

Big Easy embarks on safe city project.

The New Orleans Real Time Crime Center integrates Axis cameras to play a critical role in giving first responders immediate incident awareness.



Organization:
New Orleans Office of
Homeland Security and
Emergency Preparedness

Location:
New Orleans, LA, USA

Industry segment:
City surveillance

Application:
Citywide safety, security,
emergency preparedness

Axis partners:
Motorola, Genetec,
Active Solutions

Mission

When New Orleans announced its Citywide Public Safety Project, city officials planned for video cameras to play a key role in helping its police department and partner agencies prevent, detect and investigate crimes. They proposed the solution that would coordinate 911 dispatch center calls with video cameras in the vicinity of incidents and transmit real-time information to appropriate responders.

Solution

New Orleans built a Real Time Crime Center where staff monitor video streams from a mix of panoramic, fixed and pan/tilt/zoom (PTZ) Axis video cameras deployed throughout the city. The 24/7 operation uses Motorola's CommandCentral Aware software to integrate the geolocation data, provided through the city's computer-aided 911 dispatch center, with the GPS coordinates of the Axis cameras managed by Security Center and Stratocast, video management systems from Genetec.

When the dispatch center receives a call, the appropriate camera views appear on the monitors at the Crime Center. Crime Center Technicians are then able to track activity in the vicinity and share that situational awareness with police and other responders.

Result

Since its launch, the Crime Center has proven to be a real force multiplier, helping law enforcement monitor the size of crowds, track motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic, as well as focus on any incidents that might occur along parade routes. During the 2018 Mardi Gras season, the Real Time Crime Center helped expedite more than 50 cases, including several violent crimes and a suspected drunk driving situation. Civilian staff use the Axis cameras to effectively corroborate and validate hundreds of calls for service, saving police and other agencies such as fire and emergency medical from chasing false alarms or spending hours tracking down witnesses to an event.



A proactive strategy for community safety

There's nothing easy about maintaining safety in the Big Easy. A popular tourist destination, New Orleans draws thousands of visitors to its famous French Quarters every day, many of whom party into the wee hours of the morning. Renowned for its flamboyant Mardi Gras celebrations (the equivalent of 34 Rose Bowl parades in the space of 11 days), the city also hosts countless other holiday parades throughout the year, as well as national sporting events, conventions, music festivals, and neighborhood celebrations.

With so many occasions for dense crowds, it takes constant vigilance for law enforcement to keep a lid on urban crime and create a safe and welcoming place for residents and tourists alike.

"Logistically it's a challenge," says Ross Bourgeois of the New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. "We've got a police department less than 1,500 strong. Yet we're more successful at mounting large events than other cities because we're leveraging technology to get ahead of problems and help our officers work smarter and more effectively."

Bourgeois refers to the city's new integrated public safety initiative that proactively draws information from multiple public and private resources – Axis video cameras, license plate readers and the 911 call center – to provide police patrols and first responders with a more complete picture of what's happening on the streets of the city.

Instantly assimilating information from multiple sources

The focal point of the operation is the Real Time Crime Center which is monitored 24/7 by civilian technicians. The Crime Center houses a video wall, workstations and the Genetec video management system receiving images from nearly 400 Axis HDTV-quality video cameras deployed across the city by the Public Safety Support Services branch of the city's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness.

When the 911 dispatch center receives a call for service or a report of an incident, it logs the geolocation and other pertinent information into Motorola's PremierOne CAD application. Motorola's CommandCentral Aware software correlates that geolocation data with the GPS coordinates of the Axis cameras that are in the vicinity. This allows the pertinent cameras to display on the Crime Center's video wall. The civilian technicians use all of this input to provide police and first responders with critical situational awareness needed to deal with the current circumstances.

Deploying the right cameras exactly where needed

Strategic camera deployment has proved invaluable. "We have a variety of unique installation hurdles and found that the extensive Axis portfolio was more capable for addressing those issues than any other," says George Brown, IT/COMMS manager for the New Orleans Real Time Crime Center. "This has allowed us to choose our sites based on need rather than having the cameras dictate the location."

Installations along the city's famous Bourbon Street proved a case in point. "We mounted HDTV-quality AXIS Q60 Series PTZ Network Cameras at all the intersections," says Brown. "Choosing cameras that combine PTZ and panoramic views gives us a clear picture of each intersection and lets us see down all four streets." HDTV-quality AXIS Q37 Series Fixed Dome Network Cameras were installed in the middle of each block to cover any areas that fall outside the intersection cameras' fields of view. According to Brown, New Orleans currently deploys at least 10 different Axis camera models to meet the gamut of security challenges across the city.



Above images courtesy of Amy Petersen



“Using the Axis cameras to corroborate and validate what the calls for service are allows the police department to be more efficient and more effective. This gives them more time to interact with the community, build a better rapport, which ultimately will have a positive impact on crime.”

Ross Bourgeois, Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness for the City of New Orleans.

Because of the portfolio's versatility, New Orleans has been able to choose a just-right Axis camera for every terrain from the city's riverfront to its miles of recreational greenway to its underpasses where Axis cameras will soon help monitor potential flood conditions. There are even Axis PTZ network cameras mounted on a mobile trailer that the department can move to different hot spots or pop-up events as the needs arise. For certain occasions, 3 additional pole mounts can be deployed with the AXIS V5914 PTZ Network Camera that is specialized for live streaming with high-quality video.

At most installations, cameras are equipped with red and blue lights for visibility. "There's nothing covert about our program," says Bourgeois. "We want the community to know the cameras are there and to feel safer because they are."

Shake it off!

Sitting below sea level, it's no secret New Orleans is quite susceptible to rain, road dust and pollen. In addition to Axis Sharpdome technology delivering laser focus above and below the horizon, another feature that Bourgeois has found especially useful is the ability to shake off water with Speed Dry. "In a city prone to as much weather as we get, it's a big deal," says Bourgeois. "Otherwise we'd be sending people out every day to clean off the lenses."

Targeting resources where they're most needed

One of the goals of the Real Time Crime Center is to help police and other agencies target their limited resources more effectively. Bourgeois gives the example of a business owner calling the dispatch center to complain of juveniles tap dancing in front of his store, blocking customers from entering. When technicians look at the video, they can see that after the call was placed, the tap dancers have moved on. This information is passed onto the patrolling officers, saving them from wasting time responding to a non-event.

Bourgeois says that the visual corroboration and validation provided by the video cameras has been instrumental in numerous investigations, everything from shootings and car thefts to public disturbances. The visual evidence often saves officers countless hours of tracking down witnesses, taking statements and determining fault.

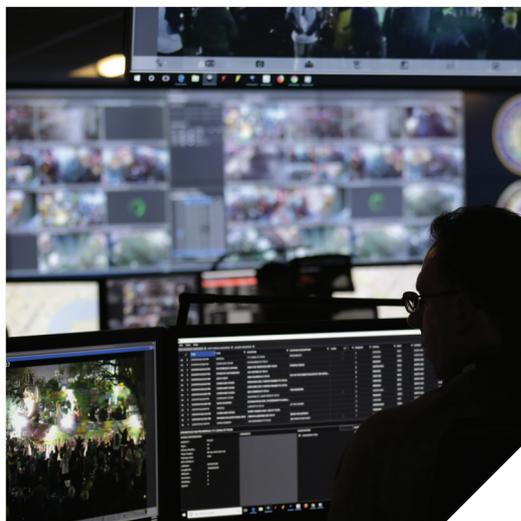
The Crime Center uses the Axis cameras to provide Emergency Medical Services information on the best route to a patient based on the current pedestrian and traffic conditions. Another example includes cameras to be installed at some of the city's underpasses verify alerts from flood sensors that Public Works should barricade certain low-lying streets from traffic.

"In addition to public safety, we also use the cameras to support a whole range of quality-of-life issues from curtailing illegal dumping to dispatching ground crews to pick up trash after a festival," says George Brown. "It's helping to make our city more attractive and pleasant to live in and visit."

Expanding coverage with private and public participation

The Crime Center continues to expand coverage throughout the city with the participation of other government agencies, local businesses and private residences. "Because we've based our solution on open standards, we're able to integrate a wide variety of video sources into our Crime Center system platform," says Brown.

The first phase was to integrate public-facing cameras mounted on municipal buildings. Subsequent phases will include an outreach program to local businesses and neighborhoods to map their external security cameras into the citywide network as well. "If we get an alert that an incident occurred near one of our cameras we want to be able to pull up views from private cameras in the vicinity as well," says Ross Bourgeois. "The more situational awareness we can get the better for everyone. Aggregating everyone's cameras into one system makes the citywide public safety project an exceptional force multiplier."



About Axis Communications

Axis offers intelligent security solutions that enable a smarter, safer world. As the 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 customers 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 2,600 dedicated employees in more than 50 countries around the world, supported by a global network of over 90,000 partners. Founded in 1984, Axis is a Sweden-based company listed on NASDAQ Stockholm under the ticker AXIS.

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