracking service for 18,000 inmates confined within the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC).

SCDC rules allow each inmate to file a form containing up to 20 phone numbers. Inmates can only call out to those numbers on their respective lists, and can change their approved list each month. When an inmate changes a phone number, they send a form to Sprint, who records the change and returns a copy to the inmate.

“If an incident were to occur involving an inmate, the first place law enforcement officials would look for evidence is from the phone records. So, at any point in time, Sprint would be required to go into the system and retrieve actual phone-out information, as well as supporting documentation,” said Sprint Program Manager Bill Seigler.

Seigler said that issues arose in dealing with the volume of paper and in tracking changes. “We are dealing with thousands of inmate records monthly, plus a state requirement for us to keep these forms in a permanent record for instant retrieval.” It wasn’t too long before Sprint employees realized that the process created a blizzard of paperwork, making it impossible to manually retrieve any one document from among the 20,000 new forms generated each month. Seigler came across Westbrook Technologies’ Partner Hal Hamilton of Triangle Solutions Inc., Raleigh, N.C., who recommended File Magic 5 Series document management software.

Sprint had been using filing cabinets and arranging files alphabetically. They soon realized that was a mistake, as there were so many last name duplicates that retrieval became a headache. Also, a surprising number of inmates would change their legal names, which also was a source of confusion. So when it came time to design SCDC’s File Magic system, they determined that the best way to index phone records would be by inmate number, which never changes.

Seigler said, “I can’t tell you how difficult it was locating records that were manually stored. If the Department of Corrections needed a paper file, it was a difficult and time-consuming process. We can now readily identify a piece of paper right from the desktop by keying in the inmate number. File Magic is a lifesaver for us.”