

Case Study

Application: Municipality
Company: City of Allentown
Country: United States

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Allentown, PA Patrols the Streets with the Sony Surveillance Solution



The City of Allentown strives to be a safe place to live, work and play. That's why the city's administration and police department decided to deploy surveillance cameras to assist the police department in reducing and preventing crime throughout the city. Currently, Allentown uses over 100 Sony cameras to view, record and analyze activities in selected areas throughout the city.



Background

Allentown is a city located in Lehigh County, Pennsylvania in the United States. It is Pennsylvania's third most populous city, after Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. As of 2008, the city had an estimated population of 111,025. Since the late 1980's, Allentown has undergone the type of socio-economic transformation typical of many eastern American cities. Allentown had long been noted for its close proximity to both Philadelphia (60 mi/97km) to the south and New York City (90 mi/140km) to the east. The completion of two major roadway projects circa 1990-2000 made Allentown even more accessible, for better and for worse, to influences from both cities.

Challenges

By 2007, several Allentown neighborhoods were experiencing above city average incidents of burglaries, vandalism, narcotics trafficking and assaults. These crimes were driving down the quality of life for the residents and merchants in these areas, while stretching the finite resources of the Allentown Police Department to the limit. Fortunately for the city, it was the home of Communication Systems Inc. (CSI) a full service advanced technology systems integrator operating in Allentown since 1975. Working with Allentown Mayor Ed Pawlowski, other elected officials and the Police Department, CSI designed, engineered, installed and maintains a wireless surveillance system, consisting of cameras installed strategically in locations throughout the city. Fulfilling the need for a full-time law enforcement presence in these high-crime areas, the solution would serve as both a crime deterrent and as an investigation aid.

Solution

Sony Solution

CSI proposed to equip the surveillance system with Sony's SNC-RX550N—Network Rapid Dome Cameras. This model of camera is ideal for this particular application because of its low-light performance. In use 24-hours a day on city streets, law enforcement relies on the rapid dome cameras' clarity in low-light conditions and Intelligent Motion features. These features enable the cameras to patrol the area around their location and to automatically provide stable and sharp images on areas of sudden or repeated movement. This focusing could also be controlled by 911 Communications Center officers in response to radio messages or calls to police. Another advantage the cameras presented is an image processing technology providing multiple compression formats, an important feature as the footage was stored at APD headquarters and could be retrieved for use in the investigation and prosecution of criminal activity. CSI combined the Sony cameras to a wireless surveillance system and directional wireless panel antennas for video backhaul in a weather-proof, thermostat-controlled enclosure. The camera was bottom-mounted for maximum coverage and enclosed in a vandal-resistant dome. Some of cameras were mounted with a blue "awareness light" to draw attention to their presence. All of the cameras are connected to a multi-point wireless network to a viewing/archiving server in the City's Data Center. CSI designed and installed two monitoring stations in the city's 911 Communications Center and Public Safety Building, while enabling video to be pushed to patrol vehicles.

Results

Upon the activation of the first phase of the system, the city observed a reduction in crime, meeting the objective of the initiative. Police see and interrupt crimes in progress and are also able to use footage obtained from the cameras as evidence in making arrests and to refute claims of tampering or other alleged misconduct during arrests. In the years following the launch, additional cameras placed in other Allentown neighborhoods provide similar positive results. There are now over 100 cameras in operation city wide. As part of his January 2011 "state of the city" address, Allentown Mayor Ed Pawlowski noted that the crime rate in the city has declined four consecutive years, 2007-2010 and credited the presence of the surveillance system as one of the key drivers in reducing the crime rates.

In February 2011, a gas line explosion rocked an Allentown neighborhood, sending a fireball through several homes, destroying them and causing five fatalities. A surveillance camera less than 50 feet from the blast remained operational through the entire incident and the live feed was used to help direct first responders to the scene.

Why Sony Cameras Were Selected

During the formative stages of the project, CSI and Allentown mapped out the projected requirements for the system. It was readily apparent that if the cameras failed to deliver as intended, there was a high risk of the loss of time, money and reputation for all involved.

Quotes

Ed Pawlowski, Mayor of Allentown

"The system has paid tremendous dividends. The cameras continue to be an effective evidence tool. There have been numerous incidents where the cameras detect criminal activity long before a 911 call is placed. The 'eye in the sky' is a perfect complement to feet on the street."

Charlie Thiel, CSI's General Manager

"CSI and Allentown chose Sony Cameras because of their tradition and reputation for quality imaging and reliable communication. These cameras are still running strong after nearly four years of patrolling in extreme environments. This clearly demonstrates Sony's superior commitment to quality and to their customers."



Product List

• SNC-RX550N