

Allcom puts secure remote access on the menu for NSW Food Authority

As Australia's first completely integrated or "through-chain" food regulation agency, the NSW Food Authority is responsible for food safety across the entire food industry, from primary production to point-of-sale. It works with local government to enforce all aspects of the Australian and New Zealand Food Standards Code, the NSW Food Act 2003 and the State's food safety programs.

In April 2004, when SafeFood NSW was merged with the food regulatory activities of NSW Health to establish the NSW Food Authority, the agency gained an extra 35 specialist field staff located all over the State. The immediate challenge was how to provision the new agency and the additional staff, many of whom were working remotely, with fast secure access to applications stored on the central server.

Secure shared access

NSW Food Authority field officers needed to be in touch with the department on a daily basis filing reports, uploading confidential information, downloading laboratory analyses and checking policies and agency directives.

Katie Kinaan, Manager, Information Management and Technology at the NSW Food Authority comments: "Field officers spend much of their time on the road inspecting farms and abattoirs ensuring that they comply with food safety programs. They also ensure that these industries comply with food safety programs by licensing or recording notification of food businesses, auditing and inspecting their operations regularly and where necessary, penalising non-compliance."

In the past, NSW Food Authority field officers had to dial in from home using the NSW Food Authority's existing Citrix Secure Gateway® which provides secure Virtual Private Network access to upload confidential files and information to the head office server. This solution also provides staff with access to core business applications, file and mail services. However, in most cases, field officers were limited to low bandwidth dial-up access because of their remote locations. To improve access, the agency invested in shared rural offices with other regulatory government agencies such as the NSW Department of Fisheries and the NSW Department of Agriculture.

This provided them with branches in Albury, Bathurst, Belmont, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Lake Illawarra, Wagga Wagga and Wollongbar, all of which had high-speed network and secure Internet access. While the new branches provided staff with faster network connections thereby improving their productivity, the NSW Food Authority still wanted to implement more robust security measures to further protect the confidentiality of company information and litigation files located on their field officers' laptops. While the Citrix Secure Gateway encrypts all confidential data traversing the Internet, between the client workstation and the head office server, NSW Food Authority wanted to ensure that they deployed the most robust and hardened solution possible.

The challenge

To ensure secure remote access for NSW Food Authority field officers in regional New South Wales.

The solution

Combining the ironclad security of RSA SecureID two-factor authentication with the remote access capabilities of the Citrix Server and management software

The benefits

- Secure network access for all staff regardless of location
- Easy to manage, cost effective robust IT infrastructure that's flexible and scalable

After an in-depth investigation of the available solutions, the NSW Food Authority contracted IT solutions provider Allcom to assess their network and deploy a hardened Virtual Private Network in conjunction with a comprehensive authentication solution. Allcom recommended SecurID from RSA Security® combined with the Citrix Secure Gateway to deliver high-level secure access and streamlined login procedures.

Katie Kinaan explains: "We're only a small agency so we needed something that was simple to manage, quick to implement, cost effective and above all, highly secure. Allcom worked very closely with us, developing an IT solution around our Citrix-based VPN, which is ideal for managing remote staff login; we had also recently upgraded to a Windows® XP-based standard operating environment across our laptops and desktop PCs."

As part of this secure remote access strategy, all applications used by NSW Food Authority staff were

thin-client enabled. Allcom designed a secure infrastructure so that all core business applications would only be stored on the NSW Food Authority head office servers, ensuring confidential material remained in one location.

"This enabled remote staff to log in and file and store projects on the central server without any confidential data needing to remain on their laptops in the field." said Katie Kinaan.

"For example, when working in remote locations, field officers may use a digital camera to record food-borne contamination or potential food-related problems. These images can be downloaded from their laptops to the server, filed and then deleted off the laptop. As well as ensuring robust security, this guarantees that files are not accidentally lost and provides centralised records, that are always completely up to date."

To provide secure access to the Citrix Secure Gateway servers, Allcom recommended the deployment of an RSA SecurID two-factor authentication solution. To gain access, staff require not only a personal password but also a one-time pass-code, randomly generated by the ID token every 60 seconds.

"RSA SecurID is an extremely robust solution which complements our Citrix Secure Gateway. It includes a powerful set of management tools to add new users, manage access and instantly switch off lost or misplaced ID tags."

"It's also extremely easy for staff to use," Katie Kinaan explains. "Recently, one of our senior executive directors was travelling overseas and needed access to the network. Using the RSA SecureID system, she quickly logged in, checked her email and updated a few files. The director later commented, how easy it was to do."

Peace of Mind

With a flexible Virtual Private Network and smart security in place, managing the network has also proved easier. Katie Kinaan has been able to set aside more time for project development and network improvements, such as identifying and eliminating bottlenecks, assessing usage and updating processes.

Katie Kinaan comments: "With so many staff on the road, security will always be a major issue for us, but now, it's no longer a major concern with the Citrix Secure Gateway and RSA's SecurID two-factor authentication. It gives us the peace of mind we need."

About Allcom

Since 1996, Allcom has provided effective and innovative IT solutions. These include total system integration encompassing the implementation of leading edge technologies and infrastructure design. Regardless of whether you want to streamline communications between branches, speed up network transactions, implement an effective customer contact centre, incorporate wireless networking, introduce new applications or strengthen the security of your network, Allcom can design and implement a proven solution.

Contact our friendly, professional team.

Allcom Networks Pty Ltd,
Level 1, 8-10 Loftus Street
Sydney, Australia

PO Box R1318, Royal Exchange
NSW 1225

Tel: +61 2 9921 1355

Fax: +61 2 9921 1366

Email: sales@allcomnetworks.com.au

Web: www.allcomnetworks.com.au

©Copyright 2004 Allcom Networks Pty Ltd. All rights reserved. The Allcom logo is a trademark of Allcom Networks Pty Ltd. Third party products and brand names may be trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. 7789-0804/NSWfood/Allcom Manageable, scalable security. Remote Access Case Study -NSW Food Authority