



Anthrax testing? No problem

Madge provides reliability and affordability after Terrorist attacks

Wexham Springs, UNITED KINGDOM (March 5, 2002) – After the terrorist attacks of September 11th, the services of the State Laboratory of Public Health for the State of North Carolina were very much in demand.

As part of the unit's function, testing for suspected bio-terrorist substances - anthrax especially - took on a special urgency, and the Lab rose magnificently to the challenge, carrying out the tests and delivering the results as soon as physically possible. But the story could have been very different, as Sheila Jones, the Lab's information systems manager, explains. "Up to last August, we had been having a lot of network outages. And any one of these outages would bring the entire network down for several hours," she says. "It was starting to happen once or twice a week. People trying to get into our web applications couldn't get hold of their test results. **It was getting really ugly.**"

Hospitals and doctors around the State were being locked out from the Lab's website, and results were being delayed by the constant failures of the ageing computer network. The work of the Lab, of course, goes far wider than testing for anthrax. Whenever a new child is born in the State, a sample of their blood is sent for testing there. The lab also handles cancer smears and samples for all sorts of other diseases. It is also responsible for testing the quality of milk and water across the State.

The network problems were therefore having a severe effect on the running of healthcare in North Carolina. The answer was obviously to upgrade the infrastructure, which consisted mainly of IBM Token Ring hardware that had first been installed in 1993. But like most publicly-funded bodies, the Lab works on a tight budget and its options were limited. Sheila Jones, and her Systems Administrator Eric Dyer, just knew they had to create a more reliable infrastructure that would also be able to provide a link from an Ethernet segment of the network into the network backbone.

"We really had no budget for an expensive upgrade," says Eric Dyer. "We had to come with a solution based on our annual budget which was already minuscule - and rebuild our infrastructure."

At this time, they discovered Madge, a long-time Token Ring supplier with advanced technology that would also provide the necessary links to their Ethernet devices. Working on the tight budget, Madge proposed taking out the old shared Token Ring devices, and moving the Lab to a switched environment that would provide a dedicated connection for each of the 180 PCs and various pieces of medical equipment that were attached to the network. "We installed one Ringswitch Express with a High Speed Token Ring card and an Ethernet card, plus 12 Smartswitch devices with 24 ports," Dyer says.

With Madge's Trueview network management software in place, the pair were soon able to identify certain troublesome Network Interface Cards, and some cabling, that had been causing most of their problems before. The whole installation was completed by the last week of August, and suddenly outages became a thing of the past. All of a sudden, results were feeding back from the lab equipment quickly, and were readily accessible by the hospitals and doctors who depend so heavily on the Lab for fast turnaround at low cost. Jones and Dyer also appreciate the high reliability of the new network. "It is very critical for us not to have outages," Sheila Jones says. "We just don't have the staff to do night work and weekend work to repair things. We run it ourselves, pretty much."

The timing of the upgrade could not have been more fortunate, also. "We were upgrading the network in the last weekend in August," Sheila Jones recalls. "It was very fortunate we didn't have any outages in the ensuing weeks because we did all the anthrax testing here." Within two weeks, the demand for anthrax tests had rocketed and a struggling network could have caused serious distress. In the event, however, the Lab found the resilience it needed at a bargain price. It is now able to process its work efficiently, and if it needs to expand the Ethernet side of the network, the Madge equipment allows that to happen without disruption to the Lab's valuable - and vital - work.





About North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health

The Division of Public Health covers a wide range of programs and services, all aimed toward protecting and improving the health of the people who live and work in North Carolina. Please visit, <http://slph.state.nc.us/>

About Madge Networks N.V.

Madge Networks N.V. (NASDAQ NM: MADGF) is a global supplier of advanced networking product solutions to large enterprises, and is the market leader in Token Ring. Madge is pioneering next generation networking solutions, which enable the painless deployment of 100Mbps and Gigabit speed IP-based applications within existing corporate networks while protecting customers' investments in Token Ring. Madge Networks also has an associate company, Red-M™, a leading supplier of wireless networking product solutions. The Company's main business centers are located in Wexham Springs, United Kingdom and Manasquan, New Jersey. Information about Madge's complete range of products and services can be accessed at www.Madge.com.

