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Limestone County
Courthouse

TUNING IN FOR HEARINGS

One Alabama county finds that keeping inmates onsite for hearings saves time and money, and helps ease document workflow.

With budget crunches in the forefront of many counties' agendas, Alabama's Limestone County recently installed a solution that streamlines the preliminary hearing process while also saving time and money. Document management and workflow software provider Cabinet NG's Secure Access Filing Environment (CNG-SAFE) enables Limestone County to utilize video hearings in tandem with online document management. While new inmates remain in jail during their

video hearing process, CNG-SAFE ensures that all legal forms and paperwork are immediately available to judges, attorneys and court staff.

Prior to deploying CNG-SAFE, Limestone County conducted approximately 22 face-to-face hearings per week, which typically required three sheriff's personnel and three hours to process inmates—one hour to ready the inmate prior to leaving the jail, one hour at the courthouse for the hear-

ing and another hour to process them back into the facility. "Now Limestone County can perform at least 30 appearances per week, with only the need for one jailer to escort the inmate from his or her cell to the video room without leaving the secure area of the jail and the judge never leaves his or her office," explains James True, vice president of business development, Cabinet NG. "When you have state and local government-level budgets that are very tight right now, and take a

A Limestone County judicial court judge uses Cabinet NG's CNG-SAFE solution, where new inmates no longer need to be transported to the courthouse for their preliminary hearings, and electronic documents are immediately created and signed by judge.



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—JAMES TRUE, CABINET NG

solution that’s already being used in the county, it’s a tremendous return on investment.” Since Limestone County was already an existing Cabinet NG customer, adding the Cisco IP videophone component brought additional benefits such as increasing public safety by eliminating the need to transport inmates to the county courthouse.

According to the company, the videophone hearings use CNG-

SAFE to ensure documents are properly routed between the Sheriff’s office and the courthouse. Judges electronically sign case documents and these documents, along with questions and recorded responses, are sent to the inmate’s legal file. The county uses the Cisco IP videophone to conduct the face-to-face preliminary hearing. Other hardware needed to implement this solution includes a server to store

the digital files, a laptop, printer and signature pad. Without the need to appear in person, inmates’ preliminary hearings can be conducted at any time, and judges’ productivity is enhanced, Cabinet NG states.

Not New, But Better

“Video conferencing has been around for some time now, and so has document management,” True notes, “but there hasn’t been a solution that combined the two for one easy solution.” Not unlike Limestone County, other customers of Cabinet NG’s document management solution typically began using the solution to handle a “pain point,” then see additional opportunities to ease workflow.

In addition to the cost savings, both Cabinet NG and Limestone County tout the increase in safety benefits with the implementation of the video hearing application. “No longer are inmates exposed to the



is correctly transmitted to and from the Sheriff's office and the courthouse, True notes that with this solution, an additional powerful safety factor is provided—privacy of information. "They're looking to keep up with demand on a very fixed budget," he adds. And with electronic documents that are all officially signed by judges, there's no paper and files floating around between buildings which can easily fall into the wrong hands or become lost. And once documents are created, an instant audit trail shows when documents were added, edited, updated, etc.

And since Limestone County has found much success using the CNG-SAFE solution for videophone hearings for new inmates, the county has since expanded their use of the Cisco video component. They're now using it in the county commissioner's office enabling them to have live meetings with other counties, again saving money for transportation and other expenses. While Limestone County has been

Videophone hearings use CNG-SAFE to ensure documents are properly routed between County Sheriff Mike Blakely's office and the courthouse.

recognized in state of Alabama as a champion for effectively implementing

this type of solution, True adds that 99% of Cabinet NG's customers also acknowledge the efficiency with this solution. "We hear customers say all the time that they should have done this a long time ago."

For more information, please contact Cabinet NG at www.cabinetng.com or (800) 621-6501.

public and have to be transported to and from the courthouse—and this is a big public safety component," True comments.

While all documents associated with the videophone hearings use CNG-SAFE to guarantee that everything

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