

1010 Hurley Way, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95825
(916) 263-6000
Fax (916) 263-6042

CALIFORNIA HORSE RACING BOARD

Los Alamitos Race Course
4961 E. Katella Avenue
Los Alamitos, CA 90720

Contact: Mike Marten
(714) 820-2748
Cell: (714) 240-1870
Fax (714) 821-6232

CHRB NEWS RELEASE

MARCH 8, 2006

LICENSING OFFICES USING NEW DIGITAL PHOTO ID

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California Horse Racing Board has introduced a newly developed digital photo identification system into the licensing process at all racetracks in the state, and the automated system potentially could be used by the Board and racing associations to enhance security in restricted areas.

As horse owners, trainers, jockeys, grooms, and other racing participants apply for new or renewal licenses at any of the CHRB's licensing offices, their photographs are taken and stored digitally in the Board's database, with pertinent information contained in a barcode on the back of the identification card, which is printed instantly by the system.

The process requires less than half the time of the old manual method of Polaroid snapshots and lamination, and the information stored in the system is more readily accessible to all authorized personnel with access to the CHRB database. Furthermore, with the photo of each licensee stored in the system with an embedded barcode encrypted algorithm, the process makes it virtually impossible to counterfeit licenses or assume another person's identity to obtain a license.

The concept of automating the Board's licensing process was first discussed more than 10 years ago, but budget limitations and the absence of any off-the-shelf products that could fully meet the CHRB's needs prevented the Board from moving quickly. Eventually, the Board agreed to develop the system in-house using the CHRB's own information technology staff.

Systems Analyst Terry Martin, working under the supervision of Chief Information Officer Mory Atashkar, developed the system from the ground up. Martin began by familiarizing himself with digital cameras, specialized printers, and other hardware components of any automated photo ID system. Then he needed training in the computer language required to write the programming for the new system.

Martin spent months developing the prototype system, and then he put that prototype through rigorous testing before introducing the first model in the CHRB's headquarters licensing office last summer. Based on feedback from licensing personnel, he continued improving the system until it was finally ready to be introduced at the field offices one by one, ending with the Los Alamitos office in December.

“Terry must be a genius,” said Atashkar. “It’s almost unheard of for anyone to overcome all of the obstacles that Terry had to overcome in such a short period of time and with such limited resources. He deserves all the credit.”

Martin explained that one of the biggest reasons “we developed the system in-house was because all of the products on the market were too rigid to be modified to meet our needs. We weren’t able to manipulate the system and tailor it to meet our needs. One of the greatest challenges was to develop a system that we could fully integrate with our own existing network and databases”

The final product meets all of the CHRB’s requirements, according to Licensing Supervisor Laura Sandoval, who demonstrated the system at Los Alamitos. As soon as she entered the name of a licensee applying for renewal, the system brought up his file on screen. He stood in front of the camera, and the resulting image was displayed instantly on the screen for permanent storage. The identification card printed within two minutes.

“That process used to take about 15 minutes. Now it takes five minutes,” said Sandoval. “Saving 10 minutes may not sound like much unless you are standing in the back of a line. Nowadays, everything is so quick, we rarely have a line. And once we have everyone’s photo in the system, the renewal process will be even quicker.”

The barcode on the back of the photo currently contains only the licensee’s name, license number, license status, and internal CHRB processing information. But Atashkar said the system was designed with the capability of expanding to include much more information and be used for other applications.

“Photo ID is one part of a bigger puzzle that we envision,” said Atashkar. “Exactly what we do with the system is a policy decision to be made by the CHRB executive staff and racing commissioners, but we have provided them with a tool to provide a better future for the horse-racing industry.”

CHRB Assistant Executive Director Roy Minami, an early advocate of the photo ID system, said it would be possible to use the identification cards at the entrances to the stable areas and other restricted areas.

“We aren’t that far along yet, but we might be able provide the racing associations with limited access to a portion of our database,” said Minami. “I’m sure the racetracks will come up with ideas for other uses of the system.”

#