

Casting a protective eye over shoppers, diners and movie-goers. Golf Mill Shopping Center deploys analytic surveillance system for patron safety and thwarting insurance fraud.



Organization:
Golf Mill Shopping
Center

Location:
Niles, Illinois, USA

Industry segment:
Retail

Application:
Real-time monitoring
and analysis of activity

Axis partner:
Secure Integrations

Mission

With the addition of exclusive restaurants, a multiplex movie theater, an off-track betting facility and a 24-hour fitness gym, Golf Mill Shopping Center in Niles, Illinois, felt that the increase in visitor and vehicle traffic warranted additional security measures. The mall management company, General Growth Properties, in tandem with the owners of the retail complex, decided to deploy a sophisticated video surveillance network that would proactively protect merchants and patrons throughout the million square feet of retail space and 89 acres of parking.

Solution

Without an existing cabling infrastructure in place – and no desire to incur the high cost of tearing up floors to hard wire a system – the complex needed someone to approach the mall surveillance solution from a different perspective. They hired Secure Integrations, a Des Plaines, Illinois surveillance and security integrator, to design and

implement an array of Axis Communications network cameras that could communicate over a multi-node wireless mesh network.

Result

Mall security officers monitor the cameras from a central station as well as view the video feed on individual PDAs as they patrol the facility on their regular rounds. The multiple network cameras overtly mounted both inside and outside the mall have proved an excellent theft deterrent. The video footage has also been instrumental in thwarting fraudulent insurance claims and enabling staff to respond quickly to incidents and emergency situations. With the addition of video analytics software, the mall management company monitors patron traffic patterns at every entrance into the complex and uses the data for marketing purposes.

"The Axis cameras deliver crystal clear images even when there's a high degree of motion, so mall security personnel can accurately assess the situation before responding."

Eugene Szatkowski, president of Secure Integrations.

Putting safety first

Secure Integrations installed 50 Axis network cameras to keep a watchful eye over a broad area that includes 120 specialty shops, four department stores, as well as after-hour venues such as restaurants and movie theaters, off-track betting and fitness centers, plus 89 acres of parking. The cameras are connected wirelessly over a Firetide mesh network to a central security office in the mall. Mall security officers can also access the video stream of any camera in the complex on their handheld PDAs as they traverse the property. The system also gives local police patrolling the area in their cruisers the ability to call up camera views of mall activity through a secure network access.

In addition to providing high-resolution images, the Axis network cameras feature embedded analytics for motion and audio detection as well as tampering alarms to alert security officers to situations that require their attention. For the interior locations, Secure Integrations chose AXIS 216FD Network Cameras for their compact design and vari-focal lens and AXIS 214 PTZ (pan/tilt/zoom) Network Cameras for their ability to operate in low light. For the exterior locations, the integrators chose AXIS 214 PTZ for their day-night light range, AXIS 225FD Network Dome Cameras for their ability to withstand inclement weather and tampering, and AXIS 233D Network Dome Cameras for their superior optical and digital zoom in monitoring the wide expanse of mall parking lots.

Another advantage of this wireless configuration is its flexibility. If any part of the network needs to be relocated, the node and the Axis camera can be moved and reinstalled in less than a day.

Going beyond security

Golf Mill owners have been quick to realize a value from their surveillance system that extends beyond safety and security. "Our wireless network video surveillance system has been a great asset for our tenants and patrons," said Michael D. Williams, senior general manager

at General Growth Properties." Whatever the situation – someone slipping and falling, shoplifting, or unusual traffic congestion – our security staff can respond quickly and proactively."

While surveillance footage can be used for counting people to detect loitering and potential criminal activity, it can also provide customer traffic patterns to event planners and coordinators that can help them improve the success of their programs. Documenting traffic flow also helps management sell future tenants on leasing space in the mall.

Surveillance footage not only assists tenants in loss prevention, it helps law enforcement secure convictions for criminal activity. Typically video footage is stored for 30 days, but any time an incident takes place the evidence remains catalogued for up to two years. Digital storage of footage makes it is easy to e-mail and distribute the video when needed.

Since the installation of the wireless network video surveillance system, Golf Mill has already experienced a decrease in fraudulent insurance claims and petty theft. Security personnel and event planners have become better at managing crowds. And tenants and patrons have expressed a greater feeling of safety, especially in the new recreation and nightlife environments added to the complex.

The Golf Mills surveillance system stands as one of the largest wireless security networks in a retail environment. "Using cable and analog CCTV cameras would have cost at least three times as much in a retail space of this size," explained Eugene Szatkowski, president of Secure Integrations. "Not only would we have had the expense of ripping up newly installed floors to lay network cables, but a wired system would have required us to install multiple digital video recorders around the mall. Axis network cameras connected to wireless mesh nodes and access points provide a cost-effective and flexible alternative."

