

Houston PD Sizes Up Their Evidence Storage

Houston Police Department looks to Spacesaver® Mobilized Storage Systems to efficiently store and organize one million property and evidence items in 30% less space.

Challenges:

Before the city of Houston built its new Houston Police Department (HPD) Property Room, the police department stored evidence and property in an antiquated building that had outlived its purpose. The facility made evidence storage a significant challenge requiring increased levels of staffing and ever escalating time spent on finding and retrieving evidence when needed for court.

In addition, HPD was faced with exponential growth of evidence and property. It is a problem shared by police departments nationwide, according to Evidence Control Systems President Joe Latta, who consulted for HPD during the new facility design process. The importance of DNA evidence today has significantly increased the amount of evidence departments need to collect and basically store forever.

The project challenges identified by HPD were:

- Safeguard the integrity of evidence
- Accommodate up to one million different items with unique space needs from drugs and jewelry to bicycles, car bumpers and washing machines
- Easily and efficiently store, locate and retrieve any evidence item
- Optimize the capacity given unique building angles

Solution:

Southwest Solutions Group in Houston, TX, an authorized Spacesaver® area contractor, in conjunction with Page Southerland Page, the project architect, consulted with HPD to understand their existing needs and the attributes of the new facility design.

At the heart of the evidence storage solution was the ActivRAC® 16P mobilized storage system from Spacesaver® Corporation. With ActivRAC®, otherwise stationary (or fixed) rows of pallet racking and shelving are mounted on carriages and mobilized. The carriages



Staggered or tiered carriages maximize storage space when angled walls are present.



The Houston Police Department stands tall as a nationwide example of successful evidence storage and organization.



Even though thousands of pieces of evidence are shelved in a compact manner, mobilized storage systems ensure each piece is easily locatable and retrievable.

“Officers throughout the country are collecting more evidence at crime scenes than ever before and police departments need to keep it for longer and longer periods based on state statutes.” – Joe Latta, executive director of the International Association for Property and Evidence, Inc.



Handguns, long guns and other smaller items are organized neatly and in a smaller footprint by utilizing Eclipse Powered Mobile Systems by Spacesaver®.

travel back and forth on steel wheels mated to a rail system. By moving side to side, the system is able to compress or compact the materials into a much smaller footprint by reducing the fixed aisles to just a single (or possibly multiple) aisles. The system still provides 100% accessibility to every pallet or storage location wherever and whenever needed. Users decide which aisle to “open” with a simple press of a button. The entire HPD property room was outfitted with the ActivRAC 16P system.

The general property and evidence room storage follows a strategy that calls for the majority of items to be stored in six standard boxes, which in turn, delivers the maximum amount of storage density possible. The carriages of the ActivRAC systems are designed so that one module (or set) of carriages stores a given number of small boxes while another module stores medium sized boxes and so on. The carriages are arranged so that box sizes increase from one side to the other. In all, the boxes are stored on a total of 33 mobilized, back-to-back carriages.

Other systems recommended by Southwest Solutions Group range from powered, commercial-grade Eclipse® mobile systems to standard pallet racking. The weapons storage area was designed with Spacesaver’s commercial-grade mobile which provided for highly configurable shelving on the carriages. Each weapon is placed in a box and the shelves are arranged for maximum density.



Boxed evidence items are stored efficiently on massive ActivRAC 16P Mobilized Storage Systems by Spacesaver®.

Result:

HPD’s property room is hailed as a technically advanced, highly functional building that meets the need to maintain the integrity of evidence through proper security, climate control, and a highly efficient approach to storage.

With the use of ActivRAC mobilized storage systems, HPD was able to reduce the building envelope by as much as 30% saving significant construction costs without sacrificing storage space. Additionally the Property Room earned LEED certification through the use of sustainable design and construction processes.

The weapons storage area provides enough storage for 22,984 handguns, 5,256 rifles and 17,500 knives in a single room with quick and easy access to each.

At the opening of the facility, Mayor Bill White said the property room is a major asset for the city and its citizens and stated, “This property room is an indispensable part of the criminal justice system designed to keep our city safe while according fairness to those who are accused of crime.”

