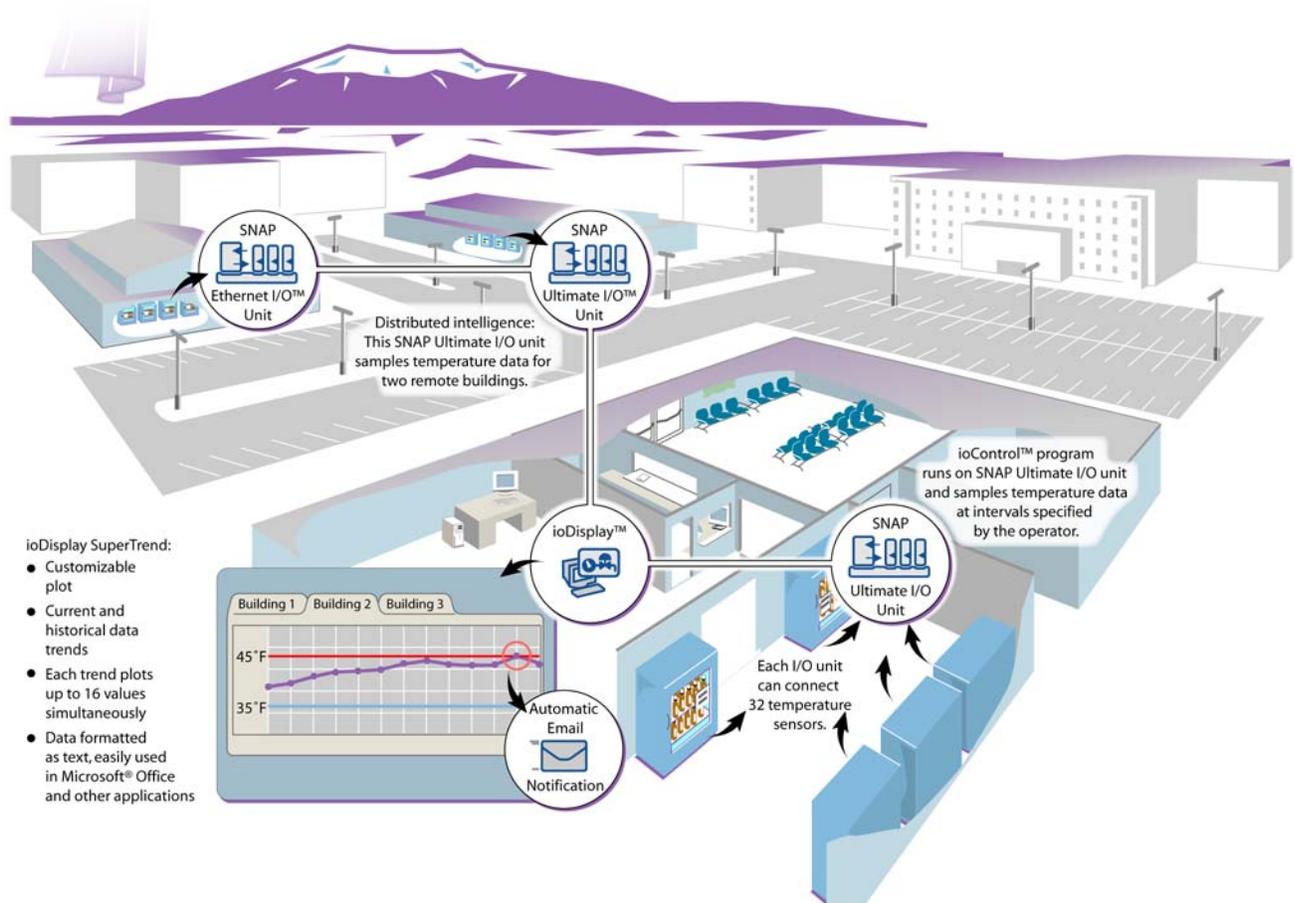


Alaska Native Medical Center

Healthcare Organizations Seeks Accreditation Using Opto 22 SNAP Ethernet Systems for Drug Storage And Refrigeration

The Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) in Anchorage is a non-profit, managed health care organization jointly operated by the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and the Southcentral Foundation. The ANMC campus includes a patient hospital, pharmacy, clinics, and several administration buildings.

As part of its operations, the ANMC needed to pursue accreditation by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), the nation's oldest and largest healthcare accrediting body. An independent, nonprofit organization, the JCAHO has, for more than 50 years, developed standards and evaluated the compliance of healthcare organizations to those standards.



To earn their JCAHO accreditation, healthcare organizations must undergo an exhaustive on-site evaluation, known as a survey, which typically takes place over a three day period. A team of surveyors meets with healthcare organization personnel, patients, and visitors, and carefully assesses the quality and safety of patient care, infection control, emergency management, and other services. Also evaluated during the survey are all of the organization's systems and processes. Among these are the refrigeration and storage of all drugs and pharmaceutical supplies.

To store its drugs, the ANMC maintains 45 refrigerators in three different buildings. Because some drugs are very sensitive to fluctuations in temperature—and sometimes even lose their potency and effectiveness—the JCAHO requires that these drugs be stored at temperatures between 35° and 45° fahrenheit. Moreover, the JCAHO requires a reporting method be established to verify refrigerator temperature at designated intervals.

"In recent years, the center had tried many different systems to accomplish this," says CAPT Doug Herring, Assistant Chief of Pharmacy Services at the ANMC. "All of these, however, required physical inspection of each refrigerator. That meant a lot of walking and a lot of lost man hours."

For example, ANMC tried chart recorders on its refrigerators. Chart recorders are antiquated devices that monitor and record data on graph paper.

Unfortunately, these chart recorders required physical inspection and the graph paper had to be replaced regularly and stored. One day, the system failed and didn't record any temperatures at all. This was the last straw. Looking for a way to monitor the ANMC refrigerators remotely and accurately record and store temperatures, Herring sat down at his computer and typed "refrigerator monitoring" into his search engine. The result? Opto 22 and its line of asset monitoring and data acquisition hardware.

Herring soon had an Opto 22 SNAP Ethernet system installed at the ANMC, consisting of two SNAP Ultimate I/O units and one SNAP Ethernet I/O unit.

On each refrigerator, installed temperature sensors connect to SNAP modules on the I/O unit. The processor (or "brain") then records the refrigerator temperature at any interval Herring (or the JCAHO) requires.

The resulting real time data is made available using ioDisplay, Opto 22's Windows-based software interface used

for viewing and collating data from SNAP I/O systems. ioDisplay saves the data as a graphical "supertrend", and archives it for later use. The data is also available as raw numerical values that can populate popular software databases such as Microsoft Excel and Access.

Integration of the ANMC's new system was both quick and seamless and Herring is very pleased with his new capabilities. "It's so straightforward. I just tell the unit how often I need the readings and there they are," he says.



*Opto 22's SNAP Ultimate I/O System:
Brain, Modules, and Rack*

Herring and his pharmacy services staff now have the ability to monitor all 45 ANMC refrigerators right from their desktop PCs. At any given moment, authorized personnel can check temperature status and the SNAP Ethernet system populates ioDisplay with fresh, accurate temperature readings which are timestamped and saved for JCAHO inspectors, regulatory agencies, administration staff, or anyone else who might need this verified data. Data can be presented as pure numerical values or graphically in the form of line graphs. Perhaps best of all, should temperatures fall out of the designated 35-45° range, ioDisplay sends an immediate email warning to Herring automatically.

"A reliable system that could do the monitoring but also attach to the our IT network and send the information directly to our databases is exactly what I was looking for," says Herring. "No more trekking out to three different buildings all the time; no more paper records and filing cabinets; and instant notification if there's a problem. It's so much more efficient."

The Alaska Naval Medical Center's survey took place on October 8, 2003. With the help of Opto 22 SNAP Ethernet systems, the center's drug storage and refrigeration processes met or exceeded all of the JCAHO's requirements and Herring and his staff received their accreditation with an overall preliminary score of 93.

About Opto 22

Opto 22 manufactures and develops hardware and software products for applications in industrial automation, remote monitoring, and enterprise data acquisition. Using standard, commercially available Internet, networking, and computer technologies, Opto 22's SNAP systems allow customers to monitor, control, and acquire data from all of the mechanical, electrical, or electronic assets that are key to their business operations. Opto 22's products and services support automation end users, OEMs, and information technology and operations personnel. founded in 1974 and with over 85 million Opto 22-connected devices deployed worldwide, the company has an established reputation for quality and reliability. Opto 22 products are sold through a worldwide network of distributors, partners, and system integrators. For more information, contact Opto 22 headquarters at 800-321-OPTO or visit our Web site at www.opto22.com.