



29 JAN 10 FEDERAL STORAGE OPENS AUTOMATED FACILITY IN NORTH CAROLINA

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By Alex Hassel, Storage.com

Ever wish you could make your self storage facility safer while cutting down on employees? Brad Minsley, co-owner of [10 Federal Storage](#), says he's made it happen thanks to Janus International's and PTI Security Systems' [SecurGuard Electronic Lock](#). Add web and kiosk service to the mix, and the 10 Federal Storage property in Graham, N.C., is fully automated. Minsley says it's the first of its kind using a kiosk and SecurGuard locks.

The Graham facility offers 15,600 square feet of storage with 156 units. 10 Federal Storage processes the property's rentals through its website or an on-site kiosk. Each of the facility's storage units are locked from the inside using SecurGuard but can be unlocked with a code once they're rented. If a renter becomes delinquent, the





SecurGuard system will automatically override the interior lock until payment is made. 10 Federal Storage still keeps a five-seat call center in case customers need help.

Although the concept is relatively new to the self storage industry, Minsley and his brother—who is his business partner—thought using the SecurGuard locks in order to go automated seemed like an obvious choice. “We feel it is where the industry is going,” says Minsley. “When the North Carolina DMV manages to start using kiosks and making their process unmanned, you pretty much know self storage should be there, too.”

Although they immediately saw the benefits, it still took some time to learn how to use the new technology. “It was fairly easy to get set up,” Minsley says. “Six months before opening the Graham facility, we built a ‘one-door self storage facility’ in our office with the kiosk, lock, etc., so we had plenty of time to work through any challenges. And when I say challenges, there was nothing wrong with the lock, PTI, or [StorEdge](#) (the system’s software).”

“The challenges were figuring out the proper workflow for the automated leasing process, overlocking and release of the overlock, maintenance access, etc. PTI and StorEdge have both been phenomenal in being dynamic and responsive in getting everything in place,” Minsley explains.

Minsley will tell you that integrating the SecurGuard system into an entire facility is costly, but you don’t have to pay as much for long-term maintenance or for a manager as a result. “There is an upfront cost for sure, but let me list the savings. Without a manager, we don’t have to have a bathroom. Without a bathroom, we don’t need to annex into the city for public utilities. By staying in the county, we have lower impact fees, lower taxes, and in some instances, lower construction requirements for things like storm water treatment.”

“Also, the office to house the kiosk is much smaller and less expensive to build. Those savings alone more than make up for the upfront lock cost. But the biggest savings is simply eliminating the manager position. We still provide the human element through a call center that we have, but when one agent can be spread across many properties, the payroll cost to the property is dramatically reduced,” says Minsley.





Wouldn't having no manager on the property at all bring some safety concerns? "Ha! I actually have less concern about the automated facility than I do for our manned facility," says Minsley. You pretty much have to rip the Janus door out of the wall to get past their overlock. At the manned facility, anyone with a drill can be through the cylinder lock and into the unit within about ten minutes."

However, this technology isn't just new for 10 Federal Storage, but its customers as well. With no one on site, the rental process has to be simple for new renters. "So like all new technologies, there is a learning curve," Minsley explains. "In this instance, there are two things being introduced to the Graham market. We have the first kiosk, but thankfully Redbox has blazed that trail, so most people are pretty comfortable when they encounter it."

"And the second [piece of] technology is the locks themselves. We have an instructional video playing on repeat in the kiosk office, as well as a mockup of the lock from Janus. And if people still don't get it, they just pick up the phone and hit up our call center. We





haven't had anyone back out once they understand the technology. If anything, based upon the initial reviews, people are very positive," adds Minsley.

The brothers behind 10 Federal Storage have had self storage experience in the past but have just recently added storage to the company's portfolio they started five years ago. Their first facility in Durham, N.C., uses standard self storage locks and services. After success in automation with the Graham facility, they'll continue developing that way in the future. "We start construction on our second fully-automated facility next month in Durham, N.C.," says Minsley.

Minsley recommends automated service with SecurGuard to others in the industry, but he adds that the concept may not work as well in every area. "If we are going to be in more urban areas competing against other manned facilities that have typical 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday hours, then we had better offer a better value because the on-site person does add a level of service, such as receiving packages and renting trucks that we have yet to implement."

"The better market [for automation] is the 90% of the country that's out in very suburban markets where we compete against the guy with a phone number on the fence or the facility that has about ten office hours a week."

After opening in the middle of January 2016, 10 Federal Storage's Graham facility is already filling up. The facility also offers other state-of-the-art systems like 24-hour camera surveillance, remote monitoring of its HVAC system, and remote monitoring and controls of the property's gates.

Images provided by 10 Federal Storage.

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