

## *Video Killed the Cash Bottleneck*

**June 2006**

How camera surveillance and an automatic cash handling system saved man-hours and boosted cafeteria sales at large hospital.

*Mike Buzalka ([editors@food-management.com](mailto:editors@food-management.com))*

Two years ago, FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital had quite a problem. The 385-bed acute-care nonprofit based in Pinehurst, NC, faced mounting labor costs in handling the cash from its round-the-clock cafeteria operation.

That cafeteria operation, where some 4,000 meals were served daily, required six to eight cash drawer tills to be emptied each day from the three checkout stations. The highly time-consuming, labor intensive process then in place required a shift supervisor to receive, count, verify, change, safely store and issue cash each time a till needed to be changed.

In bottom line terms, every "cashout" cost the operation an average of one to two man-hours per drawer, counting the time spent by the supervisor and the register worker.

In the summer of 2004, Moore Regional addressed the problem by installing cash management and Digital Video Recorder (DVR) surveillance systems that had proved successful in other sites managed by the hospital's dining services contractor, Sodexo Healthcare Services.

The results, for an equipment and installation outlay of under \$25,000, were more than the department could have hoped for. Not only did the system address the man-hours problem, but it boosted cashier productivity, significantly increased cash handling accuracy and even produced a not-inconsequential revenue increase. The bottom line: the systems paid for themselves within six months.



**CASH IN A FLASH.** This autobank safe, complete with biometric finger reader, dispenses starting tills and change to cashiers going on duty. It is part of a high-tech cash management system that has streamlined cash handling at Moore Regional Hospital.

---

At Moore Regional, the advanced cash management system consists of an NKL Dispensing Autobank Safe with biometric fingerprint reader, three NKL Validating Autobanks and an Image Vault DVR system integrated with the Autobanks (both Image Vault and NKL are divisions of Fire King Security Group).

When cashiers report for duty, they retrieve a cash drawer with \$198 in change from the Autobank Safe by logging in with their fingerprint on the biometric scanner. This prevents unauthorized access to the drawers and verifies that a cashier has taken one.

At the POS stations, the system's video recording units automatically record every instance of cash being received and change dispensed with a time and date stamp that key specific video footage to a specific cash transaction. Cash is taken from and put into the Autobank, which records the changes.

At the end of the shift, the receipts, minus the initial \$198 change amount, is automatically deposited in the cafeteria's bank account. Discrepancies, such as cash in a drawer not matching the transaction records, is quickly resolved with a review of the DVR tape, which videotapes all the physical actions taking place at the register, from money being handed over by customers, to cashiers taking the money, depositing it in the Autobank and making change.

"The Autobank removed the need to hand-count and verify each bill at cash-out time," says Retail/Catering Manager Michael Gibson of Sodexo Healthcare. "That reduced average cash-out time by 20-45 minutes per till. With up to six man-hours saved per day, when you start talking about weeks and months, those savings really add up."

But there were other more intangible benefits as well, Gibson says. "The time the employees didn't have to spend counting and verifying cash receipts freed them to do other things. We suddenly gained six hours a day of labor time that we could put to use better serving customers. That may help explain the rise in sales revenues that occurred when we put the system in."

Of course, such a meticulous record keeping system also tends to discourage employee theft and forces increased attention to cashier accuracy, since mistakes in receiving cash from customers or making change are now caught and addressed.

"The bottom line is that numbers don't lie," Gibson says. "Once the system was installed, the cafeteria saw an immediate jump of 10 to 15 percent in cash receipts. Since we didn't change anything else, I can only conclude that it was the system that produced the increase," he says.