

Cooling down hotspots with Axis and unique SkyWatch mobile surveillance solution.

Glenwood PD mobilizes a roving security zone for high-crime neighborhoods with portable Axis/SkyWatch camera system.



SkyWatch Mobile Surveillance Unit at the Illinois Supreme Court, Springfield, IL

Organization:

Village of Glenwood
Police Department

Location:

Glenwood, Illinois, USA

Industry segment:

City surveillance

Application:

Crime prevention, mobile surveillance

Axis partners:

Critical Technology
Solutions, Milestone

Mission

Like many small town police departments, the Village of Glenwood needed to squeeze every ounce of value from its law enforcement tools to maintain the safety of its neighborhoods. Since the community's budget couldn't absorb the cost of city-wide surveillance, the Chief of Police sought a solution that would help Glenwood PD monitor neighborhood hot spots without monopolizing resources needed to patrol elsewhere in the village.

Solution

Critical Technology Solutions, an IT integrator and Axis partner, provided Glenwood with a portable SkyWatch system that could be easily trailered from one hotspot to another to mitigate violence and crime. The unit features HDTV-quality Axis fixed dome and PTZ network cameras elevated on a 30-foot telescoping mast to create a 360° view. The video is stored on a server inside the compact chassis of the unit and controlled by Milestone XProtect® video management system.

A high-powered 802.11 WiFi antenna enables the video to be streamed wirelessly to authorized laptops and iPads in the field as well as back to police headquarters. The SkyWatch trailer also contains a public address system with siren and lights that allows remote PD staff to warn suspicious individuals.

Result

In addition to preventing the annual end-of-the-school-year brawl that typically took place in the local park, the portable surveillance system has been used to reduce crime at Wal-Mart during the holiday rush, discourage drug dealers from congregating in residential areas and maintain crowd safety during the community's popular Fourth of July celebration at the village's golf course.



Setting up surveillance on the fly

Demetrius Cook, Chief of Police for the Village of Glenwood, first spotted the SkyWatch Mobile Surveillance platform at a conference with the mayor and village manager. He immediately envisioned how the technology could be leveraged to deter crime in his community just south of Chicago. "While we have Axis cameras in the Police Department, Village Hall and are in the process of installing cameras at the Public Works and Senior Center, we have no cameras in the neighborhoods," shares Chief Cook.

Like many communities, Glenwood has hotspots: a park where youth congregate and cause disturbances, a few houses involved in narcotics and some high-crime streets experiencing a rash of burglaries. With the portable Axis/SkyWatch solution, the Glenwood PD has mobile set of HDTV eyes whenever and wherever they're needed.

"We watch for patterns of incidents," explains Chief Cook. "If we think we can make some headway by moving the unit to that location, that's what we do." According to Chief Cook, he hooks the trailer to his police vehicle, tows it to the new location and has SkyWatch up and running in about five minutes.

Critical Technology Solutions customized the SkyWatch unit to meet Glenwood PD's overt and covert surveillance strategies, mounting four Axis HDTV-quality network cameras on the 30-foot mast. AXIS Q6034-E and AXIS Q6035 PTZ Network Cameras operate on guard tour and auto-tracking mode to provide a 360o endless pan of the area. AXIS M3114-VE Fixed Dome Network Camera provides an overview of the trailer to prevent vandalism to the unit. And AXIS P3364-VE Fixed Dome Network Camera with Lightfinder and P-Iris technology provides true color fidelity even in near-dark lighting conditions. All four cameras are vandal-resistant and weather-proof.

The unit also includes an intrusion detection alarm as well as a siren and PA system to allow PD staff to verbally deter mischief makers from afar. Police lights atop the unit can be turned on and off with a keychain remote or over the Internet, depending on if the police want the lights to serve as a deterrent or need surveillance to be covert.

"We constructed the Glenwood unit with a built-in generator to give the PD maximum flexibility to locate it in areas without easy access to electricity," says Don Peters, President of Critical Technology Solutions. "As the Chief predicted, most of the agencies we show SkyWatch to want that generator option in their units."

Lending retailers a helping hand

The first test of Glenwood's SkyWatch unit was in response to a request from the local Wal-Mart during the holiday shopping season. There had been a rash of armed robberies at several Wal-Marts in neighboring communities.

"[Before deploying SkyWatch] we received an anonymous tip that there was a robbery taking place at our own Wal-Mart," says Chief Cook. "We had several patrol cars respond only to find out that the call was a hoax." Chief Cook thinks it could have been potential robbers checking out the department's response time.

The Chief installed SkyWatch outside the Wal-Mart as a visual deterrent, programming the cameras to make a sweeping tour of the main entrance and zoom out to include the gas station and parking lot. "We kept it there for two and half months," reports Chief Cook. "We didn't have a robbery there in all that time and theft inside went way down because the Axis cameras were capturing people coming in and out of the store." According to Chief Cook, even though Wal-Mart has a camera system inside the store, the Axis/SkyWatch unit outside provides much more vivid images.

"They were so happy with the results that they want the unit back there next year," says Chief Cook.





Improving neighborhood quality of life

Chief Cook meets frequently with homeowner associations to pinpoint sites that need extra surveillance. "It's not always a crime issue," he shares. "Sometimes it's a quality of life issue."

One place with recurring problems was Hickory Glen Park. With no surveillance cameras or adult supervision, dozens of teens would take over the tot lot, making it an unsafe place for parents to take young children. High schoolers traditionally congregated there on the last day of school for an all-out brawl to settle yearlong grudges.

With SkyWatch in the park, fighting, gambling and antisocial behavior came to a halt. "We got a lot of praise from the neighbors who border the park when we set up the camera system," says Chief Cook.

While there was some initial pushback from a liquor store owner in a strip mall when SkyWatch was put in the parking lot, the owner acknowledged that the system deterred rowdy patrons who lingered to drink their purchases. As a result the retailer was able to attract a better class of customers and increase his sales.

To address concerns about invasion of privacy when SkyWatch is deployed in neighborhoods, Chief Cook invokes privacy masking to block out any views into homeowners' windows. According to Peters, it only takes a couple of minutes to mask a section of the camera's field of view once the SkyWatch system is in place.

To forestall complaints, Chief Cook has "shown concerned residents the camera views on my laptop just to assure them that the police weren't going to be peeping into their living rooms."

Sharing technology with neighboring communities

The Glenwood PD works closely with neighboring law enforcement agencies, often sharing resources in the interest of public safety. For instance, the Glenwood PD doesn't have a K-9 unit, but neighboring Lynnwood does. "If we have to search for a missing child or search for drugs, all we need to do is make a phone call and they show up with their dog," says Chief Cook.

Conversely, when the neighboring community of Home-wood needed Glenwood's SkyWatch system for temporary surveillance, Chief Cook hooked the trailer to his vehicle, towed it to their venue, gave a quick lesson on how to use the system and lent his laptop to monitor the cameras.

"We been experiencing an increase in handgun violence in the Chicago area of late," explains Chief Cook. "This portable tool is a cost-effective way to expand our surveillance coverage and ensure our neighborhoods that we're looking out for their safety."

"If we detect a cluster of crimes in an area or get complaints from residents about kids hanging out and being disorderly, that's where I move the cameras. It frees up a lot of manpower because I don't have to concentrate patrol officers in a particular neighborhood."

Chief Demetrius Cook of the Glenwood Police Department.



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About Axis Communications

Axis offers intelligent security solutions that enable a smarter, safer world. As the global market leader in network video, Axis is driving the industry by continually launching innovative network products based on an open platform – delivering high value to its customers and carried through a global partner network. Axis has long-term relationships with partners and provides them with knowledge and ground-breaking network products in existing and new markets.

Axis has more than 1,600 dedicated employees in more than 40 countries around the world, supported by a network of over 60,000 partners across 179 countries. Founded in 1984, Axis is a Sweden-based company listed on NASDAQ OMX Stockholm under the ticker AXIS.

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