

## VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SECURITY for Emergency Service Organizations

Use of video surveillance cameras for security purposes should be part of an integrated overall premises safety and security program. The program should be designed after a careful review and analysis of the security needs and a threat assessment of the premises. Video surveillance can be as effective as the facility's ability to monitor and respond promptly. Generally, there are no specific requirements regarding use of video cameras for security purposes, such as location, type and number of cameras and real-time surveillance. However, privacy issues should be seriously considered.

The following are some considerations that may be helpful when implementing a video surveillance program. This is not comprehensive. The equipment manufacturers and legal counsel should be consulted for more specific guidelines. In light of emerging terrorism, video surveillance has become an important element of a site security program.

- Q Covert use of video cameras may have significant legal implications related to invasion of privacy issues — for example, use of such a camera in a rest room or a bunkroom. Legal counsel familiar with local laws on this subject should be consulted.
- Q A video surveillance camera without appropriate real-time monitoring and prompt response capability is an ineffective deterrent of crime. Although it may help in apprehending the criminal later, it does nothing to protect and assist the victim.
- Q Depending on the need, the recording can be time-lapsed or real-time. All surveillance recordings should have a date and time stamp. Organizations will want to record in real time, as a time-lapsed recording may not capture the observed crime, which could create

problems when the case goes to trial.

- Q Although it may provide a very limited visible deterrent against criminal activities, never use dummy cameras. These devices give a false sense of security to people and create an expectation of safety. This can have very serious legal and liability implications in case of litigation involving personal injuries, especially assaults, robberies, and rapes.
- Q Fixed surveillance cameras are not very effective for large open areas where there is constant movement. These areas, such as parking lots, should be monitored by multiple cameras, possibly overlapping to give better coverage. Cameras with pan, tilt, or zoom capabilities provide more flexibility for surveillance of large areas.
- Q The number of cameras to deploy in a premises security program depends on many factors, and the decision should be part of an overall security plan. Design and layout of the area and location of obstructions must be considered. Cameras can be hard-wired or wireless for transmission. For wireless cameras, consideration may have to be given to the interference issue and the transmission frequency.
- Q Appropriate lighting is crucial to effective video surveillance. The camera selected must be capable of operating with the available light. Cameras used for outdoor surveillance must be able to accommodate a broad range of variable light conditions, from natural daylight to night-time illumination.
- Q Outdoor installations will require appropriate protection of the equipment from weather elements and vandals.
- Q Mounting options (high or low), back-up power and service maintenance access must also be considered.

Video surveillance will be generally permissible in areas that are open and accessible to a larger number of people. Individuals do not have an expectation of privacy in such public areas. Some companies also choose to post warning signs (for example: "This public area is monitored for personal safety and property protection.") Distribution of a written organizational policy on surveillance and signed consent forms from all employees/members ensures the documentation that they have reviewed the policy and puts them on notice for any premises monitoring.

Some additional management procedures that should be considered when implementing a premise video surveillance program are:

- Q Written communication to anyone entering the film range of the camera with a clearly visible sign. If the images taken are linked to a data collection site, the sign must indicate whom to contact if someone wants to press his right to information.
- Q The organization must protect the personal data against unauthorized processing by technical and organizational measures. Only authorized persons may have access to the data, and it must be kept in a locked room or cabinet.
- Q The data may only be used for the express purpose of the surveillance and for no other reason.
- Q The identity of persons filmed cannot be disclosed except to the appropriate authorities for the purposes of the surveillance.
- Q The images taken must be deleted within a short time frame. A suggested time frame is one week.

Video surveillance can be an effective tool for premise security. Proper development and management of the system is important for that effectiveness. 🌟