

Case Study

LASTING SOLUTIONS FOR SUPPORTING CIVIL SERVANTS

Skokie, Illinois



SKOKIE POLICE DEPARTMENT



SKOKIE PD

Sixteen miles west of downtown Chicago you'll find the Village of Skokie, Illinois. Home to 65,000 people and approximately 2,300 businesses in its 10-mile radius, the village is a fast-growing, extremely livable suburb, particularly for those who want to escape the hectic pace of city life while remaining close to Chicago.

Fast growth hasn't come without growing pains — especially in the case of Skokie's Police Department. Although the department always earned high marks for service — the department was running out of space to perform its mission effectively.

A 2009 building analysis showed that the department had outgrown its 27,000 SF space - built in 1957 - and it also revealed inadequate storage systems to support a modern police force. Data systems and fire alarms didn't meet current standards, and many of the areas within the facility didn't comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Records storage, evidence processing, and other key functions of the department were also inadequate, and traffic patterns in the building were a problem. All of these conditions, compounded, contributed to a lack of good employee morale.



Thanks to an integrated storage solution for every aspect of their headquarters, the Skokie Police Department has increased efficiency, productivity, and morale.



Time Savings + Productivity = Higher Morale

When the Village of Skokie moved ahead in 2010 with a plan to convert an abandoned 79,300-square-foot bottling plant into a state-of-the-art police headquarters, the decision-makers at the Skokie Police Department knew exactly that their most valuable asset was people. “Employees truly appreciate it when you do what you can to make their jobs easier, and storage systems definitely play a role in helping us do that,” says now-retired Skokie Police Chief Barry Silverberg. “What it often boils down to in law enforcement is time savings and productivity. Both ultimately lead to higher morale and in turn, a higher level of service to the community.”

With this in mind, Skokie Police Department brought together several different groups to create a “New Headquarters Team,” including police department leaders, user committees, SRBL Architects, and the local Spacesaver representative. Together, the team analyzed the facility, budgetary goals, and key functions within each office of law enforcement, as well as the role storage systems play in helping the department succeed in proactively and professionally delivering service to the village’s residents.



SKOKIE PD

Creating A "Home Base" For Officers

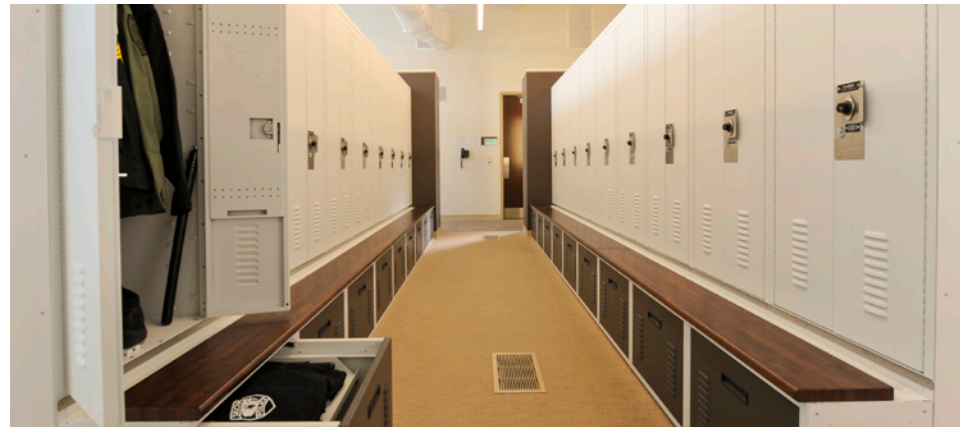
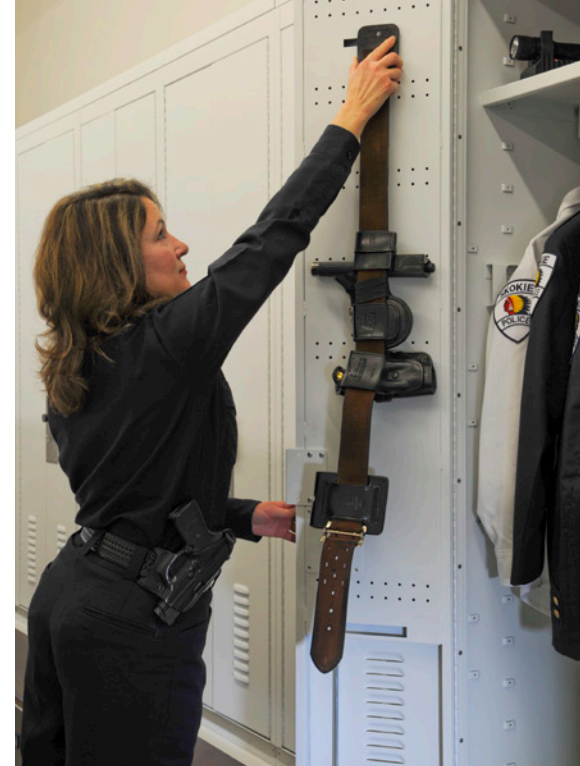
For many police officers at Skokie and around the United States, a personal storage locker is their "home base" - a place where they can keep their personal and professional items safe and secure. At the Skokie PD's old facility, not everyone was assigned a locker because of their limited number. More to the point, the lockers were designed for students — not law enforcement personnel. "The old lockers were way too narrow and only had a shelf and a couple of hooks," Silverberg said.

Based on criteria developed by the department, Spacesaver's

storage experts designed a solution for the facility's locker rooms, including 142 Spacesaver FreeStyle® Personal Storage Lockers. Each of the department's lockers includes a bench made out of hardwood that includes a drawer; double doors that open from the middle; adjustable, full-width shelves with a garment hanger for civilian clothes and uniforms; modular electrical components with duplex outlets for powering and charging electronic devices; notches on the inside of the doors for duty belt storage; and three-hook bracket

assemblies on the interior of the locker for even more places to hang garments or accessories.

The many options and interchangeable features were crucial for Silverberg, who said there's a lot more to personal storage lockers for law enforcement than meets the eye. "A properly designed locker goes a long way toward the creation of a positive working environment," he said. "The lockers have a huge impact on morale, and the attention to detail has paid off."





Tactical Gear Storage: When Rapid Response is Key

The mission of Skokie's Tactical Intervention Unit (TIU) is to rapidly respond to special circumstances, such as hostage situations and barricaded subjects. Given the need to maintain a state of readiness, TIU team members must move quickly — and their gear must be organized and easily accessible.

While the department envisioned utilizing lockers similar to those in their old locker rooms, Spacesaver had other ideas. They engineered 23 large steel lockers out of heavy-duty 4-Post Shelving - creating large cubbies for each TIU team member. The storage system features shelves at a variety of heights and provides immediate access to helmets, weapons, radios, batteries, shields, gas masks, and additional gear.

The lockers also include electrical outlets and heavy-duty garment hangers, which allow officers to hang fully loaded tactical vests, that can weigh around 130 pounds. "With the old lockers, the TIU officers couldn't store loaded vests, because they wouldn't fit," Silverberg explained. "Now, they're able to gear up much quicker."

Readiness is also critical for patrol and community service officers. Seeing the corridor that connects the roll-call room with Skokie's parking garage, Spacesaver planners lined it with 47 additional lockers for gear bag storage. A gear bag contains everything from ticket books to extra ammunition, and can weigh up to 30 pounds. With the design of the new lockers, the potential for clutter is limited.



Looking back, Silverberg wondered how the department managed in the old facility without the new storage systems. He said the difference between the old and new way of doing things is night and day. "I'm impressed with the storage solution," he said. "It gets back to our ability to provide a quality level of service. After all, it's what we're here for."

SKOKIE PD

Evidence Storage: Securing the Chain of Custody

Skokie Police Department employs more than 20 evidence technicians — and evidence is processed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. At the old police station, the Property & Evidence Room consisted of a converted janitor's closet, and space was so tight that technicians had to use the floor to package large pieces of evidence. Once the evidence was packaged, it was stored on static shelving and in standard lockers, which made space even tighter. Further, refrigerated evidence was kept in a refrigerator secured by a padlock.

Given the longer periods required for holding certain evidence, coupled with the need to protect the integrity of evidence throughout the entire chain of custody, the department knew they had to do something. "Maintaining the chain of custody is paramount in the prosecution of criminal cases," Silverberg said. "We knew we wanted to go as high-tech as we could at the new facility for evidence storage."

The department installed Spacesaver's Pass-Thru Evidence Lockers, which are specifically designed for maintaining the chain of

custody during the critical short-term evidence period. The lockers, which accommodate evidence of various sizes, are built into the wall that separates the evidence drop-off area from the Property & Evidence Room, and include four double-walled refrigerated components.

With these Pass-Thru Lockers, an officer can deposit packaged and labeled evidence in one of the open lockers, and then push a button to lock the door. At that point, no one can open it from that side, and the custody of the item passes definitively to the evidence technicians on the opposite side of the wall.

In addition to the short-term evidence storage, Skokie also gave their long-term evidence storage a makeover. As Skokie is home to one of the most popular malls in the Chicago area, the department continually processes and stores large volumes of stolen some of which needs to be held for an indefinite amount of time. By implementing High-Density Mobile Shelving, the department was able to organize all its current long-term storage, as well as plan for future needs.



\$369,840

— the amount of money two high-density mobile storage systems were able to save the Village of Skokie in new construction costs that would have been needed to accommodate fixed or static shelving systems.



Major Storage Efficiencies Help with LEED® Gold Certification

Even with the move to digitize documents, there's still a need to retain hard documents — like police reports, arrest reports, and warrants — and this need was creating a significant organizational challenge for the Skokie Police Department. To assist with this, another high-density mobile shelving system was installed in the department's record storage area. Stationary carriages bookend the mobile carriages on the system, one of them is lockable to protect sensitive files.

Both mobile systems at Skokie not only helped the department achieve optimal efficiency — they also contributed to the architect's goal of designing an environmentally friendly facility with a small footprint. SRBL Architects estimates that the mobile storage systems saved 1,380 total square feet in the new facility. At the cost of \$268 per square foot, that adds up to \$369,840 the Village of Skokie

was able to save in new construction costs by using mobile instead of static shelving. These efficiencies, along with a host of sustainability measures, led to the Skokie Police Department receiving a LEED Gold Certification for the building.

"The buzz in law enforcement these days is to do more with less, and the mobile storage system lets us do exactly that," said Silverberg.

"The mobile system, combined with the evidence lockers, allows us to tighten the chain of custody and do what we do much more efficiently than ever."

-Barry Silverberg, Former Chief of Police, Skokie Police Department

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-Barry Silverberg, Former Chief of Police, Skokie Police Department

Connect with the Experts in Evidence Storage

With more than 50 years in business, Spacesaver's law enforcement consultants understand the vital importance of proper evidence storage. Our in-house engineers and project managers team up with our network of local distributorships to serve hundreds of agencies, large and small, throughout the U.S. and Canada. We can help plan your project, install Spacesaver products, and provide ongoing service.

Contact us today to learn how we can help increase storage capacity and preserve evidence at your facility.

800.492.3434 | [spacesaver.com](https://www.spacesaver.com)



Spacesaver Corporation
1450 Janesville Avenue
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538-2798
1-800-492-3434
www.spacesaver.com