Axis network cameras help busy car wash fight grime and crime.

Red Hill Car Wash improves business operations and reduces vandalism and theft 80% with IP cameras.

Organization:
Red Hill Car Wash

Location:
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Industry segment:
Commercial

Application:
Remote monitoring, site security

Axis partners:
Brick Properties and Security, Milestone Systems

Mission

Red Hill Car Wash is a six-bay coin-operated car wash in Hamilton, Ont., Canada. The facility sees a continual flow of traffic 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Owner JJ Woodley manages the site along with three part-time employees who work during peak hours. Existing analog cameras used for security were too limited in playback capability, video quality and remote access to properly prevent vandalism and theft. Woodley needed a security solution that offered easily searchable, higher-resolution images from which culprits could be quickly identified.

Solution

Fellow car wash owner and systems integrator Brian Owens recommended Axis network cameras because of their reliability and HDTV-quality video. IP video cameras were set up at multiple locations across the car wash's almost one acre lot to provide detailed views with special focus on areas such as car bays, the garage and cleaning vacuums.

Using Milestone XProtect® Essential video management software (VMS) , Woodley can monitor video live and quickly search archived video captured by the 19 installed Axis network cameras. The VMS is programed to store the high-quality IP video for two weeks on a custom-built server and accessed remotely through the Milestone Mobile app by phone or tablet for security and operational purposes.

Result

Since implementing the Axis network cameras, vandalism and attempted theft decreased by 80 percent, and the business had clear photographic evidence when police were called in to deal with an issue. In addition, Red Hill has been able to improve business operations by monitoring service and customer traffic, and the video has saved the carwash significant amounts of money by supplying documentary evidence for customers and regulators.

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> "Network cameras just make so much sense in the car wash business. And the quality of the Axis cameras gives me peace of mind. For the first six years that I owned the place, I couldn't know what was going on once I drove off the lot. All of a sudden, I now have eyes everywhere available at all times."
>
> JJ Woodley, Owner, Red Hill Car Wash.

Shoring up security

Red Hill Car Wash in Hamilton, Ontario, is a 24-hour car wash with an onsite ATM. Because the car wash bays are coin-operated, the coin boxes are vulnerable to theft. Originally, the business was monitored with analog surveillance cameras, but following an attempted theft, the video quality was too poor to identify the suspect. Owner JJ Woodley knew something had to be done.

Woodley turned to integrator Brian Owens, president of Brick Properties and Security, who also owns Kerman Car Wash in Grimsby, Ont. Owens recommended Woodley replace the outdated analog technology with 19 Axis network cameras and Milestone IP video management software.

For areas such as the coin-operated bays, they selected AXIS M3114-VE Network Cameras to provide detailed views in HDTV-quality 720p resolution. The vandal-resistant cameras also feature a tampering alarm to alert Woodley to any attempts at disruption or manipulation. These were paired with a set of AXIS P13 Series Network Cameras to deliver detailed imaging across distances. In addition, AXIS P33 Series Fixed Dome Network Cameras record HDTV-quality video at the ATM, while a pinhole AXIS P1204 Network Camera installed inside the ATM captures anyone around or using the machine.

Combined, these cameras ensure high-quality video captures suspects' faces, clothes, and car models, as well as the front and back license plates. This selection of cameras also has the resolution needed to catch clear shots of the plates of vehicles entering the car wash, as well as in "hot spots" around the lot.

Within six months of the implementation, the cameras caught two incidents of vandalism. The clarity of the images, especially of culprits and licence plates, resulted in arrests and, in one case, restitution. Since then, such instances have dropped off 80 to 85 per cent and continue to decline rapidly. The six car-wash bays have signs informing criminals and customers that the site is under 24-hour surveillance. "I think word gets around in the underground community that this isn't a place to mess with. There's certainly been a notable drop off in criminal activity," Woodley says.

Clean operations, remotely monitored

Although originally intended for security, the cameras have helped make significant improvements in business operations. Instead of driving an hour to and from the lot, Woodley can now monitor operations remotely on his phone or tablet with the Milestone Mobile client. This means he can manage traffic peaks better and ensure consistent, quality service at all times.

Video from the cameras in the equipment room can also help identify malfunctioning equipment, while those focused on car bays assist in assessing customer complaints. "If they say they put $3 in the machine and it didn't run, I can see immediately if they actually did so," Woodley says.

The high-quality video has already saved the car wash money. In one instance, a customer complained his car's paint job was damaged. Time-stamped photos collected and stored through the Milestone XProtect VMS were promptly forwarded to prove the damage existed before the wash.

More significantly, the video helped Red Hill avoid an incorrectly assessed regulatory fine. When city inspectors accidentally took wastewater samples from the wrong part of a system that captures oil, the car wash appeared in violation and faced a fine of $50,000 a day. Woodley provided video showing the error, and the fine was cancelled.

A bright future

Based on this success, Woodley plans a more extensive IP camera system for his next, larger car wash. He's also investigating license-plate recognition technology to track suspicious vehicles, as well as understand traffic patterns to better serve customers.

"It's good to have it all locked down," Woodley says. "People feel more comfortable and it improves our long-term reputation."

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