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Network Video Makes the Grade at Jefferson City High School



With upgraded video surveillance technologies, Jefferson City High School is able to utilize video in a more proactive manner to improve emergency evacuation plans, reduce problems in high traffic areas and prosecute campus crimes

In the heart of Missouri, Jefferson City High School (JCHS) is a tranquil campus that operates by its motto "pride through excellence." Despite having relatively minor security incidents, JCHS remains focused on making security a top priority.

Up until 2006, JCHS's video surveillance equipment consisted of a few analog video cameras. Increasingly, the school's staff was finding that the legacy surveillance system was outdated and lacked the ability to provide quality video images of all key areas across the campus and most importantly, easy access to video files. To improve security and to invest in cutting-edge video solutions and software, JCHS turned to a locally-based network video solution provider, Wren.

The administration's first step was to invest in more cameras to capture video in high traffic areas including hallways, cafeterias, and the outdoor walkways between the two main buildings. Additionally, the administration implemented Wren Video Management System (VMS) Software to make it easy to retrieve, view, and share video images now being captured from so many vital points across campus.

Julia Koch, Assistant Principal, came on board at JCHS as the second set of cameras was being deployed. "After progressing through the initial learning curve of a new video system, we were quickly able to realize the benefits of our new network video system," recalled Koch.

With the newfound accessibility and all of the functionality of network cameras, Jefferson City High School is now getting the biggest bang for the buck out of their surveillance system. “We helped the administration select the right equipment for each shot they wanted to capture and trained them on Wren VMS Software so that they could get what they needed out of the system. I am pleased to see them really using the capabilities of the system to use video in more proactive and impactful ways,” said Rick Johnson, Manager of Services and Training who helped JCHS through the implementation process.

Whereas use of the old system was limited to primarily post-incident investigations, the new network video system is now used on an increasingly proactive basis to identify potential problems and correct them. A key enabler for taking a proactive stance with operational and security improvements is the VMS Software that enables Koch to easily review video on her PC whenever she needs to.

“We have limited staff and time, so quick and easy access to the video is essential to making it useful to us on a daily basis. Initially, we were using the video to investigate incidences, but as we learn more about the capabilities of the system and the ease of locating critical video, we are beginning to use insights from video on a proactive basis,” noted Koch. Most recently, Koch has been using video to monitor and evaluate processes and staff performance during emergency drills, namely fire and tornado drills.

“We absolutely must ensure maximum speed and efficiency during these drills. In addition, we need to test the ability of students and staff to deal with obstacles that present themselves,” said Koch. In a recent drill, Koch blocked a couple of the exits to test students and staff response.

Watching the evacuation process live using Wren VMS Software, Koch was able to measure the additional time it took to evacuate and provide specific

recommendations to staff on other exits that would have reduced their time to get everyone out of the building. This is just the first step in JCHS’s initiatives to use video more creatively to improve operations and safety at the school.

Koch is also using video to capture and resolve incidences. In the last few weeks, there have been a couple of rare but serious incidences on campus. JCHS was able to pull video from a number of different cameras across campus to track intruders and piece together a vandalism event. “Law enforcement was extremely impressed with the quality video we were able to provide. It really was essential in their investigation and prosecution of the crime,” said Koch.

Koch notes that while video is a critical part of the school’s security measures, it is only one component of a good security program. “We have put many policies in place that have helped to reduce the number of incidences, including a new tardy policy and a lockdown program to keep the building secured during school hours.

We’ve minimized hallway traffic and we have access control on the doors. All of these things play a part in a well-rounded security policy.”

When asked what advice she would give schools looking to implement network video solutions, Koch emphasized the importance of planning and prioritization. “It is simply not practical to provide video coverage of every square foot on a campus. It’s important to be strategic about it and to cover key areas first. It’s also critical to select a system that doesn’t require you to be a technical genius to operate,” suggested Koch.

Thanks to network video, JCHS is advancing security and operations, letting educators and students focus on the business of learning so that each student achieves his or her maximum potential through a challenging educational system characterized by pride through excellence.



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