

City of Cincinnati



Client name

City of Cincinnati Police Department

Organization size

1009 Sworn Officers and 206
Civilian Support Staff

Products

Security Center, Omnicast

Industry

City Wide Surveillance

Location

Cincinnati, Ohio, United States

Partners

Federal Signal Corporation, Axis
Communications, Cambium, Dell,
Firetide, Pelco

Cincinnati achieves multi-stakeholder collaboration with Security Center to maximize security investments and keep citizens safe.

The queen city uses Omnicast™ video surveillance to quickly dispatch first responders and provide access to video in the field.

Business challenge

The City of Cincinnati, which is often referred to as the Queen City, has nearly 300,000 Cincinnatians living in the downtown core and over 2.2 million residents in the surrounding metropolitan area. This influx of citizens has made Cincinnati the third largest city in the state of Ohio, and the 65th most populous city in the United States. Situated on the border between the states of Ohio and Kentucky, the city of Cincinnati lies in a wide basin on the north bank of the Ohio River, and draws in over 2 million visitors each year.

The Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) understood the importance of having video surveillance and other advanced security technologies to keep its citizens safe; investing in its first Genetec Omnicast IP video management system (VMS) in 2008. Over time, the benefits of the video management system prompted the CPD to expand their Omnicast system, and thus sought to leverage the innate scalability of Omnicast to freely and gradually add more cameras as necessary.

When the CPD was looking to expand its functionality and benefit from the latest advancements in IP security technology, they worked with Federal Signal Corporation, an international provider and installer of integrated solutions, to upgrade to Genetec Omnicast IP video surveillance as part of the Genetec unified security platform, Security Center. Genetec Security Center offers advanced functionality such as an intuitive mobile client which provides secure access to video from any mobile device, a map-based interface which makes it easier for operators to locate security devices and handle alarms, and health monitoring which automatically alerts administrators to potential system vulnerabilities.

Investigations just got easier with Omnicast VMS

Today, the City of Cincinnati has close to 200 cameras from Axis Communications, Pelco and other manufacturers spread throughout five city districts which are all managed from

the Genetec Omnicast video surveillance system. According to Barry Whitton, Computer Systems Analyst at Cincinnati Police Department Technology and Systems Section, “You can’t have officers everywhere, and by no means do the cameras and VMS take the place of the police officers, but it gives us the ability to view more areas. Omnicast allows us to see what happening in real-time and respond efficiently.”

Having the ability to instantly playback video directly from the live video frame during an emergency, has been the most impactful time-saving feature for the CPD Real Time Crime Center (RTCC), whose officers handle all investigations. “If we have an incident, we can view real-time video, and at the click of a mouse, see what happened only moments before; as well as from a minute ago, to hour ago, to a day ago. Then, it’s only a couple more clicks to bookmark and protect the video,” said Whitton.

The CPD is also taking advantage of mobile functionality with Genetec Security Center, helping officers be better prepared when responding to incidents. The CPD has used mobile to monitor covert investigations, “so they can be watching live video right around the corner from the operation, and react quickly when necessary,” explained Whitton. The mobile app has also been very helpful to other regional first responders (Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana police, fire and rescue) and the US Coast Guard, who are offered mobile capabilities from smart phones, Apple iPads, or ruggedized laptops onboard boats.

User privileges and audit reports keep policies in check

Beyond the maritime entities and the RTCC, other Cincinnati city departments such as the 911 Dispatch Center and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) have access to the system. Operationally, even the Cincinnati Public Works and Traffic Engineering Departments are using the system to monitor weather conditions on city thoroughfares, spot hazardous debris on roadways and monitor major roadway construction projects. The CPD has also established partnerships with agencies such as the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority, receiving permission-based access to systems which monitor their respective properties.

Since many city departments use the Security Center system, the City of Cincinnati takes every precaution to ensure that only those with proper permissions have access to certain cameras and system functionalities by setting up very strict user access privileges within Security Center. Whitton elaborates: “We have so many different levels of security. We have people that can view only, or view and PTZ control only, and others than that can view, control and archive, or export. The RTCC officers are key players in all this. They are set at the highest priority, so they can lock out lower-level users at any time. This provides us with continuity of evidence. If

something is extracted from our system, it had gone through the right chain of custody.”

On a case-by-case basis, the City conducts audit reports to see if any evidence, or the system itself, was being used outside the guidelines of its policies. A quick audit report helps to ensure that the video surveillance system is being used ethically, and that the privacy of its citizens is protected at all times. In terms of ensuring continuous system availability, the CPD has been using the health monitoring feature in Security Center so that they can be immediately notified via email if portable or wireless cameras, or cameras in more important locations, go offline.

Community involvement helps expansion continue

Always on the look-out to add more cameras when necessary, the City of Cincinnati has received community support from hospitals, universities and private businesses who actively donate funds and provide location space for antennas and cameras to aid in the system expansion. Beyond that, the City of Cincinnati is also possibly looking to expand applications within Security Center, such as adding access control to police precincts, as well as supplement investigative efforts with automatic license plate recognition system. The ability to manage all systems from one platform will further improve investigations and keep the city safe.

“When we are able to show that the video surveillance system serves to not only help police and deter crime, but also deliver more benefits to public safety, traffic management and the whole city, it’s easier to get people to get buy-in on the project, either through financial funds or general support; and that is exactly what we have been able to do with the Genetec Omnicast VMS. We are extremely satisfied with the system and would recommend it to anyone”

Infrastructure at a Glance

The CPD has just under 200 cameras spread throughout the city, from manufacturers including Axis Communications (AXIS Q6034-E and AXIS Q6044-E PTZ) and Pelco. A combination of a dedicated city-maintained fiber optics network and wireless and cellular connectivity are used to stream video to police Regional Operations Center where the RTCC and EOC are located. In areas outside the fiber network, a Firetide wireless mesh network and Cambium microwave backhauls have been deployed. Dell servers are also centrally housed, and provide 14-day video retention period on a 64 TB Dell Compellent SAN.