

Lothian and Borders Police improves firearms and explosives licensing administration with Genisys document management software

Mounting firearms and explosives documentation coupled with the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act 2002 presented Lothian and Borders Police with a major administrative challenge. Based on the recommendation of its IT consultancy, Dacoll, Lothian and Borders Police selected Genisys to meet its document management requirements.



FINANCIAL
OBJECTS

Background

Lothian and Borders Firearms Licensing Department is responsible for administering and processing licenses for all current firearms and explosives in the Lothian and Borders region of Scotland. The law has been subject to considerable change over recent years, which has led to more complex legislation requiring all firearms and licenses to possess a full history. The department not only stores information on private owners of shotguns and explosives items but also extends to firearms dealers, shooting clubs and shooting related sports.

Following on from the Freedom of Information Act 2002, the licensing department experienced an increased need to implement a document management system that could provide efficient storage, filing and retrieval of all types of documentation and one that could cope with any changes as a result of new legislation.

The challenge

The licensing department had encountered several long-term problems with its previous document management systems and had initially used an archaic microfilm machine to store and retrieve documents. This process involved the laborious task of photographing hard copy documents, waiting 7-10 days for developing and then spending lengthy amounts of time cutting the negative reel and placing document images into individual sleeves. Even when the documents were stored, they could only be indexed by number and were subject to human error in the storage and retrieval process thereafter.

After a few frustrating years tackling the microfilm system the team installed a document management system in 1997. This was very basic in operation and had no indexing facility and no control over the ordering and management of the files. Document filing and retrieval within this system still remained a labour intensive task.

Each firearms or explosives certificate is allocated its own unique code which is pre-fixed depending on the type of firearm or explosive. The team needed a system that could automatically allocate unique storage places* for each type of firearm certificate so that individual documents and associated information could be retrieved quickly and efficiently as well as being able to cross index files.

This functionality is crucial to police investigations and intelligence reports and to making the information available across the other stations. The number of records on file was increasing rapidly year on year and the prospect of further legislation on the horizon prompted the team to tender for a new document management system in 2003.

The Solution

Lothian and Borders Police looked at five different document management solutions in the tender process and were keen to work with a company that would base its approach around the current and evolving document management needs of the department. Lothian and Borders Police had already established a relationship with Dacoll, the IT delivery and support specialists who initially introduced them to the Genisys team.

Objectives

- Implement a user-friendly document management solution to store and manage records associated with firearms and explosives licensing certificates;
- Increase the productivity of staff by spending less time on filing administration;
- Reduce the amount of physical storage space currently used;
- Implement a system that could easily be expanded.

Solution

- Genisys Document Management Solution – document scanning, storage, retrieval and email.

Results

- Documentation for 20,000 certificate holders stored within the Genisys system;
- System accessible to six other Police sub-stations over the Internet;
- Information readily available to assist many areas of police work including criminal investigation and a license holder's history related to a particular incident.

Benefits

- Easy access to information regarding the history of a particular firearm or explosives license;
- Concurrent multi-user access from different locations;
- Quality and clarity of electronic documents far superior to previous document management systems;
- Reduced physical storage space required within stations;
- Reduced time spent on filing and administration.

*Storage Places – An electronic library that stores all documentation under a certain index term.

Customer



Partner



Product

genisys

Derek Blackley, IT Manager at Lothian and Borders Police commented: "One company on the tender list was very keen to show us all the bells and whistles of their solution but they didn't show us how the solution would actually meet our particular needs. They talked to us about critical business issues but these didn't address the unique requirements of our operation. When we spoke to Dacoll they were able to look at our document management requirements in detail and provide a thorough overview of the type of system and support framework that would suit our operation best. Dacoll recommended Genisys who adopted a different approach right from the initial meeting and made a concerted effort to understand our needs before demonstrating the relevant areas of the software."

By thoroughly researching the operational needs of Lothian and Borders firearms licensing department Dacoll and Genisys were awarded the contract to provide a document management solution.

Genisys is a totally flexible document management solution that enables Lothian and Borders Police to achieve complete control over the storage and retrieval of its documentation. The wider document management process has been transformed from a very labour intensive and time consuming procedure, taking several hours, to a streamlined procedure that takes very little time and resource to administer.

Indexes have been created for all firearms and explosives categories and staff have allocated each item with a unique code, which is used to search for the record whenever information needs to be retrieved on that item. Staff can attach any documentation related to a particular item such as criminal background information reports, license applications, revocations or general email correspondence.

Genisys also ensures that documentation cannot be misfiled against an incorrect code. When a document is scanned, the user is prompted to enter the correct code for that particular firearm or explosive item. Once the code is entered, Genisys will not allow the document to be stored under any other index therefore eradicating the risk of misfiling.

All associated documentation is easily retrievable and can be emailed or printed as a hard copy. Genisys enables the department to respond quickly to requests for information on a firearm or explosive to aid criminal investigations.

Kate Marshall, Firearms Licensing Administrator, comments: "Since Genisys went live in 2005 it has exceeded all expectations. Once a document is indexed, it can be retrieved instantaneously together with its associated documents or emails. The system is fast, cuts down on errors, produces high quality document reproductions and is very easy to use for the non-IT expert. I would recommend Dacoll and Genisys to colleagues in other firearms and licensing operations".

The Technology

Genisys supplied a full-featured document management system tailored and configured to meet the exact requirements of Lothian and Borders Police.

The solution is based on Microsoft SQL Server to provide a robust indexing mechanism for staff based at HQ. Lothian and Borders Police can also provide the Genisys solution over a Web browser enabling Police staff in remote stations to enjoy instant and secure access to documents over the force intranet. 30 licenses were supplied, each configured to allow the correct level of access.

The batch load facilities in Genisys were used to convert documents stored in the existing system and transfer them to the new system. A 25 page per minute scanner was used to assist with loading new documents into the system.

The Future

Today Genisys holds over 20,000 firearms and explosives licenses for the Lothian and Borders licensing department. This volume is expected to continue to rise as further legislation is put in place to control ownership and usage. The flexibility of Genisys ensures that unlimited numbers of storage places can be created to file new categories of firearms, weapons and explosives and retrieve all associated documents in quick time.

The efficiency of the firearms licensing department has increased dramatically since the introduction of Genisys and plays a pivotal role in filing and retrieving information for police investigations and as means of general police information.

The success of the Genisys system within the firearms licensing department has led to interest from other departments within the Lothian and Borders force. The Liquor licensing department is currently planning to install Genisys to manage its licensing management operation, which covers organisations such as casinos, off sales and snooker clubs.



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Kate Marshall, Firearms Licensing Administrator

To learn more about the Genisys solution please contact Martin Connelly on **+44 (0) 191 245 2000** or visit www.finobj.com/docmgt

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