

Textile management at the German Red Cross

Intelligent clothes cabinets at the DRK local branch Schwenningen



Project goal

- Digitized laundry documentation
- Automated, transparent dispensing and returns
- Improvement of hygiene management
- Loss reduction

Challenge

- It should also be possible to supply temporary emergency forces at short notice
- Strongly fluctuating demand due to pandemic situation should not lead to bottlenecks

Solution

- RFID-based laundry management system with intelligent dispensing cabinets (texCabinets)
- Return cabinet (texReturn)
- Management software (Commander Connect)

Benefits

- More efficient processes
- Collection of usage data
- Simple management of also temporary personnel
- 24/7 availability of clothing

Less trouble with laundry management – more time for protection and assistance

The German Red Cross has many important tasks that are performed competently, efficiently and mostly by volunteers on a daily basis. Cumbersome administrative tasks and inefficient small details in the management of work clothes are even more important when they get in the way of such essential tasks and unnecessarily tie up already scarce time and resources.

Heiko Knickrehm, head of the on-call team at the DRK Ortsverein Schwenningen e.V., and his colleagues Daniel Weißhaar and Marvin Böck realized this when the manual administration of the work clothes of the nearly 100 emergency personnel became increasingly complicated. The previous solution for documenting who had been issued which clothing in which size: paper lists. There were frequent problems with the availability of the clothing items, pieces were lost, and the return and reprocessing process was intransparent and unsatisfactory. This had to be improved, thought Heiko Knickrehm, and he set out to find an intelligent, digitized solution.



Intelligent cabinet system

He found what he was looking for at deister electronic, with whom he had already worked before. Now, the clothing pool of the DRK Schwenningen, consisting of several hundred polo shirts, pants and sweatshirts in various sizes, is stored in three cabinets from deister's teXtag® series – a fourth one manages spare work jackets. Instead of keeping tedious records of who has which service clothing by hand and goodwill, the intelligent dispensing cabinets now record this fully automatically and book the clothing directly to the respective personnel account when it is removed. ►

In addition, it is possible to see at any time whether the specified minimum stock of a piece of clothing has dropped below the minimum level, so that the stock can be replenished or the laundry informed. A drop-off cabinet with a laundry bag has also been installed for the return process. The employees simply throw their dirty laundry in here, which then relieves their account. The return cabinet also sends an automatic e-mail notification as soon as a defined filling limit is reached. Due to the high hygiene requirements and voluminous clothing items, the laundry bag is emptied once or twice a week. All users, pieces of clothing, events and laundry movements are managed and documented centrally in the Commander Connect software supplied with the system. The current inventory for each locker can also be viewed there at any time.



Easy installation and handling

The cabinets were delivered fully assembled and only needed to be set up, aligned and connected. The technology-savvy team around Heiko Knickrehm took care of this themselves without further ado. Only software training and commissioning were carried out on site with the support of a deister electronic employee.

A good 300 items of clothing were purchased for this purpose and, in collaboration with a local laundry, fitted with the necessary RFID tags for sticking in. After a short test phase, a small instruction sheet was all that was needed to teach the users how to operate the cabinets. „The system is not complicated and is very intuitive to use,“ says Daniel Weißhaar. „The lockers now unobtrusively relieve [the DRK Schwenningen] of annoying administrative work in the background and ensure continuous and reliable availability of service clothing,“ adds Heiko Knickrehm. More hygienic cleaning cycles and full transparency are additional benefits. This is particularly helpful because, with the sometimes highly variable workloads and team sizes, bottlenecks in clothing supply can be anticipated and avoided. And many volunteers are also motivated, as clean clothing is always available for them.

Emergency volunteer personnel who are involved with the DRK Schwenningen every now and then for a short time and spontaneously receive a temporary user ID card and thus have access to the service clothing pool. And the existing badges have also been integrated into the system in such a way that, as before, only one transponder is required per person. An added bonus that the team is pleased about: The lockers are certified as fireproof. ►

The need for optimization and modernization had already been there for a long time. The crucial point in the decision for the intelligent textile management system was the support from a Corona emergency aid fund for better hygiene measures, from which financial support could be requested. This is also generating interest elsewhere: „Other aid organizations have already visited us and others will be looking at the system,“ says Knickrehm.

„Another advantage of the solution is the software, which can be expanded modularly to include additional functions. For example, we are currently evaluating the use of digital door and cabinet locks from deister. They can be used with the RFID employee ID cards that are already stored in the software for use with the textile management system.“ ■



About the DRK Ortsverein Schwenningen

The DRK local branch Schwenningen is one of ten local branches in the district association Villingen-Schwenningen e.V. The local branches perform the various Red Cross tasks in the northern part of the Schwarzwald-Baar district within the scope of their capacity together with the district association. The district association is part of the national and international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement in the DRK state association Badisches Rotes Kreuz.



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About deister electronic

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