

REPRINTED from

COMPUTERWORLD®

THE VOICE OF IT MANAGEMENT ■ WWW.COMPUTERWORLD.COM

JANUARY 24, 2006

Security management tool comes to hospital's aid

Tool guards 250 wireless access points at Carilion Health System

BY MATT HAMBLÉN

Carilion Health System has been working to make its wireless LAN secure and compliant with federal regulations for three years, but the company recently found a new tool to simplify its wireless security management.

Brian Brindle, senior network engineer for the health care provider in Roanoke, Va., said Carilion has been using a new version of a wireless security tool for managing 250 wireless access points that offers better reports and simplifies administration.

The wireless network is critical to patient care and administration of medications in the 700-bed main hospital and 12 other sites that have wireless access, Brindle said.

In addition, recent HIPAA requirements require Carilion, like other hospitals, to keep daily logs showing that the net-

work is working properly, he said.

Brindle began testing AirDefense Enterprise 7.0 in late October and has been using it fully since it was released Dec. 12. The tool, from AirDefense Inc. in Atlanta, has an updated dashboard display that helps present more pertinent security information, rather than just log files of network activity.

"I can better tell what might be going on, such as whether that's an intrusion or just a technical problem," he said in a recent interview. "I get fewer calls from administrators asking, 'What does this mean?'" he said.

According to Brindle, AirDefense has developed a product that can create custom reports on network activity for regulatory compliance that are more sophisticated than what's available from other vendors, such as AirMagnet Inc. and AirTight Networks Inc.

The AirDefense tool has "freed me up big time," Brindle said, since he was the one handling all wireless problems until he could train help desk workers to handle remote monitoring chores.

Brindle has worked with earlier AirDefense versions for three years to detect wireless LAN intruders and rogue users. Over that time, Carilion has collected information on the security incidents and network exposures it has avoided. "We've even had real attacks to enable us to shut down and avoid compromises," he added.

He estimates that over three years, Carilion has spent about \$50,000 for security management, but he said it has been worth the investment just in terms of avoiding security problems. "There is no return on investment in security products, period," he said.

AirDefense Enterprise 7.0 pricing starts at \$8,975.