



Uptime, On Time, All the Time

Alaska Airlines Uses Video Surveillance to Reduce Losses and Improve Operating Performance



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Alaska Airlines traces its origins to a single, three-passenger turboprop that began service out of Anchorage in 1932, and while it has evolved into a major carrier flying to 57 destinations, it still takes pride in serving as the primary link to the outside world for more than a dozen remote communities across Alaska.

"It can take a whole day of travel to get to Barrow (320 miles north of the Arctic Circle), so the reliability of our video surveillance systems is very important to us," said Terry West, Alaska Airlines' security manager.

"In some of the locations we serve, we'll see power spikes, brownouts and blackouts. We found that with our previous system, the recorders wouldn't reboot themselves and go back to recording after an unexpected loss of power."

Since making a decision to switch to March Networks[®] technology in 2006, West has been sleeping a lot easier.

March Networks' extremely reliable Linux operating system and the health status monitoring capability of the Enterprise Service Manager (ESM) software have virtually eliminated system downtime.

The ESM can be configured to alert system administrators to camera malfunctions and hard drive issues automatically, but West is content to rely on a weekly system check.

Alaska Airlines

Alaska Airlines (www.alaskaair.com) is the ninth-largest U.S. airline based on passenger traffic and is the dominant U.S. West Coast air carrier. Headquartered in Seattle, Alaska Airlines serves 57 U.S., Mexican and Canadian destinations. The carrier traces its roots back to 1932, when Linious "Mac" McGee of McGee Airways started flying his three-seat Stinson between Anchorage and Bristol Bay, Alaska. A merger with Star Air Service in 1934 created the largest airline in Alaska, which eventually became Alaska Airlines. The carrier today operates a fleet of 110 Boeing 737s. Major hubs are located in Anchorage, Seattle, Portland and Los Angeles.

"I don't use the notification functionality," he said. "I know it's there, but we've had so few system malfunctions that I don't bother."

The Seattle-based airline has grown by leaps and bounds and today offers flights to Boston, Chicago, Newark, Miami, Orlando and Washington D.C. in addition to providing service to dozens of U.S. West Coast and Mid-West centers, as well as destinations in Western Canada, Mexico and Hawaii. It also offers complete coverage of Alaska, from Juneau in the south to Prudhoe Bay and Barrow in the north, and the Aleutian Islands in the west.

Keeping track of the 150 million pounds of cargo the airline carries every year – much of it Alaskan salmon – is one of West's priorities. Security staff at the airline's monitoring center in Seattle are able to access live and archived video recorded at cargo distribution centers and investigate loss claims by tracking the flow of consignments.

"In one of our cargo facilities, we had a loss claim for a significant dollar value and were able to use the March Networks system to put together a complete picture of where the cargo went when it came in and where it went going out," recalled West. "We flew the customer into Seattle, sat him down in front of a 42-inch flat screen monitor and were able to satisfy him that the loss had to have occurred somewhere else. Resolving that one incident alone paid for several video surveillance systems."

On another occasion, the system was instrumental in leading to the arrest and



conviction of a contractor and a large number of people who were involved in a theft ring.

Cargo in the warehouses is stored according to destination and, sometimes, shipments are either delayed or go missing because they are misplaced. In these situations, Alaska Airlines staff use PTZ cameras in the warehouses to zoom in on shipping labels and make sure everything is where it's supposed to be. This type of automated investigation is extremely efficient and effective.

Video surveillance is also being used in parking lots, passenger terminals and at gates to monitor the loading, unloading, fueling and servicing of aircraft.

"The airline industry is all about ontime performance, so we use video in some destinations to find out why things aren't working as well as they should be and how we can improve our performance," said West.

The decision to switch to March Networks technology was made in 2006 in partnership with Alaska Airlines' security systems integrator, Niscayah.

"We looked at several other systems, but came to the conclusion that March Networks would best meet our needs," remarked West. "Reliability was a key factor, but there were several other considerations, including the product lineup that allowed us to select appropriately sized recorders for every location."

West also liked the ease of use, the archiving capacity and the centralized administration features available through the ESM. "Using the Enterprise Service Manager, we can remotely adjust the frame rates and the quality of recording, assign user privileges and update software."

The ability to accommodate both analog and IP cameras was another feature that has proven advantageous.

"If the bandwidth is available, we can install an IP camera in an isolated location, connect it directly to the network and assign its IP address to any recorder on the network," said West. "We don't have to have a dedicated recorder or worry about long cable runs. It's a lot more efficient."

West expects the system to continue expanding, especially now that operations staff see the value of using live and archived video to improve productivity and on-time performance.

"We're one of the most successful major carriers in the market right now," he said. "We take pride in being a well-run company and we have a lot of customers who are happy with the service we provide. Video is a tool we can use to both reduce our losses and improve our performance." *****

Niscavah

Niscayah (www.niscayah.us) provides complete security solutions, specializing as a security systems integrator in the design, installation, and support of technologybased solutions. Boasting expertise in access control, video surveillance and alarms, Niscayah serves large organizations with complex security challenges and varied operating environments across the U.S. and around the world.