

GOVERNMENT SECURITY

TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS IN DEFENSE OF THE HOMELAND



Monitoring Systems

Drive-By Surveillance

ABOVE: South Sioux City police monitor situations in city schools and other areas using computers in their police cars and ViconNet software.

South Sioux City, Neb., integrates its video system with city-wide wireless Internet

By Erin Semple

South Sioux City, Neb., is a technology hub in the Midwest United States.

Wanting to provide local police and the 911 emergency center with remote monitoring of public and school district video cameras, the city looked to the ViconNet IP video solution by Vicon Industries Inc., Hauppauge, N.Y. The city had just implemented a city-wide wireless Internet service.

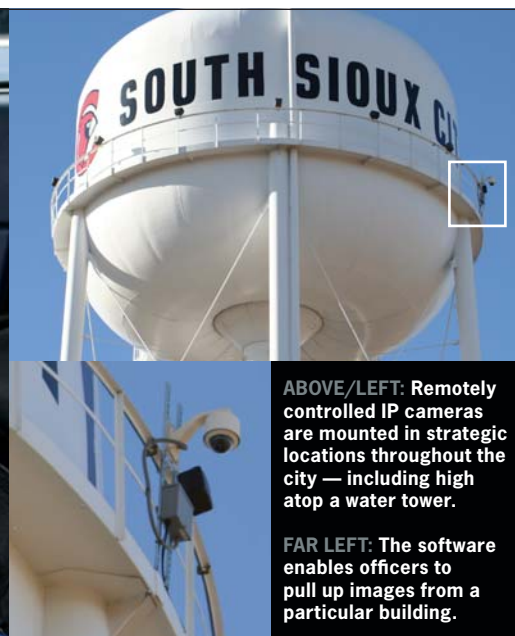
"We are a very aggressive city," says Lance Martin, communications director for South Sioux City. "We write a lot of grants and get funded for a lot of grants." The city received an ITEP (Information Technology Evaluation Program) grant through the Department of Homeland Security. "The reason we were funded for this was because we had already implemented a wireless system; we had that infrastructure," Martin says.

The grant allowed South Sioux City to use the infrastructure to benefit security in multiple venues from utilities to City Hall to local schools. Mike Tice, Vicon territory sales manager, says the product line was chosen for its hybrid IP platform and high picture quality.

The city's unique relationship with the local schools led to installing the technology around one year ago. "The typical jurisdiction and boundaries have blurred in our case," Martin says. "The city and the schools partnered to build a major fiber-optic network."

For their part, the city paid to implement a non-line-of-sight, city-wide wireless broadband system. "With the technology we deployed, you

"The city and the schools partnered to build a major fiber-optic network...We did it specifically to be able to respond to a Columbine-like incident. The ability for the police to see inside the school is huge."



ABOVE/LEFT: Remotely controlled IP cameras are mounted in strategic locations throughout the city — including high atop a water tower.

FAR LEFT: The software enables officers to pull up images from a particular building.

Now, if an incident were to occur at the school, first responder officers could go in immediately and then be guided by the command staff or later-arriving officers viewing the video.

can be completely blocked by a building and still receive a signal (from the tower),” Martin says. “That gave us city-wide coverage of about 30 square miles.”

Using the wireless Internet system, students could get on-line from anywhere on campus.

“Because the schools had put in that video system and we had done the joint project, that gave the police department access to that video from their patrol cars,” Martin says. “We did it specifically to be able to respond to a Columbine-like incident. The ability for the police to see inside the school is huge.”

Now, if an incident were to occur at the school, first responder officers could go in immediately and then be guided by the command staff or later-arriving officers viewing the video. They could also inform

teachers and staff the location of safe areas of refuge.

The DVRs and IP cameras are on that wireless network, and the squad cars have small wireless antennas on top of their cars. They can travel a 30-sq.-mile radius without video loss. “The police department can now look inside any schools or municipal buildings from their squad cars as they drive down the road or roll up on the scene,” Tice says.

They were also able to retrofit their existing equipment and integrate it to the ViconNet network.

“We are using the Vicon Kollector DVRs as well as pan-tilt-zoom dome cameras,” Martin says of the city-wide project. “We have three Vicon PTZ domes. One of them is mounted way up high on top of a water tower. It oversees a large swath of the interstate. We have another camera on Highway 20 on an overpass. These are specifically for traffic monitoring. That’s where the information-sharing piece of the project comes in. Sioux City, Iowa, has a great interest in seeing the video from our side. So we are offering up this video to the Iowa 9-1-1 center as well.”

Including the city and the schools, there have been 130 cameras installed. The system has also become a training ground for SWAT teams in conjunction with local law enforcement. Other sites using the

technology include City Hall, the public library, public works and the city/county law enforcement facility.

“We have water treatment plants with video both inside and outside recorded at all times,” Martin says. “We also have electric substations we are monitoring. We have several cameras at City Hall. Where the clerks sit there are cameras and a panic button. If we have an incident, the video will record it. If the panic button is pressed, the 9-1-1 center can see the video.”

Future expansion of the system is planned to include better coverage and broader access for other city, county and state agencies

“We are working on an agreement with the Nebraska Department of Roads to give them access to the cameras,” Martin says. “They have an interest in seeing traffic, so we are going to allow them to access the Vicon system.”

The city is also negotiating with large banks, so that in the event of a robbery, police would be able to see what is going on inside.

Martin would also like to bring the same mobile abilities to other law enforcement agencies. “We currently only have city police vehicles equipped. I would like to equip state and county patrols with this technology.” ★

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