

Fairfax Meadow, the premier UK catering butcher, gets more than just security with Milestone IP video surveillance: it helps to meet demanding industry specifications and quality in factory practices.

“The underlying reason for the surveillance is to enhance security, but what’s coming out strongly as a bigger benefit is the improved quality in our practices because people are being supervised better. I think it will pay for itself even more in that way.”

- Tony Carlisle, IT Manager at Fairfax Meadow



Situation:

The company’s old CCTV system was outdated and labour-intensive, poor quality, inflexible, and required closing down the system to search for evidence. Refrigerated rooms and wash-down procedures require exceptionally robust hardware.

Solution:

Matrix Net Limited is upgrading the company’s analogue CCTV system with Milestone XProtect Enterprise IP video surveillance software in operation with Mobotix Megapixel external network video cameras set up around the factory buildings inside and out.

Advantages:

The network system is easily scalable for adding new cameras or moving them around to improve surveillance coverage. The viewing can be carried out from any PC on the company network using an internet browser. Searching for evidence is now easy and fast, and the video images have greater clarity. The management have also discovered that the system is a new tool for improving quality practices to uphold demanding industry standards.

For over 10 years Fairfax Meadow had used traditional analogue CCTV with videotapes in their main Derby location, but following demand from the business to improve the quality of the system, the IT Manager decided to upgrade to a network solution to gain greater flexibility and gain the benefits of newer technology.

“The main reason we have surveillance is to reduce and deter the amount of internal theft we get. The problem that we have with meat is that once it is taken, it’s not traceable. As soon as it’s removed from our packaging, you can’t tell where it came from. One could say it was bought at the local butcher or wherever. Depending on the cuts of meat taken, it can be very high value,” says Tony Carlisle, IT Manager at Fairfax Meadow. “The biggest advantage, however, and one not initially considered by the management, is that the surveillance is used more for monitoring the working practices, checking that people are doing what they’re meant to be doing in the right way to follow proper working and hygiene procedures.”

Quality control of industry best practices

Fairfax Meadow has BRC accreditation and embraces the high standards for running their business. The British Retail Consortium (BRC) Technical Standard for Companies Supplying Retailer Branded Food Products was developed in 1998 to provide a common standard for companies supplying retailer branded food products. The BRC Technical Standard was developed by UK supermarket retailers to assist them in their fulfilment of legal obligations and protection of the consumer. This involves a grading system based on the status and number of non-conformities, attainable through fundamental requirements which must be well established, monitored and maintained. The requirements include monitoring HACCP (Hazardous Area Critical Control Points), internal audits, traceability, corrective action, layout, product flow and segregation, housekeeping, hygiene and training.

Royal British seals on the company website and brochures prove that the accreditation for Fairfax Meadow earns customers at the highest levels of society.

The procedures for handling the meat properly at Fairfax include everything from wearing special uniforms when inside the facilities to hand washing, use of metal detectors, labelling packages correctly, and more. The new cameras have been set up inside the working areas of the factory as well as outside, so these activities can be picked up in the video images for archiving and easy review.



"The factories are quite big and there's a lot of space to cover. The surveillance makes it easier for the managers to keep a check on what's happening in all the areas, making sure that everything's okay," states Tony Carlisle.

Protecting against product loss and accidents

There are about 380 employees and four locations, with the largest in Derby and North London, followed by Canterbury and Newcastle. They process and package meat at each site. All of the locations are planned for further implementation of the Milestone IP video surveillance system. Fairfax Meadow started with the Derby buildings, where Matrix Net Ltd. installed the network cabling and cameras in the beginning of 2005.

Fairfax Meadow has their own truck fleet with 65 dual-temperature vehicles delivering directly to customers and driving product between the sites. In addition, there are sub-suppliers driving in and out for other product shipments.

The initial focus has been on setting up cameras in the production areas and near the loading bays. Outside where there are a lot of vehicles moving around, cameras can help monitor those activities.

"There's is a 'banksman' walking around for the drivers to see on the blind side of the bigger vehicles, to assist them in parking properly and avoiding accidents. They help them manoeuvre, as the spaces can be rather tight. We don't want anyone getting injured. People have to wear high visibility clothing and safety vests, too," adds Carlisle.

Milestone allows mix of cameras

"The attraction of the Milestone software was that we could mix the camera models we use in our implementations," asserts Tony Carlisle. "We're going to put Mobotix in the outside parking lots, as well as all over inside the factory, but use other less expensive cameras in the entrance halls, corridors, and perhaps the clocking points, where there are no special hardware demands."

At the moment, they are using Mobotix cameras that are protected in their own housing and come as one total unit each, unlike other cameras that are delivered separate from the housing and wiring, which makes them more vulnerable to element degradation.

"The main areas we want to cover are inside where it's refrigerated and we need to be able to hose down the entire area for cleanliness," says Carlisle. "We looked at a whole lot of cameras from Gardiner Security like Axis and Pixord, but the combination of Milestone software with the Mobotix was very, very good for our needs."



"We had the special health and safety requirements to deal with at Fairfax Meadow, and other cameras would require a wire heater to keep the hardware warm enough for operation," explains Stef Hatton, Technical Director at Matrix Net Ltd. "The Mobotix hardware can handle down to minus 30 (centigrade) straight from the box. It's an 'all-singing-and-dancing' unit!"

"Yes, it encompasses different environments with extremes in temperature, and the microphones and speakers for the audio aspects, as well," continues Mark Eggett, Account Manager at Matrix Net. "It's got PIR sensors and mega-pixel resolution that gives excellent image quality, too, with good depth of field in the images. You can cover a large area with one camera giving such clarity."

"Another benefit that we're getting out of using the Mobotix cameras is the fact that you don't need to run a separate power cable to them, you just run an Ethernet cable. Stef and Mark have supplied us with the power-over-Ethernet adaptors which go into our computer racking, then we just relay signal network cable out to the camera. This means that our own maintenance engineers can site cameras wherever we want – the cabling is already in place. We'll set up for about 30 camera points internally," says Tony Carlisle.

"This network approach ensures great flexibility for optimal coverage and cost effectiveness," confirms Stef Hatton.

Easier to find evidence

Tony Carlisle remarks on how laborious the previous analogue videotape CCTV technology was. A critical difference with the Milestone IP video software approach is the ability to quickly and easily search and find evidence in the archived digital images. Fairfax Meadow keeps images archived for a week or more.

"The real big difference between the old way and the Milestone software-based system is that when you wanted to look through a tape for evidence, you had to stop your system while you were searching. Milestone keeps recording while you search," explains Tony. "What you want to look at 99 times out of 100 has already occurred – you rarely happen to be looking at the system as a problem develops. As incidents occur and are captured on the CCTV system, the images can be used to point out to the culprits the error of their ways."

The Fairfax Meadow management approve of the clear message this sends: the surveillance catches all activities. This helps to prevent such things happening again.

Remote viewing anytime, anywhere

"We have the server managing the system locked away on this site, and about 6 managers here have access to the system using the XProtect Remote Client. They can all look at the system at the same time at various cameras, viewing live or recorded video from their office desktops. We have night shifts with round-the-clock operations, so this is a big advantage," says Carlisle.

"It's one of the key factors for using IP video software!" comments Stef Hatton enthusiastically.

Milestone XProtect Enterprise offers the option to view images on a PDA which would provide desirable mobility to monitoring activities, as well. The Derby location has an outsourced guard service stationed at the site entrance gates, currently using some older CCTV cameras. They will be given access to the network system as this analogue hardware gets converted through video servers.



"We're looking at some of the newer capabilities the Milestone software allows like access control integration," adds Mark Eggett. "As a Gardiner Security NVIP, we're interested in implementing the Paxton Access control solution that integrates with the video. When a card is swiped, the camera records it so you can see that the person using the card is the right one."

Matrix Net is also advising Fairfax Meadow on the options for wireless connections for more perimeter coverage, as required by insurance providers. The guard would benefit from the increased overview and previews of what may be happening elsewhere on the grounds without having to patrol around all the buildings.

About Fairfax Meadow

The company has been existence over a quarter of a century, serving the food industry with some 17,000 tonnes of chilled and frozen meats, including 10 million portion-controlled products. The product range includes beef, lamb, pork, veal, poultry and more. Fairfax Meadow supplies over 5,000 customers per year, taking 6,000 orders per week. Their advanced IT capabilities and data warehouse facility ensure information is readily available to assess performance in line with specific industry service levels. Fairfax Meadow's commitment to safety, quality and accountability ensures total satisfaction for all stakeholders. See more at www.fairfax.co.uk.

About Matrix Net Limited

Matrix Net are specialists in the design and installation of voice and data structured cabling infrastructures, also providing several complimentary solutions including IP Telephony, CCTV over IP, Storage Area Networks (SAN), Wireless LAN/WAN and multimedia whiteboard installations. Learn more at www.matrixnet.co.uk

About Milestone Systems

Milestone is the world leader for open platform IP video surveillance software, according to IMS Research. The XProtect® products provide support for the widest choice in network video hardware connected to a LAN, WAN or the Internet, and allow API integration with other systems or devices. Milestone solutions are in operation on more than 100,000 cameras worldwide, and are sold through a channel of 170 partners in 55 countries. Check out a free demo at www.milestonesys.com.