

Best Practice: Biometric Identification and Access Control System



Category:	Access Control
Location:	Port of Felixstowe, United Kingdom
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Description: The HPUK IDACS (Identification and Access control system) is a combined identification card and access control management tool. All employees, temporary contractors and day visitors must wear and display a visible form of identification. Each category of personnel on the facility is identified with a unique card color: blue for employees, green for temporary contractors, and red for day visitors. Safety lanyards are provided in matching colors to assist access control staff to easily recognize the bearer's designation. Each card is electronically embedded with unique biometric data of the card owner which allows automatic operation at remote turnstiles, barriers or doorways and the ability to confirm that the card holder is the card owner. All transactions made by the card at any reader is recorded and logged centrally at the security control room allowing comprehensive access management. Cards are allocated based on the card holder's status for the relevant level of access both by time and location.

Discussion: Biometric verification that the wearer is the owner of the card provides a level of confidence that the system meets personnel identification requirements. The biometric data can also be used to provide building roll calls in the event of security or other incidents, it can allow cards to be used to determine authorization for operating machinery and other safety enhancements. Security posture is greatly enhanced by monitoring all access point alarms and linking to CCTV images of the alarmed locations.

Potential Down-side: Human rights issues and the perception of a "Big-Brother" culture must be addressed. The fact that biometric data is stored only on the card allays many of these fears. Potential misuse of the system, as in all identification systems, requires careful and constant management processes.

Cost: IDACS is a state of the art system and therefore comes at a significant price. However, the cost benefit of such a system compared to a simple identification process may justify the additional expenditure for some port facilities.

Conclusion: The IDACS system fully meets the identification and access control requirements of this particular facility and provides additional benefits over and above improved security.