



CarpetLOK™ Helps Emergency Call Center



Given the opportunity to create a purpose-built facility after “adapting” other spaces to your highly specialized needs for more than two decades, chances are you’d know *exactly* what to do. That’s the position Ted Wise found himself in when he set out to create a new emergency operations center for Cumberland County, PA.

Ted joined the Department of Public Safety in 1974, rose through the ranks, and became its Director in 1983. In the 70’s, the department was housed in the basement of the county courthouse. One of the headaches they had to deal with in that facility was a ventilation system that allowed vehicle exhaust from the parking lot to circulate indoors.

In the 80’s, an addendum to a bond issue enabled the county to construct an operations center on the ground floor of a new prison. That new home was welcomed...but the nature of the financing and construction process did not allow for design input from the department: Public Safety moved in, and made things work. In the 90’s, they relocated within the prison facility, and adapted again.



By 2011, the department needed more space. Also—having observed that the rate of technological change in the field of emergency operations is staggering, Ted knew their new home would need to be supremely *flexible*, to keep up with increasingly sophisticated and constantly evolving equipment. This became a key principle when Ted began working with the team designing the county's 22,000 square foot dedicated facility. One building element essential to providing that flexibility was a raised access floor; the open plenum not only houses all the cabling needed to power and link the center's communications and display devices, but allows for that equipment to be painlessly relocated and upgraded.



Another key design principle was *comfort*. 911 operators work long, stressful shifts, tied to their workstations. Ted knew that making those workstations comfortable was essential to keep the operators and other staff efficient and effective. "The care and feeding of our personnel is critical. I've got 38 dispatchers, and half of them have at least 15 years experience. Some centers run 25-30% turnover annually; we average less than 5%." Among the many thoughtful accommodations are high-back chairs with 7-wheel pedestal bases, sit/stand consoles, wireless headsets and touch-screen PCs.



While the floor plenum had to be accessible to provide maximum functionality, finishes and detailing were important here, too. Experience in prior facilities—some on raised floor, some on slab—had shown Ted how to avoid a host of problems, and some of the biggest issues involved carpet. "Operating 24/7, we found that the chairs were very hard on carpet tiles: the squares would get dust

underneath, and the backing started to decompose. It became a real issue. The backing particles and dust compromised the tackiness of the releasable adhesive, and the next thing you know, we had corners and ends rolling up everywhere. We had to replace all that carpet in less than 8 years."

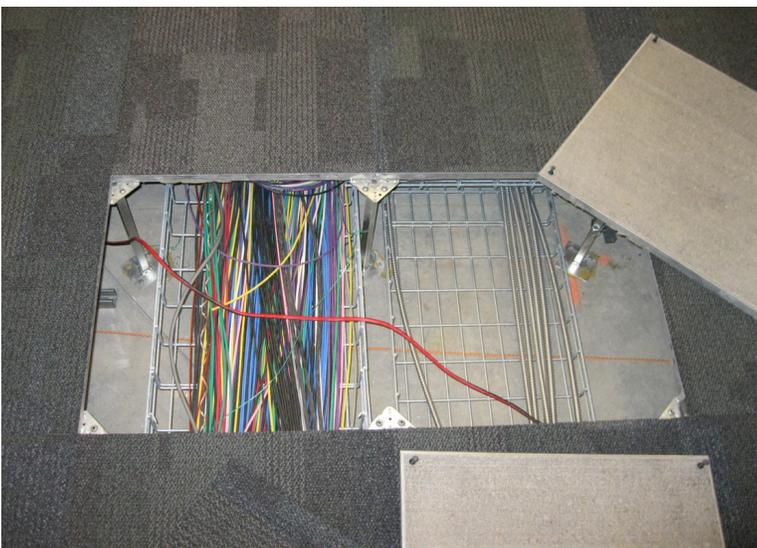
Other issues included: *noise*—from unreinforced steel panels &/or hard floor coverings, *static*—a particular threat to electronics when uncontrolled, and *chair mats*—which Ted sought to eliminate for a variety of functional and aesthetic reasons.

To preclude all these problems, Cumberland Public Safety specified an innovative floor-covering installation and maintenance system from InterfaceFLOR. Patented CarpetLOK™ anchors, affixed directly to raised floor pedestals, index the 2-foot square Interface carpet tiles and keep them stationary without adhesives. The anchors engage the semi-rigid carpet backing to prevent movement, yet are undetectable when the carpet is in place.



An added benefit of the CarpetLOK system which particularly appealed to Ted is that carpet tiles are perfectly aligned with access floor panels below. A common task such as relocating an electrical box or communications outlet can now be done just by lifting the panel with the service box attached, and swapping it with another panel in the desired location; the carpet tiles in each location are simply laid back in place. In contrast, conventional methods typically require that 4 carpet tiles be removed for each floor panel being relocated...and at least one new tile must be cut to fit the utility box in its new position. The old carpet tiles are usually discarded. With the CarpetLOK system, there's no wasted material, changes require far less labor, and there's no need to inventory carpet to cut around relocated services.

Because the CarpetLOK system was new, Ted couldn't be sure exactly what to expect in terms of usability. Any concerns he had, however, were quickly put to rest. After the electrician ran power and data cable, the floor was closed and the carpet laid on top, using the anchors.



Almost as soon as the carpet installation was complete, it was determined that the entire grounding system had to be upgraded, and the floor was re-opened to facilitate that work. When the new grounding was done, the custom consoles for each 911 operator were laid out, assembled, and installed, with all wiring through the floor plenum. After that, a water detection system was installed on the slab, inside the plenum. Before the call center began operations,

4 different subcontractors pulled up large areas of carpet and floor, completed their work, and reinstalled both floor and carpet.



The bottom line is that, through all this work, the original carpet installer never had to return. Each trade that needed to access the floor plenum simply lifted the indicated carpet tiles, removed the floor panels underneath, then replaced panels and tiles when finished. None of these tradesmen had worked with the CarpetLOK system before, and they received no special instruction; it's that intuitive.

Before each sub left the job, the general contractor and Ted walked the floor to be sure everything was as intended. "There was a lot of under-floor activity in a short period of time. Multiple vendors were lifting and replacing tiles, but when they left, you couldn't tell there were any changes to the floor from the initial installation."

Post-occupancy reports are equally positive. Ted says "there's no floor noise whatsoever," and adds "there are no issues with static, either." After years of 24/7 operation, he says that his operators—rolling their 7-wheeled chairs directly on the CarpetLOK anchored Interface carpet tiles—describe the space as "warmer" and "quieter." That makes Ted happy, as he knows it will be easy to continue his track record of dramatically low staff turnover...which keeps efficiency up and costs down.

With a chance to build from scratch, Ted Wise and the Cumberland County Commissioners built an emergency communications and operations center that will serve them well for a very long time. Cost-effective from the start, it will readily accommodate up to 50% growth in services to keep up with the needs of a growing county. Ted is confident that this growth, and the technology "churn" that's inevitable, will be painless and inexpensive to manage, thanks in part to his flexible, easy-to-maintain floor covering system.

