

Case study

Freightliner Group

Remote Monitoring via the WAN

The versatility of network cameras is well illustrated in their remote operational monitoring role with Freightliner, one of the UK's leading rail freight companies. Network Webcams Ltd have supplied and installed a total of 22 Axis cameras (mainly Axis 211 statics and 231D IP domes) at Freightliner's Coatbridge, Leeds, Birmingham and Cleveland terminals.

The cameras were configured by Network Webcams, who are Axis Development Partners as well as Axis Gold Solutions Partner. Network Webcams also looked after the camera installation and associated cabling, while Freightliner IT personnel installed the Axis Camera Station software on their PCs and servers.



The Axis 211 static IP cameras are used 24/7 to monitor and record registration numbers, container ID numbers, container seals and security at terminal gates. The Axis 211 is designed to give the best image quality in its class, with its progressive scan CCD sensor and powerful, real-time image processing. Located on higher points are the Axis 231D IP dome cameras that allow managers to get an overview of operations. The 231D, with 360-degree pan and 18x optical zoom, is suitable for such demanding surveillance and remote monitoring applications.

All the cameras are accessible across Freightliner's computer network, meaning that authorised staff can view live or recorded video from any terminal, regardless of where they are based, using the company's own Wide Area Network or the public Internet.

The new cameras have been well received by Freightliner, whose Deputy General Manager of Terminals, Andy Murphy, points out that a variety of systems, some quite antiquated, were used previously. “If we required any data in the past, we had to go through tapes, but it’s far more efficient with the new set-up, which also features a motion detection facility, allowing operators to go to real time when any situation arises.”

The system has more than exceeded expectations, according to Andy, who says that Freightliner have plans to introduce it at other terminals. Only slight hitches at the outset related to software, which required an upgrade, and the location of certain cameras, which had to be repositioned to gain the ideal field of view.

“The image quality from the cameras is excellent and we now plan to move on to the next stage in our programme, recording images of moving rail vehicles. The night time images have also been first rate – better than what we expected at the outset”, says Andy.

Operators are getting used to the PTZ cameras which, because of network bandwidth limitations, do not respond as quickly as the older, joystick-operated devices. Andy explains: “It’s more of a re-education while the managers get used to the new system. Obviously it would be good to have instant movement in the cameras, but we are aware of the bandwidth restriction.”

It is a point amplified by Freightliner Systems Technologist Jike Igiri. “The cameras are very good, but we have had to make some compromises on our network or we would literally flood it. The cameras are configurable and if you were to give them the full bandwidth, they would be very quick, but obviously we have to make allowances.”

Jike says: “Overall, the biggest benefit, over the previous set-up of hiring CCTV from contractors, is cost. By running the system in-house it is cheaper and there are no annual maintenance costs. It also has the added advantage of being stable and carries out the job it was supposed to do.”

Network Webcams also provide technical support when required as part of their service package, which, according to Andy, is “very good and proactive”.



He continues: “The installation of the cameras and cabling by Network Webcams has been carried out very professionally. We now hope to expand and upgrade over the next year or two, having got the basic system up and running at some of our terminals.”