

Mobile Wireless Camera Systems a New Tool for Managers of Construction

Superintendents of the big construction project at Washoe Medical Center in downtown Reno have a new management tool. Surveillance Cameras provide a steady stream of photos of the construction to supervisors who log onto the system, but the big value of the photos is their use in management of the \$240 million project.

Keeping track of the far-flung construction, a parking garage, hospital tower and central plant on 20 acres is challenging enough, says the Project Manager on the job. But things get substantially more complicated.

The design team and subcontractors are based everywhere from Pasadena, Calif., to Nebraska, Texas and Florida. Shots from the cameras allow all of them to tune in and see what's happening on the site in something close to real time. And because the site includes an archive of past photos, builders and designers have another tool to trace the origin of problems on the job.

About 45,000 photos have been archived in the five months that the cameras have been in operation. Supervisors working on the site on occasion turn to the cameras to get a perspective of the job.

"I check with it every hour or so," says the Project Manager. "It doesn't replace walking on the site. But it gives you a quick snapshot." Executives also found some surprising uses for the camera photos.

In a couple of cases hospital accountants have checked photos of the construction site to make sure that materials had arrived before they signed off on a suppliers' invoice. Once he even used the surveillance camera photos to check if someone was at work before he made a call. The construction executives' truck was pictured in the parking lot, so the call was made.

For the money, customers get a turnkey system that's both high-resolution and wireless, says the Project Manager. "We're proud of it, and we want to show it off."