

Incidents reporting decreased by 50%.

Minoh City installed Axis security cameras on all municipal elementary and middle school routes.



Organization:
Minoh City Council

Location:
Minoh City, Osaka
Prefecture, Japan

Industry segment:
City surveillance

Application:
Safety and security, crime
prevention

Axis partner:
Apro, Inc.

Mission

Minoh City in Osaka, home to a population of 130,000, is full of rich natural environments including Meiji-No-Mori Minoh National Park (famous for its waterfall). It is a popular place to live and was ranked No. 1 in Osaka Prefecture and No. 26 in the whole of Japan in the "2013 Best Cities To Live"^{**} ranking. In May 2014, the Minoh Police Chief asked the Mayor of Minoh to install security cameras on city streets. They were concerned about a number of kidnapping cases of young children which had recently taken place throughout Japan and reports of what seemed to be attempted kidnapping incidents within the city as well, so the city council decided to install security cameras to ensure safety on the school routes to prevent such crimes against young children.

Solution

In the two-month period between February and March 2015, security cameras were installed on 14 municipal elementary and middle school routes in Minoh. On average, 50 cameras were installed per school route, totaling 750 throughout the city.

This number, i.e., 50 per school route, is one of the highest on a nationwide level. Minoh is the first city in Osaka to have security cameras installed on all school routes throughout the city. They are equipped with the "privacy masking function", which masks specified locations such as house entrances and windows in order to protect residents' privacy. The collected data is stored for about one week, and can be provided to the police if necessary for investigations.

Result

The installation of the cameras had an instant effect. A purse snatcher on a moped was arrested in Minoh in June 2015. Multiple cameras captured clear images of details of the moped, the clothing of the suspect and the stolen purse, and an arrest was made using the images captured. This was the first case where a suspect was arrested thanks to a camera installed by the city council.^{**} In addition, the number of reports about suspicious incidents has been halved^{***} since 2014 (decreased from 30 cases to 17).

“When we compared the images taken in a dark area by various cameras we saw clear differences in camera performance. We had to choose a camera that can take pictures clear enough to be used to identify suspects. We also publish clearly captured images on the website of Minoh City as preventative measures. The fact that a suspect was arrested thanks to the captured images contributes to further crime prevention. I expect we can further reduce the number of crimes by repeatedly letting people know about the existence of security cameras on our city streets.”

Mr. Tomotaka Ogino, Citizen Safety Division, General Affairs Department, Minoh City Council.

As a result of a number of kidnapping cases of children in Japan as well as what seemed to be kidnapping attempts in Minoh, the Minoh city council decided to install security cameras on all municipal elementary and middle school routes.

The city council decided to expand its Subsidy System for the Residents' Association's security camera installation campaign for the next two years, starting in 2015, to install more security cameras within Minoh City. The upper limit of the subsidy has been set at 200,000 yen, 90% of which is said to be supported by the Minoh City Council. In addition, the electricity bill and repair fees for cameras would also be covered by this subsidy.

Clear color images in low-light environments

The camera models were carefully selected. Only models from four manufacturers passed all the 17 performance criteria defined by the Minoh City Council. The final selection was made by comparing images captured by the various models.

After strict screening, AXIS P1354 Network Camera was finally chosen. It features Axis' Lightfinder technology which captures clear color images even in low-light environments and has been used for security projects in many parts of the world. The judges unanimously ranked this product first in the final selection meeting. This product was introduced to the Minoh City Council by IT consulting company Apro, Inc.

“Many users may choose a particular camera model only using the quantitative information on the specifications such as camera features, angle of view and resolution. But I strongly recommend you actually handle the cameras with your hands and fully compare the details of the captured images. Also, publishing clearly captured images would further prevent similar crimes in the future, I presume,” said Mr. Ogino of the Minoh City Council. The crime prevention projects supported by the high quality visual surveillance system are rapidly expanding.

Mounting on poles

In addition, various problems had to be solved during the course of the security camera installations within Minoh City. In particular, selection of camera model was carefully made via cooperation between Osaka Prefectural Police, Minoh City Police and volunteer groups in the community. In general, security cameras are mounted on utility poles. However, it was found that some poles were owned by Kansai Electric and others by NTT (Japan Telecom) and some were not suitable for camera mounting.

Therefore, they had to check the ownership of each pole and submit applications to obtain usage permission from the respective owners. Moreover, they had to check whether the land surrounding the utility pole was a part of a city road, prefectural road, national road or was private land. If it was found to be private land, the ownership was checked and Minoh city workers had to visit each owner to seek their permission. Also, during installation, work vehicles had to be parked near the installation sites and workers had to work on a ladder resting against the pole, so they had to seek cooperation from the local police.

Sharing information

News on crime prevention and safety related projects is publicized on the Minoh City website from time to time in order to provide useful information, not only to citizens but also to parties considering the implementation of security cameras. The city council made its best efforts through public relations activities and media exposure to let its citizens know that the security cameras would be operated in a way that did not compromise their privacy. As a result they won the understanding and support of the broader community. In fact, it was found that few citizens were concerned about their privacy but that the majority of them strongly supported the idea of the security camera installations. And it is expected that the affirmative disclosure of information will further contribute to crime prevention.

*Sourced from "City Data Pack 2013 Edition" published by Toyo Keizai Inc.

**Sourced from the website article of Sankei WEST on 6/9/2015

***Sourced from the Minoh City Council Manager blog on 6/29/2015



Minoh City Website: Crime Prevention page
www.city.minoh.lg.jp/kurashi/bouhan/

The Minoh City Council Manager blog
<http://blog.goo.ne.jp/butyoublog>