



Pennsylvania Town Connects Community to Law Enforcement through Surveillance Cameras

In Hellam Township, Pennsylvania, the combination of community relationships and video surveillance systems helps local law enforcement investigate crime.

Overview

Hellam is nestled along the Susquehanna River, between York to the west and Lancaster to the east. Before settlers homesteaded there in the early 1700s, the land was populated by American Indian tribes, including the Iroquois.

Advantage Security Inc. has been providing intrusion, video, access control and fire alarm systems to the region for more than 30 years. It has installed equipment in sports complexes, hotels, government buildings and more. Advantage's sister company provides physical security services.

"As a result, we continue to maintain some great relationships with law enforcement," says Advantage President Duane Ness. "We've been able to provide some pretty big assistance to law enforcement when they come asking, in some cases for video, if something happens."

The challenge

Giving law enforcement access to video from a variety of locations quickly when there is an incident is crucial.

The Hellam Township Police Department employs 12 people and serves the Hellam township, Hallam Borough, and Wrightsville Borough, which have a total population of about 10,000 people.

It is located in a new municipal building, which has about 20 OpenEye surveillance cameras. The cameras are placed throughout the inside of the

building, including in the interview rooms, as well as outside, providing a 360-degree view of the area.

"It's a big factor for us for accreditation to have cameras constantly monitoring our evidence room and at every access point through the building," says Lt. Drew Heistand, who has been in law enforcement for 20 years. "OpenEye is huge for us."

Video is displayed on two 55-inch monitors so officers can have a clear picture of what's happening at any given time. The department also utilizes remote access through the OpenEye Web Services (OWS) open-cloud platform.

"Each of the administrators has access," Heistand says. "I can pull it up on my cell phone and can see what's going on in any one of our cameras."

In addition to the building's cameras, Advantage gives the department access to other cameras within its jurisdiction.

Technology as a tool

Using technology is a must for law enforcement.

"You can't live without it, not anymore. There was a time before all this technology, it would have been acceptable to not have cameras in your buildings, especially interview rooms, when it comes to court testimony," Heistand says.

In one case, a car was reported stolen and later found to be involved in a wreck. The driver, who was not supposed to drive, had made the report.

Says Ness, "We were able to pull video of the approximate time and date of the crash, and, lo and behold, the complainant is seen walking away from the crash on video."

In another case, a motorcycle moving at 100 mph passed a patrol officer going the opposite direction. Advantage has cameras installed on its building's exterior, facing the road, which captured video of the vehicle.

Within minutes of the police calling him, Ness was able to locate the relevant video clips, export them to the cloud and send a password-protected link to authorities via email.

"The car came right by our office, so we were able to provide fabulous pictures," Ness says. "What's unique about the OpenEye product is that we're able to share with law enforcement a variety of video."

In a third incident, Ness was able to pull up video from a vehicle accident at an intersection.

"It was well within the view of one of the cameras we had in place, so it was very easy to establish fault for that accident," Ness says. "The video tells the truth."

Both Heistand and Ness call the process to find, play back and download video with OWS easy.

"When it comes to operations ... the simplicity by which they can share video is key. When they pull up multiple locations, it's very easy. It's just a drop down menu for them," Ness says. "They can watch it right in the cloud."

No longer are users required to download video onto a CD or USB drive, which can create a security risk. Today's internet speed



Squadroom monitors allow staff to view activity inside and outside the station.

also makes transferring large amounts of data easier.

In the future, the Hellam Township PD hopes to collaborate with more businesses to gain access to live video of the streets. Having access to such video can help department staff see what's going on and advise

officers responding to an incident. Most importantly, it helps them document crimes, create timelines and gather evidence.

"We're here to find the bad guys."

—
Lt. Drew Heistand,
Hellam Township PD

"Some of the public might see it as infringement when it comes to facial recognition. We're not out there to track people. We're here to find the bad guys," Heistand says.

Crisis readiness

Advantage Security became an OpenEye channel partner in 2019.

"We wanted something that was cloud managed, and we

wanted something that held video locally because, in our jurisdiction, internet access is not reliable or robust. Being able to push all video to the cloud would've been a challenge for us, and expensive," Ness says. "We needed someone we could depend on, rely on and trust."

For end users, Ness cautions against choosing a security system based solely on cost.

"We deal in life safety," he says. "Ninety-five percent of the time what we do doesn't matter, but it's within that 5 percent of criticality you hope your systems work and that they're reliable and operate as they should."

The ability to monitor a system's health through OWS is "a huge benefit," Ness says. "We love the cloud-managed capability, the supervisory capability, the ease of use and installation. ... If we can make law enforcement's job easier, it's a win for them and a win for the citizens."



FOR MORE INFORMATION
sales@openeye.net
(509) 232-5261

About OpenEye

OpenEye, the cloud video platform company, provides solutions for video security, business intelligence and loss prevention. For over 20 years, it has been committed to developing an easy-to-use, comprehensive video management system backed by heroic customer service and support. OpenEye's solutions are available globally through a trusted network of certified service providers. Visit openeye.net.

*Photos courtesy of Hellam Township PD.