

Putting existing space to work

Minnesota National Guard looks to Spacesaver® Mobilized Storage to efficiently issue clothing and equipment to 11,000 individual soldiers per year

Challenges:

The Central Issue Facility (CIF) at Camp Riley in Minnesota is an extremely busy place. It ensures an average of 11,000 National Guard soldiers per year have all of the clothing and equipment they need as they train to be mobilized at any time – whether it's for war or a domestic emergency. And that doesn't count soldiers who return to exchange equipment for any number of reasons.

Success of the group that manages the CIF hinges on efficiency, especially since only seven full-time guardsmen and other temporary staff issue clothing and equipment. Without question, says Essential Issue Facility Manager Janelle Johnson, WO1, storage plays a key role in the ability to maintain peak productivity.

"We are constantly on the go and we have to keep the ball rolling," Johnson says. "For storage, that means having enough space to maintain inventory, being able to store it properly, and having easy access at all times."

CIF role expands, but not the facility

The staff at the CIF has always needed to adapt to change given the diverse duties of National Guardsmen and their role in multiple conflicts and diverse theaters of war. In recent years, however, the team faced a number of challenges that created the need to change the way it stores and manages materials.

More and more equipment and the changing role of the CIF drove the need to store nearly twice as many items than it did when the pallet racking was originally installed. Yet despite increased demands on space, a facility expansion wasn't realistic given the costs. Additionally, the CIF needed to adapt to the changes in real time; long before a facility expansion could be planned, approved and completed.

In assessing the situation, Johnson says the team needed to rethink storage. The use of stationary pallet racking for storing OCIE was no longer viable.



Parachutes, backpacks, rations, field supplies, and uniforms can all be stored in a high density mobilized storage system using a variety of bins and boxes.



Archived files take up significantly less floor space when compacted using mechanical assist mobile carriages but provide quick and direct access.



Mobilized pallet racking provides a place for everything and everything in its place.

"We've been able to cut back on the time it takes for stocking, we have more of what we most need where we need it, and we can easily find it," Johnson says. "That gives us the additional time to provide soldiers we serve; it's an accomplishment we take pride in." – Janelle Johnson, Essential Issue Facility Manager

Solution: The smartest option: ActivRAC Mobilized Storage

To solve the issue, Johnson and the team looked to Doug Schmitz of Haldeman-Homme, an authorized Spacesaver® distributor based in Minneapolis, Minn., to help design a solution.

Schmitz recommended the installation of a patent-pending ActiveRAC 16P mobilized storage system. With ActivRAC Mobilized Storage, otherwise stationary rows of pallet racking are mounted on carriages and mobilized. The carriages travel on wheels mated to a rail system, which is recessed into the CIF floor. By moving side to side, the system "compresses" (or compacts) stored materials into a much smaller footprint when compared with stationary racking – yet provides 100 percent access. The system eliminates open aisles between rows of racking, eliminating wasted space. Users decide which aisle to open to easily access stored materials while remaining aisles stay closed.

The motorized, electric powered ActivRAC system was designed around the physical space at the CIF and in such a way as to allow quick and easy access. Located behind the counter where soldiers pick up OCIE, it features five mobilized carriages, four of which are 74 feet long. The fifth carriage stretches 93 feet to capitalize on additional room for storage. Each double-sided mobile carriage is book-ended by stationary carriages, giving the system a total of 15 carriages. Each carriage has four levels to capitalize on 15 vertical feet of available storage space. The levels vary in height to allow for flexibility in storage. To save costs, the majority of the carriages were built using nearly all of the CIF's existing pallet racking.

To create even more room for OCIE storage, Haldeman-Homme replaced more than 40 vertical file cabinets with a mobile storage system. The mobile system, which is configured with lockable file drawers, safely and securely stores 11,000 records – yet it occupies only a fraction of the space used before. The system features five seven-foot-long mobile carriages, which are mated to rails located in a sub-floor. Users access files by rotating an ergonomically designed three-spoke handle, which allows for "feather-touch" movement the carriages.

Result: Seamless operation, bright future

Thanks to the ActivRAC 16P mobilized storage system, the CIF gained 47 percent more capacity for storage in the same area where pallet racking was once used. In addition, Johnson says there's little question whether the system adds to the efficiencies of the operation.

"For one thing, it's much more accessible than pushback racking because you can see exactly what you need on it," Johnson says. "And since the pallet needed is always right on the front of the system you don't have to offload and then reload the pallets that aren't needed like you would've had to do with pushback racks."

Johnson adds that the mobilized system allows the operation to put otherwise dead aisle space to work. That means having most frequently accessed items closer to the counter where soldiers are lined up and waiting.

Efficiencies aside, Johnson says the ability to install the ActivRAC system with only minor modifications to the CIF facility was a major advantage.

"There's so much that goes into funding of the building as well as the laws and regulations involved," she says, "and there are lots of people who are very particular about changes to it. If we had to modify the facility beyond what we did for the ActivRAC system, it' would've been a showstopper. The space we have is what we get and we have to make it work, which we did."

For the Minnesota National Guard, the CIF is now positioned to handle the storage and management of OCIE for years to come – making it a virtually seamless process as the guardsmen join the ranks of the most well trained soldiers on the planet.

