

Deer Park adds critical layer of security. District puts Axis network cameras at the heart of its school safety plan.



Organization:
Deer Park Independent
School District

Location:
Deer Park, Texas, USA

Industry segment:
Education

Application:
School security and
safety

Axis partner:
LenSec

Mission

Like many public schools across the nation, Deer Park Independent School District has decided to step up school security in order to ensure the safety and security of its more than 12,300 students and nearly 1,800 teachers and other employees. The district, located near an industrial shipping channel some 20 miles southeast of downtown Houston, Texas, was primarily concerned with access control. They wanted to know exactly who was entering and leaving their campuses and auxiliary buildings and whether visitors had authorization to enter those facilities.

Solution

To achieve that level of vigilance, Deer Park turned to Axis partner, LenSec, a nationwide provider of turnkey IP-based video surveillance solutions to educational institutions. The Houston-based software manufacturer and installation source provided the district with a comprehensive security system for monitoring activity at all 14 campuses, administration building and annex, service

center, transportation yard, agricultural science center and outdoor learning center. The district-wide solution integrates LenSec video management software with an array of 700 network cameras from Axis Communications to cover the hallways, cafeterias, exterior entrances and athletic grounds of Deer Park's multiple campuses.

Result

"School administrators now have a more sophisticated investigative tool for solving thefts and vandalism. The new surveillance technology also provides school personnel a proactive way to minimize inappropriate behavior on school grounds and to document incidents for quick resolution," states Alan Morris, LenSec's Vice President of Business Development. "In addition, the exterior network cameras give administrators an important window to the outside environment so they can respond quickly to protect their students and staff in case of an industrial accident in the area."

"I know that we can't anticipate every eventuality. But having a sufficient saturation of Axis network cameras at each of our facilities is an important layer in our overall security plan."

Don Dean, Deputy Superintendent for Administration of the Deer Park Independent School District.

Keeping a watchful eye

Having high-resolution network cameras on the premises helps administrators stay on the lookout for any type of behavior that might be deemed inappropriate or threatening to another student – bullying, harassment and other altercations that could result in disciplinary action. Should an incident occur, they can delve into the video archive and determine exactly what happened and who was involved.

The LenSec video management software provides several ways to search the archived video from over 700 cameras and expedite the investigation. "We can retrieve video based on an approximate time when we think the event took place in a specific location, or with 'Box Search' we can place a virtual box around the item such as a laptop and only search video pertaining to that item."

Interceding before problems develop or escalate

"Our view is that it's always better to prevent an incident rather than having to go back and investigate what happened after the fact," shares Dean. For the larger campuses such as Deer Park High School South which houses more than 2,800 students, the administration does live monitoring during peak times – immediately before school, during the seven-minute passing period between classes, lunch period and immediately after the close of school for the day. Assistant principals (APs) patrol assigned sectors while paraprofessionals monitor multi-window views of the cameras operating in those areas. The team stays in constant contact via walkie-talkie so that if the paraprofessional sees something that might be problematic, they can radio the AP to move to that area immediately.

Strategic saturation for maximum coverage

LenSec selected specific Axis network cameras based on structural and environmental factors and the desire to keep the cameras highly visible to help deter criminal or mischievous behavior. For buildings with suspended ceilings, LenSec installed AXIS 210 Network Cameras in protective housings that replaced one of the ceiling tiles.

For high-ceiling areas, AXIS 210 Network Cameras were wall-mounted. Vandal-resistant AXIS 216FD-V Network Cameras were installed in locations with hard ceilings, low ceilings and in gymnasiums where their rugged design could withstand the impact of basketballs and other objects. The primary camera for external locations was the versatile AXIS 211 Network Camera equipped with a varifocal lens for a wide range of views. AXIS 225FD Fixed Dome Network were used in areas with limited mounting heights like walkways and to provide coverage in very low-light locations. AXIS 233D Network Dome Cameras gave Deer Park officials the ability to track suspicious behavior in real-time in stadiums, athletic fields, parking lots and driveways.

Gaining credibility with parents and community

While federal privacy regulations bar parents from viewing school video without a subpoena, Dean has used the video to help mediate complaints. "It gives me more credibility with the parents when they know I've seen an actual recording of the event as it happened," says Dean, "which makes it easier to resolve the issue to everyone's satisfaction."

The school district has also used the surveillance system in Active Shooter drills to demonstrate to local law enforcement that they can track and identify a perpetrator on school grounds in under a minute. Because of the cameras' high resolution, the district has also been able to catch vandals on video during break-ins, identify and charge them with a felony. In one case, the district sent the image to the local media asking the public for help in identifying the suspect.

Expanding the security blanket

As more campus renovations get underway, the district is remodeling school entrances to include locked vestibules. Cameras mounted at those entrances will help staff identify visitors before deciding whether to buzz them into the building. "We want to be welcoming to parents and visitors," states Dean. "But we also want to prevent anyone from just wandering into our buildings without our knowledge."



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INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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