Greater Minneapolis Linked with Milestone Ring of Protection
Pro-Tech Design provides innovative inter-city security solution

Eight cities covering more than 200 square miles around the greater Minneapolis area have formed a valuable relationship by connecting the municipalities' video surveillance to protect citizens and quickly resolve incidents that can cross between their borders. With Milestone XProtect® video management software networked in numerous cities, individual municipalities control their own security monitoring, yet quickly connect with neighboring systems for collaborative surveillance missions.

"We had a collective idea between numerous municipalities to centralize local systems with the same IT backbone. Every city can adopt software from the Milestone platform to have its own system. But there are times administrators may want to open access to their system to solve a mutual incident, and they can get assistance from neighboring emergency services, requiring as much help as possible to solve a problem. Sharing camera feeds through Milestone has been a valuable yet easy-to-integrate solution that each municipality has eagerly installed." Tim Ferrian, Director of Sales and Marketing, Pro-Tec Design.

The challenge: The greater Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, area is composed of 45 municipalities with similar citywide surveillance needs. Within that space, security integrator Pro-Tec Design identified the parallel and individual needs of each city and their various departments. For example, the police department in one city has a variety of unique applications different from the IT department of another. The widespread commonality for all cities was the need for an improved IP video management software (VMS) system to replace legacy analog systems.

The solution: Milestone XProtect VMS, with its open platform technology allows each city to individually monitor and secure its own assets, be it a government building, transit stations or city-owned business. Milestone's open platform enables each city to strategically design and install the hardware and software that meet its own needs, providing a cost-effective, flexible solution that can also be shared across locations to leverage more resources.

The advantages: Milestone solves the core needs of each municipality but offers versatile feature sets and client interfaces that address the unique needs of each department. With the success of the initial Milestone installation, Pro-Tec began expanding into additional applications, such as video integration using XProtect® Transact for government-owned retail stores. The cities are saving money by efficiently deploying emergency services, knowing exactly what they are dealing with before sending out large first responder teams.

IP technology comes to Minneapolis
Working as a Milestone channel partner and Vertical Market Specialist in the city surveillance and transportation markets, Pro-Tec Design has been installing and servicing security and surveillance solutions in the Twin Cities for decades. Minneapolis/St. Paul make up the most populous area in the state of Minnesota - a sprawling metropolis with a population of more than 3,000,000.

About 10 years ago, when the industry began widely adopting IP technology in surveillance environments, Pro-Tec saw a huge opportunity to become a catalyst in the movement while also helping cities solve problems that developed with the use of outdated analog systems. This was not a fad to Tim Ferrian, Director of Sales and Marketing for Pro-Tec. The shift to IP surveillance was the way he saw the world operating in the future.

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"We had a strong feeling about the shift in security and surveillance to IP, and we wanted to partner with strong companies who could help us provide our clients a solution that was beyond their current expectations but could easily be installed, upgraded and expanded over time," says Ferrian. "Milestone had the wherewithal to understand the market and IP, not only in the technology's infancy but how it would evolve to what end-users expect in the future. Milestone was the most flexible, nimble and open technology that existed at the time we were searching, and it's delivered as a core offering for our customers ever since."

Pro-Tec's strong relationships with numerous cities in Minnesota developed from a foundation of card access control and video surveillance, so a transition into network-based surveillance that could integrate the two was a logical next step.

A Ring of Protection
Pro-Tec developed the idea for a collective solution with numerous municipalities based on a standardized IT backbone. With each area using the same platform, it would maintain its own system yet open up the option to share video feeds in case of an incident or emergency that crosses town borders. In addition, with a combined Milestone video management system (VMS) service, updates and maintenance would be streamlined for quick response from Pro-Tec.

"We began working individually with the cities and now assist quite a few," Ferrian continues. "The agencies own and operate each individual system, but if there is any incident where a neighboring town is also using Milestone and needs help in an emergency, it is convenient and expeditious if the other organizations can step in with its own camera feeds."

There are many common themes within city surveillance: watching out for the visitors of city halls, keeping track of persons in custody at police stations, providing evidence for investigations, protecting staff and equipment, monitoring community pools and protecting the government from any liability,, watching intersections for public works operations (moving snow, salting roads), among numerous other functions

With these commonalities, each city also has unique needs for surveillance whether they are monitoring a busy farmer's market, senior centers, community sports, historical landmarks, water treatment facilities, or water towers – the list goes on.

Eight cities surrounding Minneapolis are currently linked via Pro-Tec's Milestone VMS solution: Shoreview, Farmington, Brooklyn Center, Minnetonka, Maple Grove, Brooklyn Park, Edina and Minneapolis Proper. In addition, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT), Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development and the Minneapolis Convention Center are included within this Minneapolis "Ring of Protection."

Protecting Government-Owned Assets
With a full fiber network connecting most of Brooklyn Center's government buildings, IT Director Patty Hartwig looked to take full advantage of the technology opportunities available. Prior to the fiber network many of the City buildings either had no video surveillance or were stand-alone analog surveillance systems. The fiber network allowed for a cost effective video surveillance solution, including one shared location for storage.

A flexible solution was required to manage the diverse needs of the city. In addition to general government operations, Brooklyn Center owns and operates a convention center, two liquor stores and a golf course. All business units are now networked with the Milestone video solution. Additionally, administrators in the police department, general government facilities and two of the four schools in the district – an elementary and high school – are also integrated into a video system.

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"Ease of use was extremely important when deciding on our VMS installation," states Hartwig. "We did our research looking for user-friendly, adaptable and easy-to-modify solutions. Our system needed to play back and pull up video in an instant. We put an extreme value on the Milestone VMS protecting our city assets, so we required a product that would be here today, tomorrow and in the future. Milestone has and continues to show that value."

The city's 90+ cameras are positioned in 6 buildings and expansion plans include the addition of more than 70 cameras in 2014. Milestone Mobile is also deployed on tablets and smartphones for the 8 administrators on the system.

Brooklyn Center integrated the Point of Sale (POS) systems at its liquor stores with Milestone's XProtect Transact software module, which brings up video associated with register transactions to monitor and document what happens during a sale. The XProtect Transact integration provides a time-synchronized interface linking receipt data together with corresponding video, extending the monitoring of operations to include actual cash register data. This allows the city to identify problems involving POS and credit cards to reduce shrinkage and fraud, providing a safer shopping environment.

The Ring's Police Force
The legacy VHS systems installed throughout Farmington, MN were not only time-consuming to view and monitor, but extremely difficult to work with if an event occurred at government facilities, including two city-owned liquor stores. There was no communication between the disparate systems – a completely inefficient means of surveillance.

With a new City Hall, one of the first steps for improving the protection of citizens included developing a citywide monitoring solution to unify surveillance processing, fully supported by the fiber network across the city. For its scalability and future-proof technology, Milestone was integrated into Farmington's government agencies in five buildings to help support the police.

"It's easy to identify the hard costs of a project of this magnitude," says Farmington Police Sargent Jim Constantineau. "But for the long run, we asked how much money will this system save us? We can efficiently access video for investigations from anywhere with an Internet connection, saving time and allowing our officers to be more productive during their shifts. Retrieving stolen property or knowing what happens in an accident has improved our response and the costs of running the city. We expect the system to continue to provide us with great value as we scale up."

In addition to monitoring for safety in its liquor stores and senior centers, Farmington relies on Milestone to provide high-definition screen shots of the accused criminals and posts them to social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. "We haven't publicized the surveillance system yet, but we do rely on the publicity and leads on criminals generated from social media to help us even further in solving criminal acts," Constantineau continues.

Handling Public Safety Issues
The City of Edina was looking for more expandability while making its transition from analog to digital – wanting more cameras without adding more expensive analog converters to its inventory. The surveillance cameras deployed throughout the township are mainly used for simple security monitoring and general safety over the fiber network.

"Our Milestone installation process was very simple; the interface is easy to use and very straightforward," states Nick Lovejoy, IT Specialist, City of Edina. "It's evident in our day-to-day operations that the Milestone interface has helped us improve services in the city, addressing and solving many issues with a quick turnaround."

Surveillance for the city includes an aquatics center (16 cameras), a training facility (4), public works building (18) and water treatment plant (13), all are monitored for the general safety of those working and visiting, and the protection of publicly owned equipment.

Employees across the city have access to the Milestone system, but Lovejoy can easily restrict access to only see cameras linked to their facilities, thanks to Milestone's beneficial use of Microsoft's Active Directory for user management.

"Eventually, anywhere we had analog cameras, we're going to design the system to be completely reliant on Milestone through the newly installed digital solution," continues Lovejoy. "The growth potential of our system is only limited by our ability to get budget approval on the latest hardware additions."

The Benefits
Milestone works to assist the administrators as they protect the public, fight fires, manage operations and infrastructure—whatever the needs of each municipality entail. Video is a useful tool in each person's busy job, and ease of use is vital. The system's intuitiveness ensures time-efficient monitoring.

As each municipality grows and expands its coverage, Pro-Tec and its customers are able to grow with Milestone. The networked video solution addresses individual system and user needs, from management to anyone who shares the system's functionality. Milestone's open platform allows each city and its many departments to use any camera or server they find the most cost-effective or efficient; unlimited options are available for ongoing applications in the Ring of Protection.

"There have been some talks about the next Ring of Protection layer among additional municipalities," continues Ferrian. "We see cooperation between all of the agencies involved, not in a sense that they have to bolt everything together, but we're providing the framework where we can flip a switch to connect the entire area if necessary."

About Milestone Systems
Founded in 1998 and acquired by Canon Europe in 2014, Milestone Systems is an independent company within the Canon Group (TYO: 7751 and NYSE: CAJ) and a global industry leader in open platform IP video management software, according to IHS Inc. Easy to manage, reliable and proven in thousands of customer installations around the world, Milestone technology supports flexible choices in network hardware and integrations with other systems. Sold through partners in more than 100 countries, Milestone solutions help 'video enable' organizations – managing risks, protecting people and assets, optimizing processes and reducing costs. For more information, visit www.milestonesys.com

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