



MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Exciting Times



Evan Hass, General Manager

A BIG THANKS goes out to Don Pedersen who retired from his operations manager position earlier this year. Don was the second employee to begin work at DCN in January 1998, and he was a key person in designing, installing, and operating the initial DCN network. His expertise helped form the initial infrastructure on which DCN has built its success. DCN owes much of our current network capabilities to Don's knowledge and dedication. Thank you, Don!

The hillside at 4202 Coleman Street is turning green, a sure sign that the end of our major construction project is coming to an end. Nearly two years ago, the earth moving equipment began stripping the topsoil from the rocky hillside, carving out the construction site for the foundation and lower level where our new Bismarck office now stands.

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WHAT'S IN A MOVE?

Network Transition to New Bismarck Office is Under Way

With the new Bismarck office, located at 4202 Coleman Street, now officially open, the challenging task of moving DCN's 176 customers from the former DCN building to the new facility has begun.

"We have a very detailed project plan, especially because of the critical nature of these customers' businesses, which are primarily critical community institutions," says Seth Arndorfer, business development manager at DCN. "The move involves approximately 4,000 circuits, and each segment needs to be cut individually to minimize the impact."

DCN's customer base spans public safety (hospitals, National Guard, state radio dispatch, and courthouses); commerce (including 160 regional banking locations and numerous implement dealerships); and communications (wireless traffic and broadband Internet, the latter of which DCN serves more than 90 percent of the state's geographic area).

"A project of this magnitude is not taken lightly by DCN," says Jesse Heck, operations manager for DCN. "We have multiple crews working around the clock, and we're all working toward the same mission: minimize the impact to customers throughout this network transition."

While as much prep work as possible is done during "normal" working hours, the actual moving or cutting of circuits is done between midnight and 5 a.m. CT to minimize the impact.

The move, which continues through October, is going smoothly. To date, the biggest challenge – equipment delivery – is largely out of DCN's control. "We ordered the majority of our equipment well in advance, but there are still customer-specific parts and pieces that are needed, and we sometimes wait longer than we would like for those unique pieces," says Heck. "The good news is that despite equipment issues, there's been no impact in service delivery to customers."

In fact, any "blips" in service have been 50 milliseconds or less, which is faster than the blink of an eye. Such a blip doesn't cause any interruption of service.

Customers are notified well in advance of when their service will be moved to the new facility. "With any project plan, it needs to be a working plan," Arndorfer concludes. "As adjustments are made, we're doing our best to communicate proactively with our customers."

The new Bismarck office, and the new Network Operations Center located within the facility, act as a "Fort Knox" for network connectivity, support, and monitoring purposes.

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Completing the construction of the building is a small part of the project. DCN technicians have begun moving the equipment and support structure for the Bismarck DCN Network Operations Center, which is the focal point of the entire network. Migrating fully to the new facility involves many additional processes. To date we have completed connecting the new site to the DCN DWDM backbone, an integral part of the extension to the new location.

Work is in progress for the upgrade of the Ethernet Backbone which is also an integral part of the move to the new Bismarck office. Over the next few months, there will be much late-night work during maintenance windows as customer circuits are moved to the Network Operations Center within the new facility. Normal maintenance notifications will be sent to inform customers of when there will be activity related to their circuits.

Summer also finds a number of DCN construction crews placing fiber with major projects taking place in Bismarck/Mandan, Fargo, and Grand Forks. An early spring helped the crews get a jump on these summer projects.

“How hot can it get?!” That was the question heard frequently at DCN’s annual summer Classic Golf Event last July. The high heat is now a distant memory as we plan for the grand opening of our new building followed by the 11th annual summer Classic Golf Event on Monday, July 30. We hope you can join us for the program at 9:15 a.m. and then take a tour of the new facility and have lunch with us. The golf tournament starts at 1 p.m., and it won’t be as hot as last year...I promise!

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The 42,000-square-foot building is a carrier-grade hardened facility, meaning that it is extremely reliable, well-tested, and proven in its capabilities. Carrier-grade systems are tested and engineered to meet or exceed high availability standards.

The facility ensures 99.999 percent network uptime, which is especially important since DCN provides network connectivity to North Dakota’s most critical institutions, including health care, public safety, state government and financial organizations.

JOIN US FOR OUR GRAND OPENING

We’ll celebrate the grand opening of our new Bismarck office, 4202 Coleman Street, on Monday, July 30. Please join us! The day’s events include*:

9:15 – 10:15 a.m.: Program

10:15 a.m. – noon: Building Tours

10:15 a.m. – noon: Lunch

1 p.m.: 2012 DCN Classic Golf Outing

The program will include a ribbon cutting with the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber of Commerce as well as comments from state dignitaries. We hope to see you there!

*tentative schedule



CO-LOCATION PROVIDES SECURITY AND PEACE OF MIND

In addition to housing DCN's telecommunications equipment, the new state-of-the-art DCN Bismarck office houses critical equipment for many DCN customers in its new Data Center Space. DCN worked with an independent information technology (IT) security auditor to ensure that the secure co-location data center is SAE 16 SOC Type I & Type II, HIPAA, and PCI compliant for customers' security and peace of mind.

The co-location facility includes a redundant power supply; multiple 10 Gig dedicated Internet connections terminating Chicago, Seattle, Minneapolis, and Denver; 24/7 security and monitoring; and secure, lockable cabinets. Through co-location, DCN provides a reliable solution for customers who don't want the added expense of purchasing network equipment yet need a dependable disaster recovery site in addition to high available bandwidth.

The DCN Data Center Space was engineered to provide reliability, security, and flexibility:

Reliability

DCN installed an extremely advanced fire detection/suppression system. The data center is equipped with a VESDA® (very early smoke detection apparatus) system for detecting a potential fire before flames or smoke appears. Additionally, the data center is equipped with a SAPPHIRE® dry fire suppression system. DCN also monitors environmental conditions including temperature, smoke, humidity, moisture, and motion within the Data Center Space.

Security

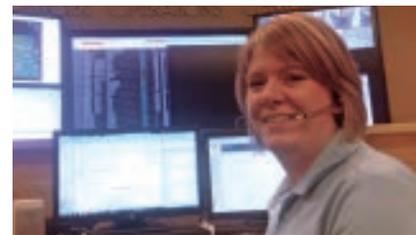
A digital video surveillance system monitors the secure data center and records all physical activity in the space. Customer cabinets are equipped with combination locks that can be set by each customer. Customers can be assured that their equipment is safe and secure through these precautions as well as building security and access badge and biometric entry systems.

Flexibility

Depending on customers' individual needs, DCN offers dedicated lockable cabinets available in full, one-half, or one-third intervals. Sophisticated equipment enables DCN to monitor customers' power consumption and charge only for power consumed within their respective cabinet(s). The Data Center Space, which is equipped with complimentary password-protected Wi-Fi, includes 24-hour customer access to a common workspace that provides a quiet, secure place for customers to work within the co-location facility.



EMPLOYEE PROFILE



Barb Pfeifer

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Barb Pfeifer has been with Dakota Carrier Network since January 2011 and serves as an operations support representative. Before joining DCN – and relocating from Farmington, Minnesota to Bismarck – she spent nearly 20 years working at Qwest at its downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota location.

Barb's primary responsibilities at DCN focus on answering incoming calls to the Network Operations Center (NOC) at the new Bismarck office, creating trouble/issue tickets, and then assigning the issues to technicians. She also monitors the network, works with local telecommunications companies to ensure that due dates for new orders are met, and informs customers when maintenance is taking place.

She says the best part of her job is being a part of a growing company and working with friendly and fun people. As for what sets DCN apart from the competition, Barb says it's the company's ability to provide customers a one-stop shop. "When customers call with a quick question or to report trouble, I am able to issue a ticket and get a tech involved right away. There's no waiting for multiple departments."

Barb is originally from Mahanomen, Minnesota. She and her husband, Patrick, have two daughters, Ava and Lauren. Outside of DCN, Barb enjoys spending time with family and friends, traveling, and reading.



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connections

MAKE TIME FOR TEE TIME



The 2012 Dakota Carrier Classic Golf Outing is scheduled for Monday, July 30 in conjunction with the grand opening of DCN's new Bismarck office.

Participants can take in the grand opening festivities – including a program, lunch, and building tours at the new office from 9:15 a.m. to noon – and then head to Hawktree Golf Club for a 1 p.m. tee off. The 11th annual golf outing will be capped off with awards, prizes, and an evening meal at the Hawktree Clubhouse.

Hawktree Golf Club is located at 3400 Burnt Creek Loop in Bismarck. For more information and/or to register, please contact your DCN sales representative.

OPERATIONS MANAGER DONALD PEDERSEN RETIRES

Donald (Don) Pedersen recently retired after 14 years of devoted service as operations manager at DCN. The second employee hired at DCN in January of 1998, Don installed the original Nortel Classic OC48 SoNET Rings throughout North Dakota. During his DCN career, he managed multiple backbone upgrades and provided valuable insight to DCN management on new service offerings such as asynchronous transfer mode (ATM), Ethernet, and managed network services.

Don's leadership was pivotal in establishing DCN as the high-quality, high-availability premier network provider in the region. After serving his country and being discharged in 1966, Don's 46-year career in the telecom industry began when he joined Northwestern Bell.

Don retired in March, just in time to enjoy more time at local golf courses. DCN appreciates Don's dedication to his position as well as to DCN.

Thank you, Don, and congratulations!

