

Ho-Chunk Gaming: **Case Study**



Ho-Chunk Gaming - Wisconsin Dells

New IDAS™ System Enhances Coverage & Security



A case study prepared by Icom America Inc.
Manufacturers of high-performance, award-winning radios for over 55 years.

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Pointon Communications has served Wisconsin since 1984 specializing in the industrial and the public safety sector. Pointon offers two-way radio sales and service, as well as engineering, and designing system solutions.

Ho-Chunk Gaming - Wisconsin Dells needed a reliable two-way radio solution that would provide instant, clear communications across its expansive facility and eliminate ongoing audio and coverage problems. IDAS™ provided a cost-effective, future-proof system that resolved nagging communications problems while increasing security and enhancing guest service.



Featured Products:

- Icom F4161DS Portable Radio
- Icom F6061D Mobile Radio
- Icom FR6000 Repeater



Service and Security Center on Communications

Ho-Chunk of Baraboo, WI, is a full-service casino located in the Wisconsin Dells region, a popular Midwestern tourist destination. It is one of six gaming casinos operated by the Ho-Chunk Nation, which offers the most locations for gaming in Wisconsin and owns 4,602 acres scattered across Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Ho-Chunk's 95,000-square-foot facility includes a 24-hour gaming floor, 315 hotel rooms, five restaurants, a convention center, and on-site recreation for guests. The gaming floor features blackjack, poker, craps, roulette, mini-baccarat, bingo, off-track betting, video poker and more than 2,300 slot machines 365 days a year.

Because providing an exceptional guest experience is a primary concern for Ho-Chunk Gaming - Wisconsin Dells, the facility uses a two-way communications system for instant contact between its executive, security, maintenance, food and beverage, gaming, housekeeping, transportation, hotel, and marketing departments. The system enhances guest services by allowing employees to communicate quickly and efficiently to meet customer needs and deliver high-quality service.

The casino also depends on its two-way communications system for maintaining security in the gaming environment, protecting the safety of guests as well as preventing individuals from cheating on the gaming floor.

Old Communications System in Need of an Upgrade

With so much riding on the performance of its communications system, Ho-Chunk began looking to replace its aging 10-channel trunked radio system installed in late 1999.



The original system had experienced problems from the onset. Radio key up collisions and intermodulation distortion created significant levels of interference for radio users. Dead spaces in the subterranean area were another major concern. Over time, repeaters and radios started to fail due to age.

“The old system had problems from day one,” says Brad Pointon of Baraboo, WI-based Pointon Communications. “The intermod problems were consistent from the beginning.”

Because clear, reliable communications are critical for an exceptional guest experience and secure gaming environment, the casino decided to upgrade its system in the hopes of resolving ongoing audio problems and increasing communications privacy.

IDAS™: Clear Winner with Great Features & Reasonable Price

Ho-Chunk had several requirements when selecting a new system. It wanted a 6.25 kHz digital trunked system, and the radios needed to be durable and operate without interference. The casino was also looking for a good value — great features and high quality at a reasonable price.



Because of the audio problems encountered with its previous system, the casino carefully researched its options before purchasing a new radio system. Ho-Chunk learned about Icom’s 6.25 kHz IDAS solution at a trade show, where it observed a beta radio operate. Impressed with the radio’s audio quality, the casino contacted Pointon Communications to see if it could provide a 6.25 kHz IDAS system.

Pointon guided the casino through the process of budget planning, system design, and FCC licensing. The casino tested several radios from different manufacturers, but Icom’s IDAS system was clearly the way to go, Pointon says.

“Ho-Chunk decided to go with the Icom system, and it has been satisfied ever since. The system continues to work as expected and casino employees say how wonderful the system works.” Brad Pointon, Owner of Pointon Communications

Once Ho-Chunk selected Icom’s IDAS solution, system design and installation were simple and straightforward. Icom America Systems built the



system at its Bellevue, WA, facility before shipping it to Baraboo for installation. The new 10-channel IDAS trunking system comprises 10 Icom FR6000 Series repeaters and approximately 800 radios and speaker microphones. All casino departments, including security, food and beverage, hotel, marketing, and gaming have access to the system.

Benefits of the New IDAS™ System

The IDAS 6.25 kHz solution proved successful in resolving Ho-Chunk Casino's ongoing audio problems. By splitting channels into 6.25 kHz frequencies, the system eliminated the intermod distortion and collision problems that plagued the facility's previous system.

IDAS allows clearer voice communications over a greater range. Digital error-correction technology permits audio communications without the loss traditionally associated with analog communications. The digital receivers reject any error signals, permitting improved audio in even difficult areas or loud environments.

The new IDAS system also resolved the casino's ongoing coverage issues. Pointon initially expected the facility to require a multisite system, but a single site was sufficient for providing coverage across the 95,000-square-foot facility. Casino personnel can operate radios reliably throughout the entire complex, including the subterranean area notorious for its dead spaces.

Another benefit of the new system is increased communications privacy. The IDAS digital system offers enhanced encryption, preventing unwanted listeners from monitoring casino communications in an effort to gain an advantage or cheat at the tables.

Ho-Chunk decided to go with the Icom system, and has been satisfied ever since," Pointon says. "While some employees were initially resistant to change, the transition to the new system went smoothly and user feedback has been very positive. The system continues to work as expected and casino employees say how wonderful the system works," Pointon says.

Loretta LoMastro, Assistant Security Director, revealed that the hand held radios were initially experiencing transmission issues which, when Icom tested the impaired units, found the minor defect. "Both Icom and Pointon Communications have provided outstanding service. To see both the manufacturer and the dealer show a genuine concern is refreshing and very much appreciated."

Fletcher Collins advises that Icom has provided the facility with an indispensable emergency back-up system in case of power failure or catastrophic events. They now have the ability to utilize both a digital and an analog off-site tower and have the ability to talk radio to radio without the need for a repeater.





“Good, clear communication is a must”, states Fletcher Collins, Security Director for Ho-Chunk Gaming – Wisconsin Dells. “This system provides this for us.”

The benefits of the new system, specifically its clarity, distance, and dependability have scored high marks with Ho-Chunk Gaming - Wisconsin Dells.

IDAS™: Advanced Communications for the Gaming Industry

Icom’s IDAS (Icom Digital Advanced System) technology is designed for business, industry, and government users requiring advanced performance and exceptional reliability. Based on the non-proprietary NXDN™ protocol, IDAS systems double the capacity of current 12.5 kHz channels and provide greater audio quality, enhanced security, and integrated data, making the solution ideal for the gaming and hospitality market. In addition to the spectral efficiency and audio improvements realized by Ho-Chunk, IDAS also provides business and industry users a path for gradual migration to very narrowband digital, allowing users to implement a digital 6.25 kHz system while continuing to run an existing analog system.

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