

DVRs Keep Watch Over Chicago Bears

Host University Safeguards Students, Staff, Players and Fans with Efficient Digital Surveillance

When the Chicago Bears descend on Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, Illinois, for training camp in July, a March Networks DVR system will be at the disposal of the institution's public safety department to ensure their security.

INSTALLED in Ludwig Center, the university's student services building, the March Networks™ 4000 Series DVR system will help security staff keep an eye on the dining hall, where the hungry National Football League players will be loading up on protein between scrimmages.

Though the DVR system wasn't specifically acquired for the Bears, Olivet Nazarene public safety staff cites the three-week training camp as an example of the need for a quality video surveillance system on campus.

When the Bears held their first training camp at Olivet Nazarene University a few years ago, security staff was expecting 3,000 to 6,000 fans to show up for practices open to the public. "Instead, we got upwards of 13,000 people," recalls Keith O'Dell, the university's telecommunications manager.

"The March Networks DVR system is a great example of the tools we can use to enhance security for students, faculty and staff. We want to be proactive in our planning so we don't have to be reactive in our response."

Craig Bishop,
Director of Public Safety,
Olivet Nazarene University

"The team does a great job allowing access to the players through controlled autograph sessions, but they're here to train and prepare for their season and our job is to make sure they have the privacy they need to conduct their business," says Olivet Nazarene director of public safety Craig Bishop.

Campus safety

Throughout the year, the DVR system also helps to provide a safe and secure environment for students, faculty and staff.

A private, Christian university located south of Chicago on a 200-acre (81 hectare), park-like campus, Olivet Nazarene has seen enrolment increases each year for the past seven years and currently serves more than 4,000 students.

The March Networks DVR technology, which was installed in September 2003, replaced a VCR-based system when the university's dean of students determined it was time for new technology.

The analog system was taking up space in his office and he was the one responsible for changing the tapes every day.

O'Dell and the university's director of IT, Dennis Seymour, subsequently saw a March Networks DVR at a telecommunications tradeshow and had systems integrator MidCo, Inc. demonstrate the DVR on campus.

"We thought it was going to be superior to the product the dean of students was looking at and when we told him about it, he turned it over to us to pursue," says O'Dell.

Olivet Nazarene University

Founded in 1907, Olivet Nazarene University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university currently serving more than 4,000 students.

The university's 200-acre (81 hectare) campus is located in the historic Village of Bourbonnais, Illinois, 50 minutes south of Chicago's downtown Loop. www.olivet.edu

By the time Bishop joined the university as security director in August 2003, the digital system was already on order.

March Networks 4000 Series DVRs accommodate 16 camera inputs and boast built-in uninterrupted power supplies (UPSs) and flash-based, Linux operating systems. Their unique docking station architecture allows hard-drives to be replaced or upgraded without disconnecting any cabling, ensuring easy installation and maintenance.

Wireless viewing

Olivet Nazarene network manager Jeffrey Rice liked the way the DVR controls bandwidth consumption and was impressed with the March Networks DVR Mobile Viewer, which was used on a wireless laptop during camera installation to make adjustments and optimize the camera view.

Bishop hopes at some point to equip security officers with PDAs and Mobile Viewer clients so they can call up video on their PDAs while on patrol from any networked DVR over the campus' wireless local area network.

Equipping the Bourbonnais police and fire departments with wireless access to the university's DVR system will also be looked at, says Bishop, so they can have access to live video of an incident on their way to campus.

Officers from the police department were given a demonstration of the March Networks DVR system at Olivet Nazarene, as they are also interested in digital video technology for recording interrogations and other applications.

The acquisition of a DVR system for the university's student center is just a first step, says Bishop.

"We're going to continue analyzing all of our campus needs and work up a proposal for expanding the system to our parking lots and all of our academic and residential buildings.

Partnering with IT

"DVR technology allows us to do much better investigative work and it takes away all the inconvenience of videotape review," he adds. "But what really excites me is that it allows us to begin partnering with IT to establish a platform from which we can expand the system.

"IT is the key," insists Bishop. "You need the IT people on-side because you want to make sure that any DVR equipment you acquire meets their needs and has their buy-in. The last thing you want is to get ahead of them and acquire something that isn't going to perform effectively for you and might negatively impact the network."

Bishop's security team consists of an assistant director, five full-time and six part-time officers and five student officers. An additional 12 students monitor buildings at night. The department provides security services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Security staff have practiced retrieving video and using the DVR software masking functionality to search for events within a user-defined area of the camera view, but have yet to use the system to investigate a reported incident.

"There have been incidents in the past when the book store buys back used text books at the end of a semester," says Bishop. "On a couple of occasions, student book bags have been stolen and the books turned in for cash, so we were thinking that we could mask that area, review the video recorded on motion alarm and capture an image of a perpetrator, but no incidents have been reported."

The increased focus on security in a post-9/11 world has had an impact at all levels of society, he observes.

"Law enforcement, public safety and all of the emergency response agencies in the nation are at a heightened level of security and want to have the most advanced technology available to them.

"The March Networks DVR system is a great example of the tools we can use to enhance security for students, faculty and staff," says Bishop. "We want to be proactive in our planning so we don't have to be reactive in our response." ✱