

Chicago's Brookfield ZOO is wild about IP video surveillance for protecting people and animals.

"The main selling point was the flexibility to add new cameras anywhere and be able to easily move them around. It's also good to have the recorded images for resolving any issues that could come up." - Jack Howe, Captain of Security and Emergency Medical Services at Brookfield Zoo.



Challenges: Crowd control, accidents, and other security-related incidences are all issues that this big metropolitan zoo has to handle. Widespread areas have to be covered, and the old analog surveillance system was not practical for planned expansions.

Solution: Milestone XProtect Enterprise IP video surveillance software is installed on a standard PC running Microsoft Windows, managing Sony model SNC-DF70 network cameras, installed and supported by Current Technologies Corporation. Axis, IQEye and JVC network cameras can be easily added in future.

Advantages: The zoo has a full network backbone with the right IP-based software that allows easy scalability and flexibility to move cameras around for different exhibits and events. Crowd control is easier with more virtual eyes from the cameras helping the zoo's police squad handle incidences faster. Integration with access control, the ticket booths, and retail shops' cash registers is now possible, as well as the option to use Milestone's PDA Client for mobile access to the images.

The Brookfield Zoo just outside Chicago has 2 million visitors yearly, coming to see more than 3,000 animals. 450 employees work there full-time, and another 1,000 are hired every summer to handle the upswing in attendance at that time. Special events are held throughout the year that bring especially big crowds, like winter holiday celebrations, Halloween, or catered events. A busy day can have 20-25,000 visitors on the property, which covers a total of 216 acres.



"It's like a mini-city here," smiles Jack Howe, Captain of Security and Safety at Brookfield Zoo, who heads up the combined police and emergency medical services. "We are EMTs, able to handle any Emergency Medical Treatments, and we are a full-fledged police department: all my people have graduated from the Police Academy. This means we are trained and commissioned officers."

The zoo is spread out over areas in both the towns of Brookfield and Riverside. The Police force numbers 20 officers, who have a fleet of cars and golf carts for getting around the large grounds. The big parking lots are located by the South and North exits, and require patrolling a lot of area.

"We were putting up new buildings at the Zoo and looked at different security options. Everyone seemed to be going the network way, and Current Technologies convinced us with their expertise and flexible solution," says Captain Howe.

"In the first phase of the project, we put cameras at the gate entrances and exits, and where the ticket takers are. The second phase includes the parking lots and other areas inside the park," says Steve Daugherty, President of Current Technologies Corporation.

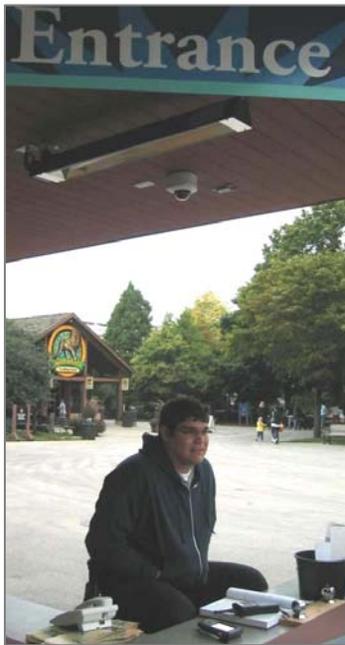
Managing constant turnover of people

The zoo has more visitors in the warmer seasons, and therefore has to hire many more workers to handle the additional flow. This means not only that the visitor numbers mushroom, but also the amount of employees to be managed.



The networked surveillance system helps increase the officers' visibility. This kind of proactive approach to security is exactly what ensures that the zoo is a safe and enjoyable place for families, friends, students and tourists – not to mention the animals!

Network approach is better than analog



Most of the Brookfield Zoo buildings were already wired with fiber optic cables, so the IT backbone for a new security installation with IP video surveillance was in place. This makes it very easy to install the cameras anywhere on the network. The cameras are scheduled, managed and archived on the Milestone XProtect Enterprise software, which provides viewing of either live or recorded images.

The zoo used to have a small analog system, which can now be integrated with the new IP solution by using video servers to convert the images from the black and white analog cameras to digital for storing in the Milestone system.

"Eventually, the old parts will be phased out and the analog cameras replaced with superior network cameras," remarks Chris Moomey, Technical Manager at Current Technologies Corporation. "Using wireless or putting in CAT-5 cable is a lot easier and faster."

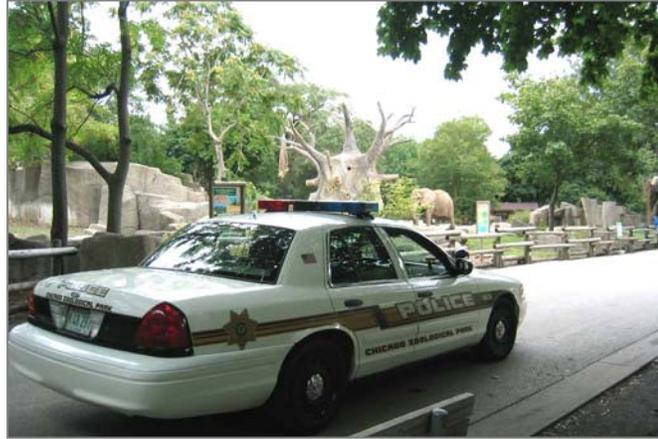
"That's right: it would be a nightmare to put up a DVR solution for the parking lots, having to put coaxial cameras with those cables out there. There's no feasible way to fish wires out to those areas," explains Steve Daugherty.

Mobile cameras for monitoring animal exhibits

"The zoo wants to put up mobile cameras with wireless connections on different animal exhibits, which can be moved around anytime to highlight an 'Animal of the Month', showing the images on the zoo's public website. This would also allow viewing of animal behavior at night," adds Daugherty.

“Our Animal Programs Department has professional zookeepers who are also very interested in using the surveillance as a tool in their work to monitor animals,” comments Captain Howe. “The head of our IT department wants to put a camera inside the big tree in the elephant exhibit, for watching both the animals and the kids’ reactions to them, which are fun to see.”

“The squad cars have laptop computers in them, so we can make the Milestone surveillance accessible to each of them. This lets the officers see what is going on anywhere throughout the park, so they can respond faster to anything that could come up. Those driving the carts could use the Milestone XPE PDA Client,” says Daugherty.



“Some areas get quite dark at night with less lighting, so for night patrol we can use cameras with infra-red. Right now, they just switch over to black and white to pick things up,” injects Moomey.

“One of the great advantages of the Milestone software is the fact that it supports the widest choice in network cameras. We like that flexibility to choose the right one for each situation. Here at the zoo, we’re using the new fixed Sony F70 dome cameras that are really rugged. We also like the Axis 232 network cameras, and we’re very excited about the brand new JCV PTZ cameras,” says Daugherty. “We’ll use several IPIX Command View 360 domes, too.”

Ready for expansion and integration with other systems



The Brookfield Zoo will be getting a new access control system, which can be integrated with the Milestone IP video surveillance system for better identification of authorized people coming and going from the grounds. Attendants at each of the gates can be given remote access to the surveillance system for this purpose.

“We’re always adding new exhibits and holding events, so the new video surveillance solution is really good for being able to grow along with us,” concludes Captain Howe.

www.brookfieldzoo.org, www.currenttech.net,
www.milestonesys.com.

