

South Bend (Indiana) Police Department



State and local law enforcement agencies rely more and more on technologies, such as NEC's Integra-ID AFIS solution, to aid in identifying suspects and solving crimes. In some cases, older unsolved crimes may contain evidence, such as partial prints, that can now be rendered useful thanks to advances in NEC's AFIS technology.

The South Bend Police Department (SBPD) has approximately 260 sworn civilian employees. With the city of South Bend just five miles from Michigan, the SBPD serves more than 107,000 city residents and an additional 316,000 residents in the greater metropolitan area.

Challenges

SBPD's crime-scene detectives found quality prints in nearly 20 percent of the department's unsolved cases. Because the prints were full or partial palm prints, the police had no way of identifying them and making a match.

"Too many crimes were left unsolved because we lacked the tools to properly identify the perpetrators," said Charlie Eakins, AFIS manager/latent supervisor, South Bend Police Department. "In my opinion, even one crime left unsolved – leaving the perpetrator free to inflict further damage to the community – was one too many."

At the time, SBPD used an earlier generation of NEC's automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS), which provided the department with local access to state and federal print databases. While the department enjoyed the value of searching, processing and storing prints in its own database, the solution only provided fingerprint capabilities.

SBPD sought an upgraded AFIS solution. "We needed to take our law enforcement arsenal to the next level by adding palmprint identification and slap-matching capabilities," says Eakins. To support the upgrade, SBPD also need to increase their capacity and throughput.

Customer

South Bend (Indiana) Police Department

Industry

Government

Challenges

- No palmprint search or storage capability
- Nearly 20% of unsolved crimes had good latent palmprints
- Limited database capacity and throughput

Solution

- Automated Fingerprint Identification System: NEC Integra-D

Results

- Palmprint and slap-matching capabilities
- Integration with state & federal databases
- Comprehensive search capabilities
- Improved speed and accuracy
- Enhanced productivity

Solution

SBPD chose NEC's Integra-ID, a total integrated biometric identification solution that incorporated palmpoint recognition and slap-matching to improve matching capabilities. The department chose the solution because of its positive experience with its previous AFIS solution by NEC. "Given its superior fingerprint technology, its understanding of law enforcement, and top-notch service, NEC was the natural fit for South Bend," says Eakins.

NEC's Integra-ID solution has a new algorithm for better matching capabilities. With the addition of slap matching, officers can scan all fingers on one hand all at once. The system automatically saves each finger image into a separate file. In the time it once took to capture a single finger print, officers can now capture four while at the same time, increasing the amount of searchable data available in the database.

These new features help SBPD match prints and make identifications that had never been possible before. During training, Eakins ran prints from cold cases for demonstration purposes.

"I even tested the trainer by giving him a difficult print to run," says Eakins. "He was able to identify the correct person within a few seconds by plotting out only 11 minutia points and running it through the system—I was amazed." As a result, Eakins made 10 new identifications from previously cold cases.

The department is also benefitting from faster searches. When police run prints, Integra-ID searches the local AFIS database, then automatically searches both the Indiana and FBI databases. "With our previous AFIS, searches took a few minutes, but now the speed is incredible. A typical print search takes a maximum of 15 seconds."

SBPD's new search capabilities provide the department with access to a perpetrator's full criminal history. Even if the police match a print to only one arrest record, the system will generate reports of all incidents involving the individual so police are aware of multiple arrests.

"Integra-ID is able to connect the dots of all the information coming from multiple sources – and fast," added Eakins. "With this tool, even small police agencies, like South Bend, can get the right information when they need it in order to act."

SBPD's new solution also provides more database capacity. Currently, the system has approximately 46,000 criminal records from over 69,000 individual records. The new solution has the capacity to hold 90,000 records. Integra-ID offers SBPD the flexibility to add additional space incrementally and as needed.

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Results

SBPD is now able to gather more information to solve cold cases, and bring more law offenders to justice. The department is also able to share local records on a larger scale. Since South Bend is the county seat, all print searches for St. Joseph's County are run through the new Integra-ID system. As a result, SBPD's new AFIS database has become the central repository for the entire county.

Since the State of Indiana also uses an AFIS solution from NEC, the LiveScan booking solution is used in every county. The SBPD Integra-ID AFIS is integrated with both the LiveScan booking solution and the St. Joseph County Jail system for tenprint submissions and processing. The SBPD database is also linked with the Indiana State Police database, which houses 1.2 million tenprint and 9,000 latent fingerprint records. The integration of the three systems has resulted in significant time savings to the state's criminal, prosecutorial and court systems since all three systems have access to the same information.

"I'm very happy to have the relationship with NEC that we do. Through this process, we developed really good friends. It's not just about being good business associates," commented Eakins. "It makes everything easier if you actually like and respect who you're working with. The whole NEC team never disappoints us. They deliver...period."

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