

Keeping the peace with Axis network cameras.

Worcester County House of Correction and Jail keeps constant watch over inmate and staff safety with Axis and Genetec.



Organization:
Worcester County Sheriff's Office

Location:
West Boylston, MA, USA

Industry segment:
Prisons/Correction Centers

Application:
Safety and security,
remote training

Axis partners:
Siemens, Genetec

Mission

With a 3:1 ratio of inmates to uniformed correctional officers, the Worcester (Mass.) County Sheriff's Office felt that it needed a video surveillance system to augment security at its county house of correction and jail. Given the nature of the facility, it was critical that the solution be robust enough to run 24/7, 365 days a year. It also had to be quick and easy to deploy while supporting remote maintenance.

Solution

The Worcester County Sheriff's Office hired security system integrators from Siemens to pull all the surveillance technology across the 12-building correctional facility campus into a single, cohesive network video solution controlled by Security Center, Genetec's video management system. The cameras used in the project include over 100 network cameras from Axis. Uniformed staff monitors the cameras live in their assigned buildings while the video from each location is streamed to a central control station for archiving and post-incident review.

Result

The high-definition Axis cameras allow uniformed officers to zoom in close enough to see the emotion on an inmate's face during a conflict and hopefully intercede before events escalate. The archived footage helps the investigative team identify all the parties involved in an incident and, when appropriate, initiate charges against specific individuals that might extend their sentence.

“The resolution of the Axis cameras is so high that we can see the emotion on an inmate’s face and get a better understanding of that person’s intentions and whether they mean to do someone harm.”

Maurice Myrie, Director of Information Technology and Information Security Officer for the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office.

Enhancing cell block surveillance

The Worcester County House of Correction and Jail in West Boylston, Mass. houses over 1,100 pre-trial detainees and inmates sentenced to two and a half years or less. Prior to network video surveillance, correctional officers relied on patrolling the corridors, cell blocks and common areas to ensure the well-being of inmates and staff.

With a 3:1 ratio of incarcerated persons to correctional staff, a new video surveillance system was installed to help even the odds. “Once the cameras were installed, we were able to cover almost every place an inmate could hide and do something [wrong],” said Maurice Myrie, director of Information Technology and Information Security Officer for the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office.

Video is monitored in security booths on each block, and multiple blocks can be viewed at central control locations. Myrie manages the entire system, including system configuration and assigning authorized users, with the Genetec Security Center video management system.

Why Axis cameras are well-suited to prison environments

“Working in a prison environment means your service calls are tightly scheduled. You have to be escorted. You’re only allowed to bring in a limited number of tools,” said Alan Krupp, operations manager for Siemens. “So it’s critical that the cameras be extremely reliable and easy to install and configure.” According to Krupp, Axis cameras are engineered with the installer in mind so it’s rare that his technicians need to revisit a site once they’re installed.

“No other manufacturer offers the range of remote camera management tools that Axis does,” said Jeffrey Pereira, District Technical Specialist for Siemens. This includes controls for resolution, frame rate, focus, and more. “It’s been a great time saver for us because we don’t need to physically touch every camera to configure it.”

The correctional facility installed several models of Axis network cameras—all vandal resistant to fit the prison environment. These models include the five megapixel AXIS P3367-V Fixed Dome and AXIS P3367-VE Fixed Dome Network Cameras, and AXIS P3301-V Fixed Dome Network Cameras.

Because the cameras are IP-based, Myrie stressed that close cooperation between the IT department and jail operations is paramount. The network must be properly configured before the start of the installation in order to ensure adequate bandwidth for the system. “If you don’t have your network configured properly, everything else is null and void,” Myrie said.

Seeing multiple points of view

In a prison environment, it pays to have eyes everywhere.

“The greatest value for us is the video evidence we now have. If a picture speaks a thousand words, video footage speaks 3,000,” said Myrie. “If somebody is cocking their hand behind them to knock somebody out, you’re capturing that emotion. The video can show you that intention.”

In one instance, video footage helped investigators identify known members of two rival gangs in the midst of a brawl that ended with a stabbing. As a result, the participants were charged in a court of law and received additional sentence time.

Myrie has plans to use these recorded incidents in partnership with his training department as part of the training curriculum for new recruits. “By viewing footage of actual events, we can show trainees how officers responded to a particular situation. It helps prepare them for the real world and learn what to do or not to do when faced with a similar situation.”

