

Hearst Castle Security Goes High Tech



March Networks Video Surveillance System Protects Priceless Collection of Antique Furniture, Paintings, Sculptures, Tapestries and Other Treasures

Hearst Castle®, an architectural gem on a hilltop overlooking the Pacific Ocean, was newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst's private retreat. Today, the 127-acre estate in San Simeon, California is a national historic landmark attracting upwards of 700,000 visitors per year.

Housing a priceless collection of antique furniture, paintings, sculptures, tapestries and other treasures, Hearst Castle poses a unique security challenge. Because it is located in a wilderness setting 250 miles (400 kilometers) from both San Francisco and Los Angeles, California State Park security specialist Jack Raymond can't just pick up the phone and call someone to swap a hard drive or install a new camera.



So, when Raymond went shopping for a new video surveillance solution in 2006, the castle's isolation dictated a requirement for reliability and ease of maintenance.

"Training on the system was a key issue," he says. "I can't rely on someone in Los Angeles if something goes down. I have to fix it now."

"I started making inquiries about video surveillance vendors and someone suggested that March Networks was selling like hotcakes. I met with a representative of the company at the ASIS show in San Diego later that year and the two of us had a long discussion about the March Networks product. It was exactly what I was looking for."

Raymond was impressed with the system's video quality, health monitoring functionality, and the docking station design that allows for the servicing of a unit without unplugging all of the cables.

The ability to accommodate IP cameras and video analytics also factored in his decision to select March Networks® technology.

Owned and operated by the California Department of Parks and Recreation since 1958, Hearst Castle boasts 56 bedrooms, 61 bathrooms, 19 sitting rooms, 127 acres of gardens, indoor and outdoor swimming pools and tennis courts. In addition to the main building, Casa Grande, there are three smaller guesthouses: Casa del Mar, Casa del Monte and Casa del Sol.

The entire property from the main gate and visitor's center off the coastal highway to the hilltop castle and gardens five miles (eight kilometers) away is monitored by video surveillance.

The castle also has its own fire department and is patrolled by Park Rangers who handle police dogs trained in protection and explosives detection.

The focus on security at Hearst Castle dates back to 1976 when domestic terrorists belonging to the New World Liberation Front bombed the balcony of Casa del Sol, causing \$1 million in damage.

At the time, says Raymond, there was no video surveillance and limited success keeping deer from wandering onto the property.

Today, it's a different story. Dispatchers keep an eye on live video from the entrance gate, the visitor's center, the gardens and the interior of the castle and guest houses.

Some 25 to 30 employees, including Park Rangers, are able to access video from the castle's 3000 and 4000 Series recorders.

"One night I got a call at home from a Ranger who needed to review an incident at one of the entrance gates," recalls Raymond. "The Ranger hadn't been trained to use the system and had no experience with video surveillance, but the March Networks system is so easy to use that it took me 10 minutes to talk him through pulling up the video and burning a CD."

The bombing of the castle in 1976 serves as a reminder to castle security staff to always be prepared for the unexpected, but today's threats are largely internal and focused on the protection of the castle's 22,500 artistic treasures.

Aside from the 700,000 visitors who tour the grounds or attend weddings and other special events every year, there are as many as 250 employees and hundreds of volunteers working at the castle during the peak summer season.

To help confirm the identity of staff entering and leaving the site, Raymond has integrated the March Networks video surveillance system with the castle's access control system, allowing dispatchers to match live video with an archived photograph of a cardholder.

Integration of the two systems also allows security staff to quickly search the archives for video of a specific individual.

Raymond has yet to deploy IP cameras and video analytics, but looks forward to doing so.

"I like the plug and play capability of IP cameras. If I have a special event or a security problem and I need to install a camera at a certain location, I can just plug it in anywhere on my fiber optic network."



He also sees the value of video analytics.

"When we close in the evening, we shut the main entrance gate at the highway, but keep the exit gate open for visitors leaving the site. If we had a camera set up with directional analytics, we would be alerted to visitors entering the site through the exit gate."

Video analytics could be used to detect loitering in the parking lot or objects left or removed on the castle grounds.

The ability to embrace emerging technologies was an important factor in Raymond's decision to select a March Networks solution, but equally important, given the distance of the castle from California's major urban centers, was the issue of reliability.

Raymond hasn't been disappointed.

"Other than one defective hard drive that was promptly replaced, I haven't had one problem with my March Networks system in two years," he said. ✨

Hearst Castle

Hearst Castle® (www.hearstcastle.com)

is a California State Park and U.S. national historic landmark and tourist attraction built by newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst. Located on a hill overlooking the Pacific Ocean halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the castle and surrounding property was donated by the Hearst family to the state of California in 1957. The castle attracts more than 700,000 visitors per year.