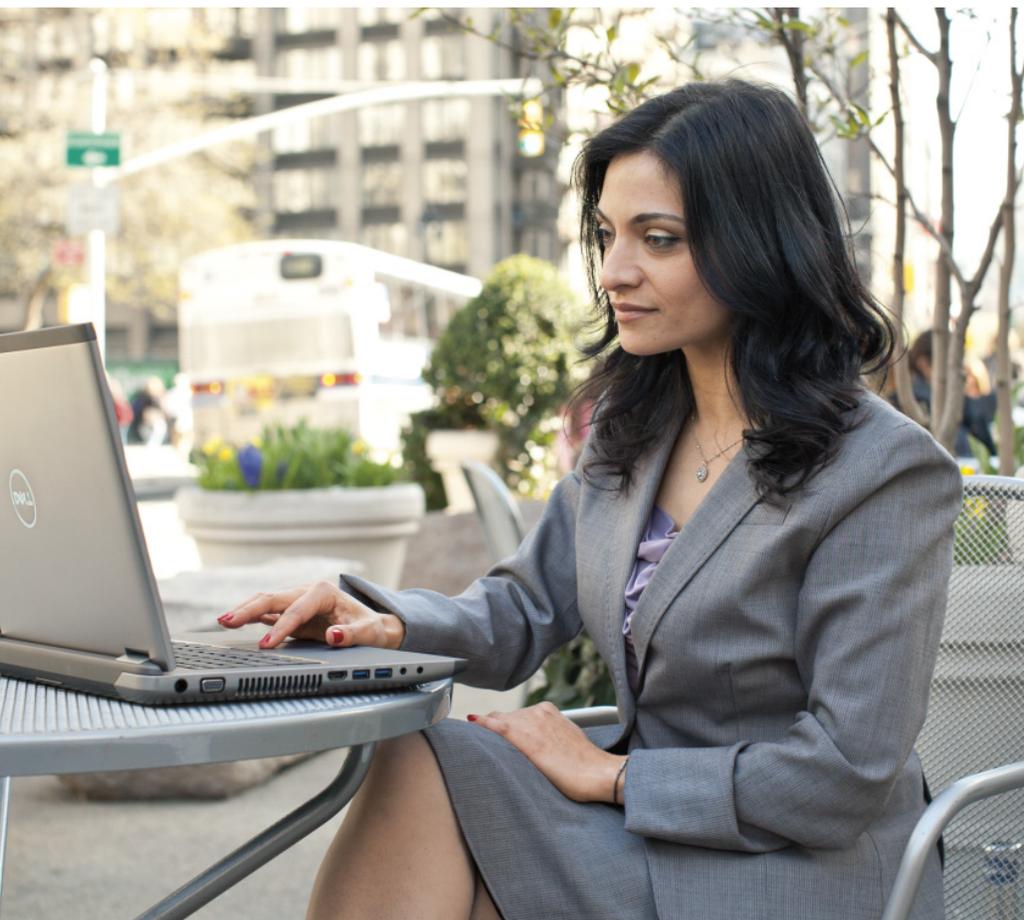




Utility cooperative turns on security, drives wireless for 600 members

NISC achieves greater security, mobility and long-term value for members through standardization on Dell SonicWALL solutions



“Our e-commerce is thriving behind these firewalls. The E8500s help us to secure the private cloud.”

Scott Kaylor
Network Installation and Support Team Lead
NISC

Customer profile



Company	NISC
Industry	Utility Cooperative
Country	United States
Employees	920
Website	www.nisc.coop

Business need

NISC is a trusted advisor and technical service provider for hundreds of rural electric and telecommunications cooperatives. It needs to ensure its members have safe, reliable access to mission-critical applications and resources. Emerging trends in cloud and mobile technology have created new challenges in meeting these goals.

Solution

NISC deployed over 600 NSA and TZ Series firewalls at member sites, all centrally managed with Dell™ SonicWALL™ GMS®. To secure its cloud-based applications and resources in the data center, NISC relies on Dell SonicWALL E-Class Next-Generation Firewalls. They also enabled remote access and mobile connectivity for members with Dell SonicWALL Clean Wireless and Mobile Connect solutions.

Benefits

- IT staff achieve time savings of 40 percent through standardization on Dell SonicWALL
- Centrally manage licensing and support for 600 firewalls using GMS
- Enhanced remote worker productivity by deploying over 100 SonicPoints

Solutions featured

- Network Security
- Mobile Computing

The National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC) offers integrated software and hardware solutions to utilities and telecommunications companies, as well as other infrastructure industries and Fortune 100 and 500 businesses. The cooperative delivers information processing services, accounting and billing software to over 600 other energy and telecommunications cooperatives in 47 states, American Samoa and Canada. To drive their member organization's businesses and meet their evolving security needs, NISC has sold, deployed and managed thousands of Dell SonicWALL appliances.

"Our members are taking advantage of the SonicWALL Mobile Connect for iOS and Android apps. It gives them the flexibility to connect with a wide range of devices to meet their expectations."

*Scott Kaylor
Network Installation and
Support Team Lead
NISC*

"We co-manage 100 percent of the Dell SonicWALL devices we have out in the field," says Scott Kaylor, network installation and support team lead at NISC. "The member owns them, but we manage the appliances and support them on an ongoing basis."

Securing emerging technologies

The growing use of cloud-based applications, as well as the increased number of workers using smartphones and tablets, has created new security challenges for both NISC and its member organizations.

"Wireless demand from our members has really taken off," says Allen Gray, network engineer at NISC. "More people are working with iPads and Android devices. In the past, we didn't have to deal with securing that type of connectivity. Members would not expect it."

As a new service for its members, NISC built a private cloud to house e-commerce applications.

"Our payment gateway uses credit card transactions and must be PCI compliant, plus our billing email needs to be tracked," says Kaylor. "The private cloud supports meter data management, which is used for smart-grid decision-making."

Securing cloud-based resources at the data center

For its own data centers, NISC chose to upgrade its legacy Juniper Networks® firewalls with four Dell SonicWALL E-Class Network Security Appliance (NSA) E8500 Next-Generation Firewalls.

"We've got two data centers that we are securing with E8500s," says Kaylor. "We now benefit from additional security services that we didn't have with the Juniper appliances. One pair is deployed in our production data center and the other pair sits in a second backup location."

The NSA E8500 is an 8-Gbps-enabled multi-core next-generation firewall designed for organizations like NISC

Technology at work

Software

Dell SonicWALL E-Class NSA E8500

Dell SonicWALL NSA Series

Dell SonicWALL SRA Series

Dell SonicWALL TZ Series

Dell SonicWALL SonicPoints

Dell SonicWALL GMS

SonicWALL Mobile Connect™



that require full deep packet inspection protection and application control without compromising performance.

To simplify member access to its mission-critical cloud-based applications, while still ensuring end-to-end security in compliance with PCI standards, NISC uses Dell SonicWALL Next-Generation Firewalls to deeply inspect local, remote, mobile and wireless traffic.

"The E8500s help us to secure the private cloud," says Kaylor. "Our e-commerce is thriving behind these firewalls. It also helps us achieve PCI compliance for our credit card transactions and relieves our customers from the burden of providing a secure network."

Expanding access to members from any device

The cooperative provides its member organizations with secure, clientless remote access to business applications and resources, using Dell SonicWALL Secure Remote Access (SRA) appliances. Utilizing a standard web browser, authorized members can securely access NISC resources from any location.

"Our members can access their accounting and billing data over an encrypted VPN tunnel," says Kaylor.

In addition, members can access the VPN from their mobile devices using SonicWALL Mobile Connect.

"Members can view power usage and pay bills from basically any type of mobile device that they want," says Kaylor. "Our members are taking advantage of the SonicWALL Mobile Connect for iOS and Android apps. It gives them the flexibility to connect with a wide range of devices to meet their expectations."

NISC has established secure, simple and cost-effective wireless networking by deploying over 100 Dell SonicWALL SonicPoints in a Clean Wireless

environment. Dell SonicWALL Clean Wireless integrates the universal 802.11 a/b/g/n wireless features of SonicPoint wireless access points with the deep packet inspection of next-generation firewalls.

"As networking has evolved, the wireless functionality and the wireless access points developed by Dell SonicWALL have evolved with it," says Gray.

Managing best-fit security solutions for members

"Members are mobile and can do their work out in the field," says Kaylor. "They can pull up to a substation and jump on the corporate wireless network back to the office to get their work orders, download their next item to work, and move on, rather than coming back 40 or 50 miles to the office."

For its member organizations' gateway firewall deployments, NISC recommends implementation of next-generation firewalls that feature superior intrusion prevention, malware protection, application intelligence and control, real-time traffic visualization and inspection of SSL-encrypted sessions. NISC typically deploys Dell SonicWALL NSA 4500 and 3500 Series Next-Generation Firewalls at member sites and TZ Series firewalls at remote locations.

"The 3500s are a nice fit for most of our member organizations," says Kaylor. "We use the 4500s for larger member organizations. All 30 substations have a TZ appliance."

The cooperative manages its security deployments with the Dell SonicWALL Global Management System (GMS).

"We manage licensing and support for about 600 firewalls on GMS," says Kaylor.

"We also bolster the e-commerce potential of all those member sites with that secure environment," says Gray. "We can set up, configure, maintain and monitor the connections and all of the e-billing. In addition, we can monitor

"We have built our business model on supporting the applications that we sell, as well as supporting our members through the Dell SonicWALL platform."

*Scott Kaylor
Network Installation and
Support Team Lead
NISC*



regular firewall connectivity for each of their satellite offices or substations they might have. GMS is very effective.”

Easing administration while lowering costs

NISC eases management of its member’s application bandwidth by implementing in-depth visualization into social media and other web application traffic.

“Bandwidth is always an issue for our members,” says Kaylor. “Now we get more visualization on what is happening on their networks. A spike doesn’t last for 30 minutes anymore. Typically, it maybe lasts for just five. If we cannot see what’s going on in real-time, we have a hard time pinpointing problems. Fortunately, Dell SonicWALL has bridged that gap. On the monitor, we can see those Layer 7 applications and see certain signatures as they are being triggered going through the firewall. We can see who is using YouTube on a real-time basis. Based on that, we make business decisions to limit or block things that are non-work related, and that need to be cleared off the network to increase total bandwidth.”

NISC streamlines network security by centralizing multiple functions on a powerful and efficient unified platform.

“It’s become easier for our members to do business,” says Kaylor. “They benefit from a one stop shop and simplified security. Dell SonicWALL really allowed us to leverage that with our members. They are small shops. They do not like to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on solutions.”

By consolidating its security platform, NISC also lowers TCO and realizes ROI. “We see a full return on our investment in Dell SonicWALL solutions in about two years,” says Kaylor. “It has allowed us to leverage a low cost solution for

a highly secure platform. We have built our business model on supporting the applications that we sell, as well as supporting our members across the Dell SonicWALL platform.”

This consolidated approach has also increased NISC staff efficiency.

“I would estimate our IT department has been able to free up 40 percent of their time by consolidating on Dell SonicWALL rather than using a multi-vendor approach,” says Kaylor. “The more components you add on your network, the more people you need to support it.”

Building confidence and trust

The cooperative helps its member organizations thrive by ensuring a secure and reliable network environment.

“People are confident with our Dell SonicWALL solutions,” says Gray. “We like the security, comfort and peace of mind that Dell SonicWALL offers us by having an industry leading firewall out there.”

“Our customers look up to us for deep expertise on network security,” says Kaylor. “Reliability is definitely a critical requirement. Dell SonicWALL is very reliable. It’s given us a highly secure platform for our members. Our incident rate is well under one percent. We use Dell SonicWALL to secure our own networks and will be using it to support our private cloud moving forward.”

Continues Kaylor: “Their sales team has taken our initiatives to heart and done everything that they can to help us out. They did a lot of things to encourage us to speak our mind, and were willing to listen to what we and our NISC members were asking for. That’s a big thing for us. That is what we strive for when we work with someone.”

View all Dell case studies at dell.com/casestudies

