Digital door locks control contractor access at University Hospital Southampton

Access control products are widely used within hospital buildings to enhance the safety and security of the people and equipment inside. For the locksmiths working in the estates building maintenance department at University Hospital Southampton, access control is a high priority. Supervisors, Eamonn Devaney and Ron Bran, and their team* need to control the movement of thousands of people on campus and keep the hospital running efficiently at the same time. With over 9,500 employees and a large transient population visiting the hospital daily, this is no easy task.
To help deter unauthorised entry to restricted areas, the estates building maintenance team use a combination of access control products including locks and keys, hard-wired systems requiring RFID cards and readers, as well as standalone mechanical and electronic digital locks. Working together, the products help create a physical barrier, while at same time allowing authorised personnel to go about their daily routine.

Managing room keys and access cards for hard-wired systems on a large scale can be problematic. With such high numbers of staff working at the hospital, it’s inevitable that some will get lost or stolen. The time taken to manage the issue of new and replacement keys and cards can be considerable, but it’s essential in order to maintain security.

Because cost is such an important factor when considering which access control products to use for new buildings or refurbishments, it’s not always possible to extend the use of hard-wired systems throughout campus. Sometimes it’s more cost effective to look at a standalone solution, and this is where the use of digital door locks can provide many advantages.

Digital locks can be installed one door at a time without impacting other systems. There are no keys or cards to issue; instead staff members are given an access code to get through the door.

Access codes can be changed on a regular basis to help prevent codes from being passed on or misused.

Digital locks are either mechanically or electronically operated. The estates building maintenance team use hundreds of mechanical and electronic door locks all over campus to give access protection to areas such as treatment rooms, offices and laboratories.
The main advantage of electronic door locks over their mechanical counterparts is their ability to provide more functions.

With electronic digital locks, more code combinations are available, the locks will shut down temporarily after three incorrect code attempts and code changes can be made via the keypad. Now, thanks to developments in technology, some electronic door locks facilitate PC-based programme control and audit trail. Where previously only card-based access control systems could provide this functionality, the doors to new applications for this product are wide open.

A good example of this is at the University Hospital Southampton, where the estates building maintenance team is trialling the use of eight new digital electronic locks with audit trail from Codelocks. One of the challenges the team faces is the ability to protect vital supplies, equipment and machinery needed to keep the hospital operating efficiently. Access protection is needed to deter theft and damage to property, both of which disrupt the smooth running of the hospital.

The hospital employs different contractors to manage the building’s services, and the contractors’ engineers need regular access to rooms containing plant and machinery.

Using the Codelocks’ CL5010 tubular mortice-latch locks with audit trail and accompanying software, the team can allocate individual time-sensitive access codes to plant room doors. The codes will only work for the hours the engineer is contracted; they will not work outside this timeslot.

The digital locks record all of the access codes used in an audit trail log, which can be downloaded using a USB memory stick and analysed using the data management software. This gives clear visibility of who’s been through each door and when. The locks also register incorrect code attempts, so if someone is trying to get access out of hours, they will know.

So far, the trial at University Southampton Hospital has worked very well and everyone is happy with the functionality the product provides. Supervisor, Eamonn Devaney commented: “All of the experienced locksmiths working on the team have found the product to be very user friendly and easy to maintain. It’s also great knowing that Codelocks is on hand to provide additional support if necessary.”
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Supervisor, Eamonn Devaney

Unlike other access control systems this product requires no hard wiring, cutting down on installation costs and causing very little disruption.

As technology continues to enable improvements in the performance and capability of electronic digital door locks, the breadth of their application will expand and enable them to claim an even greater share of the access control market.

For more information about access control and standalone digital door and cabinet locks, visit www.codelocks.co.uk

*The estates building maintenance team at University Hospital Southampton consists of supervisors, Eamonn Devaney and Ron Bran, carpenter/locksmith and lock maintainer, Richard Fenton, and carpenters/locksmiths, Simon Priestly and Gerry Whittaker.