

# Case Study

How Helsinki Zoo uses TETRA to secure bear necessities





# Securing the bear necessities

**Helsinki Zoo** attracts more than half a million visitors every year. It was founded in 1889 and is one of the oldest zoos in the world. Based on Korkeasaari island in a cove near Helsinki city centre, the zoo holds about 200 animal species, as well as rare plants from around the world. Many of the specimens are severely endangered and Helsinki is working with other zoos to conserve them.

**Think of typical TETRA public radio users and 'zookeeper' probably wouldn't be among the first professions to come to mind. But for staff at Helsinki zoo, the technology is proving its value every day.**

## at Helsinki Zoo

Helsinki Zoo has enjoyed improved security for visitors and staff since it opted to switch its communications to a TETRA solution over HelenNet in 2006. Communication blackspots, voice interference from the nearby harbour and shared radios have all been eliminated by adopting the digital solution.

The zoo's old analogue system suffered from all these problems and more. For example, all the staff used a single channel, leading to a constant babble that made priority messages difficult to isolate. The management realised that something needed to be done. "Improving the level of security – both for visitors and personnel – is a global trend," says security supervisor **Pasi Jürgens**. "There is an increasing need to be prepared."

One of the reasons for choosing HelenNet was that the existing network, which is owned and operated by Helsinki Energy, could meet the zoo's communication needs without having to build new base stations. In fact, the network was ready to provide blackspot-free coverage across the zoo with just a few small enhancements.

### Group advantages

The talk group concept also suits Helsinki Zoo's needs very well, and the service is configured for group communication only, rather than individual communication. Today, the zoo has around 55 users and terminals on its Virtual Private Network. These are currently divided among five talk groups: management, security, animal carers, environment, estates management. There is also a broadcast group that everyone can hear.

Helsinki Energy trained the users, consulted on the talk groups and configured the TETRA terminals ready for use. Two years on and everyone is fully up to speed, relying on their improved communications whenever the pressure is on.

For example, the zoo runs "Big Cats' Nights" on two evenings in September, enabling visitors to see the felines when they are at their most active. These evenings are some of the biggest events in the zoo's calendar, attracting around 8,000 visitors per night. Nearly everyone is on duty and each member of staff is equipped with their own radio.

### No more sharing

The most typical "emergency" is locating a lost child. Every member of staff can instantly be made aware of the situation. This enables people to be found much more quickly.

This contrasts with the old system, where the use of a single channel limited the total number of radios that could be used without risking overloading the frequency. So, many staff had to share radios and often couldn't access one when they needed it. "Usually, when I needed to reach the zoo veterinarian or call for repairs, I could not take the time to fetch the radio, so I used my own cell phone," explains zookeeper **Juha Kurikka**. "Today, the system is so much better."

The zoo environment can be tough, and the THR880i EADS terminals provide a robust solution. A special terminal pocket has also been built into the work trousers of the zookeepers, freeing up their hands to deal with the animals. This is a far more practical solution than an external belt or holster, according to Kurikka: "We already have keys hanging from a key chain either on the belt or around our neck, and even that tends to get caught on trees or doors. The radio would be an additional potential item that gets caught."



"This system is so much better than the old one," says zookeeper Juha Kurikka.

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