



Mobile DVRs Bridge Gap Between Home and School

Special Education Facility Equips 27 Buses and Vans with Wireless and GPS-Enabled DVRs

THE Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC) in Canton, Massachusetts, has used March Networks™ DVR systems in its school buildings and 40 group residences for about a year to keep watch over more than 200 children and young adults with developmental disabilities and behavioral disorders.

Until recently, however, the center was still relying on older, tape-based surveillance systems in its buses and vans to monitor students in transit between the residences and school.

With the recent acquisition of March Networks 5308 Mobile DVRs (MDVRs) for its fleet of 27 buses and vans, JRC management now has the capacity for

uninterrupted digital video surveillance 24 hours a day.

“Our program is not only about monitoring the students, but also about monitoring staff to make sure they perform consistently through every moment of the students’ day – from when they wake up to when they go to bed and even while they’re asleep,” says JRC information technology director Kerry Krause.

“In order to do that, we need to be able to monitor our vans and buses to see what happens and to be able to react,” he explains. “We need to know what caused an incident to happen.”

The ruggedized 5308 MDVR accommodates up to eight

cameras and features both a removable hard-drive accessible through a lockable caddy and optional wireless and global positioning system (GPS) capability. It can be remotely configured and managed with the same March Networks software package that JRC already uses to manage the March Networks DVRs operating in its school buildings and residences.

“Daily user intervention with analog systems is inherently unreliable”

Kerry Krause
Information Technology Director,
Judge Rotenberg Center

Wireless
Krause likes the flexibility of being able to swap hard-drives

when it’s necessary to review video from an entire trip, or to wirelessly download video to the school’s central monitoring facility when a short video clip is all that’s required. Wireless capability also offers monitoring staff the opportunity to access live video in response to an incident or carry out routine spot checks of staff and students.

“If a driver called me and said he was lost, I could pull up video from the vehicle along with a map showing its position and provide directions,” says Krause.

The JRC’s 21 vans were previously equipped with VCRs, while camcorders were used in the center’s six contracted buses. Video was only reviewed when

an incident was reported. The sheer volume of tapes and the time required to review them made spot checks impractical.

“Daily user intervention with analog systems is inherently unreliable,” says Krause. “Let’s say someone forgets to insert a tape or fails to press ‘record.’ The user doesn’t always remember, so we’re taking that (opportunity for error) out of the equation.”

The 5308 MDVR is configured by the JRC to record on motion and gets power from both the vehicle and an internal battery, enabling it to continue recording after the vehicle engine has been shut off.

The JRC mounts the MDVRs on the floor of its vehicles between the front seats.

Rugged

“The students sometimes put their feet on it and staff step on it on occasion,” notes Krause. “I know it sounds incredible, but it’s a very sturdy product and it can really take a beating.”

Featuring a modular chassis with unique, docking station architecture for easy installation and servicing, the 5308 MDVR meets tough international standards for resisting shock, vibration, dust, moisture and electromagnetic interference.

The current JRC configuration consists of one camera recording at 15 frames per second and one or two microphones capturing audio, depending on the size of the vehicle.

Down the road, Krause also hopes to equip staff with wireless panic buttons, which would integrate with the system to automatically launch video from a vehicle on a monitor at the JRC’s central monitoring station when activated. JRC staff on the vans and buses currently use cell phones to stay in touch with the central monitoring station but could also use the 5308 MDVR’s two-way audio capability.

“The DVRs provide our staff with a second set of eyes,” says Krause. “A monitor on the bus may be paying attention to one student and miss something else that’s going on, but the DVR will pick that up.”

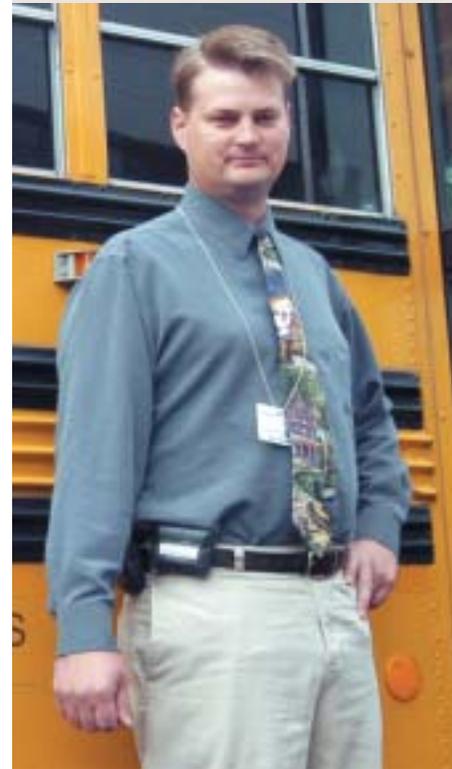
Cameras outside each residence and in the parking area at the school fill in any gaps in coverage as staff and students make their way to and from the vans and buses.

“We’re a very wired facility,” says Krause. “Our residences are all equipped with DVRs, the school building is covered and we have

a DVR in our DVR monitoring room, so we even monitor our monitors. The reality is that if people are aware that they can be viewed at any time, they are going to do the right thing. That’s all we ask.”

According to Krause, the JRC video monitoring system is in a league of its own compared to systems in use at other U.S. schools for the developmentally disabled and behaviorally challenged.

“I recently gave a presentation to the Association for Behavior Analysis on how we use our DVRs,” says Krause. “Even I was impressed and I’m the one who set it up. It’s a very well-designed system and I’m just glad to have been a part of it.” ✨



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The Judge Rotenberg Educational Center (JRC) operates residential and day programs that provide educational, treatment and respite services for children and adults with developmental disabilities or emotional/behavior disorders. JRC operates a day school in Canton, Massachusetts and residences for its students and clients in nearby communities.

www.judgerc.org