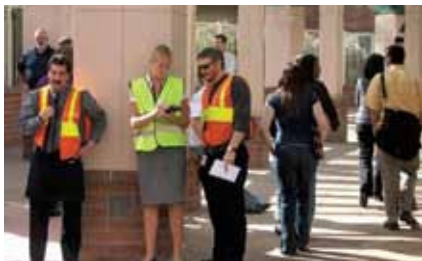


PASSING MUSTER: What You Need to Know About Mobile Mustering

Hand-held computers keep personnel records in reach during an emergency

Keeping track of all evacuees is a prime concern during the mustering process.



Imagine an emergency scenario — fire, bomb threat, gas leak — in which you need to evacuate your building or campus. The proper alerts have been sounded, people have migrated to the mustering location and first responders are on the scene. How do you know if everyone made it out? And where are the ones who remain inside?

In the past, security personnel may have grabbed a printed emergency evacuation list on the way out in order to facilitate the manual counting and sorting of employees. Progressing to laptop computers helped automate the process, but laptops often take precious minutes to start up and are

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data-dependent on the physical access control system (PACS), which may not be online during an emergency.

Mobile mustering, which uses mobile handheld computers that work online or offline, is the newest mustering tool available. The



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hand-held units are equipped with card readers to quickly scan IDs and assess mustering progress and statistics.

Local or PACS Mustering

There are two types of mobile mustering — local and PACS. The former works as an autonomous system that uses hand-held computers to log in and out people at a job site or facility. Local mustering is often helpful for temporary locations like construction sites, where it is important to track entry and exit from a location, but installing hardwired card readers is not feasible or is cost-prohibitive. Time-stamped reports can also be uploaded from the hand-held unit to track hours and billing.

PACS mustering, on the other hand, works in conjunction with hard-wired readers and access control systems. During an emergency, a security agent can use the hand-held computer while evacuating and have the latest available data from the PACS. The unit can then be used at the muster point to scan cards and to assess who remains in a facility.

An advantage of PACS mustering — particularly on larger campuses with multiple buildings or floors — is that the system automatically logs the location where the cardholder last swiped his or her ID to gain access to a building or floor. This is helpful for narrowing down the location of a missing employee.

"Mobile mustering creates an added layer of security and safety capability with flexibility to deal with many situations, both planned and unplanned," says Dave Sylvester, vice president of business development for DAP's parent company, Roper Industries. "Linked to an access control system or identity management system, the mobile application enables routine security controls and, in the event of an emergency, provides site managers with a tool to efficiently account for personnel."

Mobile Mustering Online or Offline

In PACS applications, mobile mustering can be used online — while wirelessly connected to the access control system — or offline, which is especially important during emergencies like fires or explosions that could compromise the integrity of the system.

When used offline, the hand-held units retain the last available data from the PACS, enabling the security officers to continue scanning IDs and updating the information. When the system is back online, the hand-held units automatically sync with the PACS, instantly updating the system data.

The hand-held computers also retain cardholder data including photos and contact information. If employees forget their cards while they are evacuating the building, their identity can still be verified even when the system is offline.

Ready, Reliable and Rugged

With mounting pressure from OSHA to account for workers during an emergency and budget reductions shrinking security forces, mustering must not only be part of an organization's emergency plan, it also must be accomplished with fewer resources. Choosing a system that is ready to perform, reliable and rugged will help you get the most from your investment.

The basic requirements for mobile mustering include a rugged, lightweight hand-held computer that can function as a mobile reader. It should be capable of reading formats including smart cards, PIV, PIV-I, HID Prox, iClass, Mifare and bar codes.

The ability to read PIV and PIV-I cards is particularly important for government agencies, which are required by the White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) 11-11 to have a PIV-compliant access control system and have a disaster recovery plan in place. A mobile reader that is PIV/PIV-I-compliant is essential for these customers to comply with their disaster recovery plans.

A mobile application of an existing PACS can provide the greatest flexibility and functionality. Hawkeye Technologies, for example, packages mobile mustering as a component of its mobile client applications for AMAG Technology, an access control, IP video and intrusion detection company. In addition to mobile mustering, users of the mobile application can control locks, doors, video surveillance, alarms and more from a hand-held computer from DAP Technologies.

Because emergency situations evolve quickly, data integrity is the top priority in mobile mustering. When integrated into a PACS, the ability for the system to capture and continually update data online or offline from multiple mobile handhelds safeguards data and ensures reliable information.

The computer for mobile mustering should be able to withstand the elements and rough treatment since they are likely to be used outside. Rugged handheld computers should be sealed against dust and liquids to at least IP65, operate in temperatures ranging from (-4°F to 122°F (-20°C to 50°C) and survive a 1-meter drop to concrete. They also should offer a sunlight viewable display.

Mobile mustering offers many advantages for both local and PACS applications. At the end of the day, however, it comes down to this: Quickly tracking employees and first responders during crisis situations can save lives.

Bill Patterson is the National Account Manager, Security & ID Management, for DAP Technologies (www.daptech.com). He can be reached at b.patterson@daptech.com.