

Polk County Corrections Facility Challenges Team

The new \$25 Million Polk County Justice Center and Northwest Regional Corrections Center is an impressive facility. Located in Crookston, MN. The 147,563 square foot building, which consolidates both jail and court activities in one location, opened in February of 2008.

And not a moment too soon. Polk County had been in desperate need of a new jail. For several years, the 32-bed maximum-security facility in Crookston had been overcrowded, with inmates sleeping on the floor because there weren't enough beds. The minimum-security facility, which was built in 1911, was also stretched to capacity, and an additional 15 to 20 inmates had to be housed in facilities in other communities because there was no room.

In addition, the 100 year old Professional Building that housed the District Court, County Attorney's Office, Tri-County Probation Department, and other offices needed to be replaced.

The solution was a combined facility and Bergstrom Electric was proud to be chosen as the electrical contractor. However, the project was not without its challenges.



Above: One of the courtrooms in the new Polk County Justice Center. Photo below: an exterior view of the Justice Center and Northwest Regional Corrections Facility.

"Anybody who works construction knows how complex a jail can be for the electrical contractor," admits Steve Wasvick, Bergstrom's project manager.

"The security systems are unbelievably complex."

As Wasvick noted, the key to any corrections facility is the security system. Prisoners need to be accounted for at all times, security personnel need to be kept

safe from the prisoners, and separate prison populations have different security requirements. The new Polk County Justice Center and Northwest Regional Corrections Center security system, provided by Stanley Security Solutions and installed by Bergstrom Electric, is one of the most advanced systems available.

In effect, the entire facility can be monitored and controlled from a central command

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center. Every security door and camera can also be controlled by a touch screen in the command center. That meant that every door, every camera, the paging system, the fire alarm system, the smoke evacuation system, the general alarm system, and all other components had to be wired to the command center (shown in photo above).



This equated to thousands of wires coming from every corner of the building and converging in the one 6' by 20' equipment room, which then fed into the command center. In all, over 38 miles of conduit were laid in the 147,500 square foot building. It took two electricians 45 full days of work in the electrical room to tie in each wire and connect the security system to all its separate components.

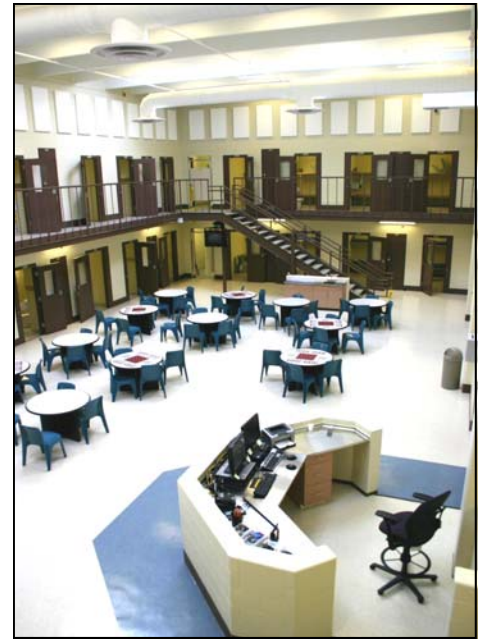


The Justice Center offered its own challenges to the Bergstrom crew. Although the office space was standard, the four courtrooms all contained an enormous amount of wiring. Each juror has his/her own microphone and touch screen to view photos, transcripts and evidence. There are movable screens, a sound system, and an interactive video system that connects to the Corrections facility side so that potentially violent prisoners can make court appearances via video that also connects to other Correctional facilities across the United States so that prisoners can make court appearances and not be transported.

Despite the complexity of the project and a tight timeline, Bergstrom Electric completed the work on time and was able to save the owner some money with a few creative design suggestions.

Their work earned praise from several of the project participants, including Gary Otterstad, CEO of CAM Construction Management: ***“As Construction Managers on over 20 correction facilities, CAM has worked with numerous electrical contractors and Bergstrom Electric is among the elite in our view.”***

Most important, Bergstrom employees are



The activity rooms in the Corrections Facility have skylights, but no windows.

proud to know that their contributions to the impressive project made a difference in the bottom line and to the safety of prisoners, staff, and the general public. ◇



Security conduits.

Spotlight on: **Jason Wardner**



An employee of Bergstrom Electric for 17 years, Jason Wardner is currently the Manager of the Service Department. He was raised in Crookston, MN and now lives on the same farm that his father grew up on between East Grand Forks and Fisher, MN. His wife Nicole works in Crookston for Polk County and they have three children—Cody (11), Logan (8), and Brianna (3).

What is your favorite part of the job?

The people I work with. You have to have fun and enjoy what you do. I am blessed to have very talented people to work with, both knowledgeable and personable. Another part of my job that I enjoy is working with a customer from start to finish on a project and watching it all come together.

What was your most memorable project or experience at Bergstrom Electric?

One project I remember was the Pembina Museum. We took it over when the original electrician left about 1/3 complete and the rest of the contractors finished construction and trim out. We had to come in, figure out what they had done, what they were planning and try to finish. Missing fixtures, parts of fixtures, receptacles trimmed out in the boxes with 2 feet of wire on them, no home runs to the panels, all the conduits buried in the elevator shaft pour to the top . . . That project was probably the most difficult.

What are your hobbies?

I love hunting and fishing with my kids and

lake time

in the summer. In the fall, winter and spring my time gets consumed with hockey as both my boy's play, I am a coach and my daughter just started.

If you could meet anyone in the world, who would it be and why?

Tony Dungy, the head football coach for the Indianapolis Colts. With all the trials and tribulations he has had in his life, he's still been able to work through it with such a successful career.

If you couldn't do your current job, what would you want to do instead?

Zamboni driver or ski instructor. No stress! ◇

Service Department Handles Multitude of Calls

“One of the biggest misconceptions out there is that Bergstrom only does big projects,” explains Jason Wardner, Service Department Manager at Bergstrom. *“But we do smaller, repair jobs for people every day.”*

Those “smaller” jobs that Wardner refers to can vary quite a bit in size and complexity. But Bergstrom’s Service Department is specifically organized to handle that variety.

With 19 full-time service employees spread across all six Bergstrom offices, the Service Department can do anything from repairing a dead outlet in your kitchen to a new office building. Projects fall into four main categories—Commercial, Agricultural, Industrial, and Residential, with the majority of work coming from the Commercial and Agricultural industries. Categorizing jobs can be difficult, however.

“The job can change once we’re on-site,” notes Wardner. *“We’ll go out to wire a brand-new set of grain bins and the owner will ask us to fix a couple lights in the house while we’re there and then maybe look at something else, too.”*

That variety of work requires Bergstrom’s service technicians to be able to handle whatever might come up in the field. Flexibility is also a key skill, since some of their jobs occur on an emergency basis.

“Just the other day we had a customer



call with an emergency,” remembers Wardner. *“Two of their conveyors went down and their trucks were getting backed up. So the service tech, who already had a full day with 8-10 scheduled jobs had to hustle over there and get them up and running first. Scheduling can be a nightmare.”*

Helping Wardner manage the multitude of calls and last-minute jobs is Tara Zahradka, the Service Coordinator, who processes all the paperwork and does about 80% of the scheduling.

The Service Department accounts for approximately 12% of Bergstrom’s annual revenues. Wardner is quick to give credit to his staff. *“We’ve got some high quality, personable guys out there,”* he says. *“They are a big asset to the company.”* ♦

Above Left: Scott Truscinski disconnects an old, worn out cable in the concrete heating component of a car wash. Above: Tara Zahradka keeps everyone in the Service Department organized. Below: Rod Wagner digs a trench in order to replace the main underground feeds for a house in Grand Forks



Bergstrom’s Service Department provided 800 amp service and lighting to this farm shop near Fisher, MN.

“Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it whether it exists or not, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedy.”

- Ernest Benn

Politics is not a bad profession. If you succeed there are many rewards, if you disgrace yourself you can always write a book.”

- Ronald Reagan

“The word ‘politics’ is derived from the word ‘poly’, meaning ‘many’ and the word ‘ticks’ meaning ‘blood sucking parasites’.”

- Larry Hardiman



Cliff Notes

Greetings friends -

As cooler weather approaches, a few of our managers headed to a warmer climate, at least for a few days. The 51st Annual IEC Convention was in Atlanta, Georgia this year and James Schmidt, Dale Hagen, and Russ Penn attended on behalf of Bergstrom Electric from October 29 through November 1.

The IEC (Independent Electrical Contractors) is a national organization of electrical contractors and the convention provides a great opportunity for us to connect with other companies, share success stories, and find new ways to improve productivity.

Bergstrom alternates managers that are able to attend the convention, to provide opportunities to each of them to be a part of the ongoing continued educational sessions that are provided and to collaborate with other contractors

throughout the US. We often feel that being in North Dakota we are the only ones that have particular issues that are difficult to address. By attending this convention, we find that we are not alone, and in fact, many of the issues we face are commonplace.

The educational sessions are very informative as well—there are over 60 presentations at this year's event and topics include basic safety, the best recruiting and hiring practices, marketing your company, the newest technology in lighting controls, dealing with difficult partners in the construction field, and estimating design-build projects, among others. Education and training is very important to us at Bergstrom and the convention offers knowledgeable presenters and useful information.

In addition, the convention hosts a

national wire-off competition. For several years, Bergstrom has been honored to send an apprentice to compete in this event. The apprentice is the winner of the local chapter's wire-off competition. This competition at the national level not only provides inspiration to the apprentice, but can show the apprentice, the instructor, and the contractors at our local level that we have people that can compete with other electricians at the national level.

I'm sure James, Dale, and Russ will bring back useful information from this year's event that we can use to improve our own company. There's always something new to be learned and I look forward to hearing about their experience.

I hope you also get a chance to learn and grow in your chosen field.

- Cliff Moen, President



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