



CASE STUDY

# EXPRESS WELD

## BlackHawk Provides Smart Technological Solutions to Traditional Gate Guard System

*BlackHawk Datacom's thorough knowledge of managed security solutions helps Express Weld modify their secure system while ensuring compliance with the Coast Guard's stringent security guidelines.*

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Express Weld is an industry leader in fabrication and repair services for the maritime industry. Located in Port Fourchon, Louisiana, Express Weld offers full dockside and crane services and specializes in top-side vessel repair, utilizing their full-service fabrication and welding capabilities. Since Express Weld opened their Port Fourchon facility in 2006, security requirements have steadily increased under the regulation of the United States Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). By 2012, Express Weld needed to meet strict governmental security guidelines. Initially, Express Weld decided to use a contract guard service. Having a live gate guard fulfilled the initial Coast Guard and DHS requirements, but presented other unique challenges in the quickly changing security landscape in Port Fourchon. When Express Weld’s Vice President of Operations, Jacob Pitre, heard that there was an alternative that could save his company money from day one, and meet the increasing security requirements head-on, he decided to explore further. The alternative was SmartGate, by BlackHawk Datacom.

## CLIENT CHALLENGES

One obvious challenge with a traditional guard service was the monthly cost of the security guard personnel. The potential for cost savings provided by SmartGate was the primary reason Pitre decided to explore the option.

Although Express Weld was generally satisfied with their security guard provider it became quickly apparent that, in addition to cost savings, the SmartGate system would provide a number of other immediate benefits including:

- ▶ BlackHawk's Managed Security Services would remove reliance upon a single gate guard who has the potential to be late or fail to show up for a shift, who could get sick, and required breaks.
- ▶ Replacing daily paper reports from the guard with automated electronic reporting and data archive from the BlackHawk system.
- ▶ Express Weld would have a single point of contact, the BlackHawk Incident Command Center, for all questions about access at their main gate.
- ▶ Every BlackHawk security professional was trained on specific Express Weld protocols, and the BlackHawk system software ensured compliance and documentation of every access-based security task.
- ▶ SmartGate cameras would provide a visual deterrent to crime, as well as a full video audit trail of gate activities for reference or investigative purposes.
- ▶ Express Weld could replace the guard shack and unsightly portable bathroom at the main facility entrance with a professionally installed, hardened SmartGate unit.

After six months in active service, Express Weld has fully realized the benefits they anticipated when they replaced their traditional gate guard with the SmartGate managed security system from BlackHawk Datacom.

After careful consideration, Pitre elected to replace his traditional gate guard with a fully managed security solution from BlackHawk, anchored by the SmartGate unit.

## BLACKHAWK AS A BUSINESS PARTNER

Security at our Nation's ports, under the guidance of the Coast Guard and DHS, is a difficult subject to navigate. Express Weld had developed a rapport with the local Coast Guard authorities. Compliance with all Coast Guard requests was an Express Weld requirement from project inception, but they needed assistance with the technical details of meeting those requirements. BlackHawk's Walt Messa took the lead on communications with the Coast Guard and DHS.

The first challenge was aligning Express Weld's Facility Security Plan (FSP) with their actual on-site procedures and the Coast Guard's documented MARSEC security requirements. Messa was able to help Express Weld modify their internal plans and processes to ensure compliance under the documented guidelines, and then submit the official plan to the Coast Guard for approval.

A series of meetings between Express Weld, Messa, and Coast Guard personnel demonstrated that not only did the SmartGate managed security service meet the Coast Guard's stringent requirements, but that BlackHawk was already mapping a path to anticipated future requirements such as a digital TWIC card interface. Additionally, SmartGate was able to provide video capture of entrants and their credentials, yielding a more robust audit trail than was achieved with a traditional guard using paper forms. The result of this series of meetings was full Coast Guard approval of the SmartGate technology and acceptance for use throughout Port Fourchon and surrounding high security areas.

Frequent interaction with the Coast Guard and DHS remains part of the service that BlackHawk is able to provide. "Walt and Floyd were excellent," said Pitre. "We have regular and spot inspections by DHS and the Coast Guard. Blackhawk personnel gets a lot of questions, and he's able to handle every one of them."

## RESULTS

After six months in active service, Express Weld has fully realized the benefits they anticipated when they replaced their traditional gate guard with the SmartGate managed security system from BlackHawk Datacom. Their costs have been reduced by a minimum of \$9,000 per month, security on site has improved, and Express Weld is consistently impressed with the quality and service provided by BlackHawk Incident Command Center personnel.

"BlackHawk's operators are great—they know what they need to know. They feel like direct employees and part of our facility," said Pitre.

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Express Weld has also realized the other practical benefits of the SmartGate system, including increased awareness of safety and security on site. Prior to SmartGate, Pitre indicated that not everyone at Express Weld had a full understanding of the security and safety requirements at the Express Weld yard. There was an assumption amongst some personnel that since a guard was involved, security and compliance were simply taken care of. The reality of the situation was that some gaps existed between the compliance requirements of the Coast Guard and DHS and the interaction between Express Weld and their guard provider.

As BlackHawk was able to engage with the Express Weld team to review procedures and meet these challenges with documented compliance solutions, awareness amongst the Express Weld team increased. The SmartGate unit and partnership with the BlackHawk security team has helped everyone understand their role in safety and security on the Express Weld location.

"The gate has made the entire process more professional, secure, and verified," said Pitre. "What I like about it is everybody that works for me is now more in-tune with safety because of the gate. Now, when they see someone wandering around or speeding, they take notice. They take more notice because of the processes enforced by the gate being here."