



THE PASS SECURITY

# Guide to Municipal Video Monitoring & Surveillance



# How to make your city safer — and smarter — with video monitoring & surveillance

In This Guide We Offer:

- Increased public safety, improved response, and better managed resources
- Elements of an effective monitoring and surveillance system
- Practical policies to reduce liability and protect privacy
- Common mistakes and how to avoid them
- Planning for growth: creating a scalable system

## Introduction

You're on the right track.

Since you downloaded this ebook, you're considering a remote monitoring and surveillance of your municipality. This ebook is designed to give you a high-level overview so you understand the advantages and disadvantages, some of the key terminology, and how to plan your system so that it can grow as your city grows.

I hope you find this information useful. If you'd like to learn more about video monitoring & surveillance services, visit **PASSmunicipal.com**. If you have specific questions about systems, hardware, or networking, feel free to reach out using the contact information below.

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**Three good reasons to consider Video Monitoring Surveillance services:** increased public safety, improved response, and better-managed resources.

## Increased public safety

Public safety is Job One for every city. It doesn't matter what your role or job title is, you have a responsibility to your citizens that you take very seriously. The primary reason that municipalities consider a video monitoring and surveillance system is a desire to increase public safety while making the best possible use of their operating budget. Video monitoring and surveillance increases public safety by positively influencing public behavior. A visible monitoring system won't completely eliminate dangerous and illegal behavior — but it does discourage it.

## Improved response

Public safety officers have a demanding, difficult, and (unfortunately) dangerous job to do. It's their responsibility to maintain and restore order. Ask any officer and they'll tell you that one of the most challenging aspects of their work is the unknown. When you add video monitoring and surveillance to select areas of your city, you give your police department the ability to respond to situations more effectively. A multiple-vehicle accident might be a fender-bender, or it might require an ambulance. Is the person who's acting strangely in the park just eccentric, or do they pose an active threat to themselves or others? When your public safety officers understand the situation they're walking into, they can appropriately tailor their response. That's safer for your citizens — and for your officers.

## **Managing resources**

**Increase public safety without the time, effort, and expense of adding personnel.**

For many cities, this is one of the most important benefits of PASS Municipal OverSite. For years, if you wanted to maintain order or get real-time information, you had to send personnel and wait for them to radio back to dispatch. With a VMS, cities can remotely survey and monitor buildings, streets, and public spaces in real time. This change has the potential to dramatically reduce the time, effort, and expense of monitoring and maintaining public safety.

## **Less damage means fewer repairs.**

A VMS system acts as a powerful deterrent to vandalism, theft, and other illegal behavior. When citizens know that their actions are being monitored and recorded. They're less likely to engage in risky or illegal behavior.

However, if that behavior VMS system also provides valuable evidence for future prosecution.

## **Lower your internet access bill.**

Cities have multiple locations that require internet access: not just city hall, but fire stations, police stations, streets and sanitation health departments. For many cities, that means multiple cable or DSL costs. When you add a video monitoring & surveillance system, you are also adding a private wireless mesh network, which allows you to more effectively leverage your internet data pipe across multiple locations.



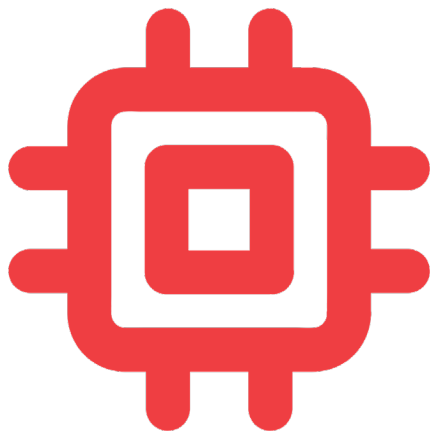
**Building** : the elements of an effective monitoring and surveillance system





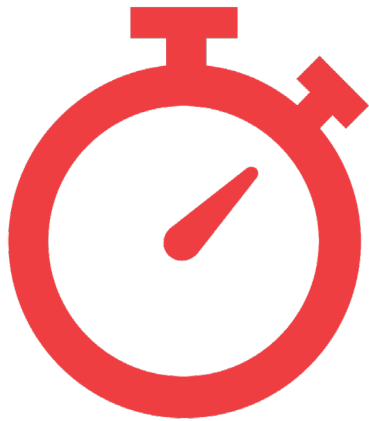
## **A plan and goals**

The most important component of a Video Monitoring and Surveillance system isn't the cameras you install or the bandwidth of your network. They are important but far more important is the thinking that you do before you begin. Just as every journey has a destination, every Video Monitoring and Surveillance system needs to have a clearly defined plan and purpose. So the first step of adding a Video Monitoring and Surveillance system is to define its primary purpose and determine ROI. Once you're clear on that, you can establish a timeframe for rolling out your Video Monitoring and Surveillance system, from design, to install, to training.



## **Reliable hardware**

A Video Monitoring and Surveillance system works 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. So it's essential that you choose hardware that's designed for commercial applications and exterior use. From the cameras to data storage, to the wireless mesh networking components, you don't want to pinch pennies here. It's just like a cordless drill: that big yellow one might cost more, but it performs far better and lasts far longer. Talk with your technology partner about your application, so they can specify hardware that's best-suited to how you're going to use it.



## Processes for prompt action

You've defined your goals, your budget, and your time frame. You've determined the right hardware, software, and networking. It's time to start installing cameras, drives, and towers, right?

### **Wrong.**

It's critical that you develop policies and procedures for how you're going to use your Video Monitoring and Surveillance system before you roll out the system. For example, if someone in a command center sees theft taking place, what is the process for reacting? If there's an angry and irrational person in the lobby of the courthouse, what action do you take? If a member of the city council requests access to a video feed or video clip, should they get it? Who needs to be notified and how will this request be logged? These are not decisions that you want to make on the fly. By creating and documenting policies and processes, city employees will be able to respond more quickly and confidently.



## **Processes for review and archiving**

While you're thinking about your Prompt Action Policies, you also need to take the long view and create an approach to govern stored video data. Consider how long are your video recordings going to be kept. You'll need to clearly define who can access this data and have a system for authorizing and logging these requests.

Your citizens have conflicting attitudes toward video surveillance: they appreciate the ability to deter and punish criminals, but they're concerned about their own privacy. For a city adding a video monitoring & surveillance system, having a well-crafted, publically accessible policy is essential.



## **A service and maintenance program**

The last element of a successful Video Monitoring and Surveillance system rollout is far from sexy, but it's still really important. You need to have a program for ongoing maintenance and service. Whether you do this in-house or work with a security partner, it's essential that you allocate resources and time to keep your system running optimally. Like every other machine or tool in your operation, components of a Video Monitoring and Surveillance system may occasionally fail. (In proof of Murphy's Law, this will usually at the worst possible time.) When it does, you want to have a well-defined service agreement in place to get things operational as quickly as possible.



## Practical policies to reduce liability and protect privacy

If you're considering Video Monitoring and Surveillance system for your city, you're probably wondering about issues of privacy and liability. When it comes to video surveillance, what's okay and what's not?

First: I'm not an attorney, and I don't want to be. If you want a definitive opinion on an issue of legality, ask an attorney. However, as with most issues, common sense is a great place to start.

## **The big picture: is there an expectation of privacy?**

For the most part, no-one has a right to privacy while in public places. (Which makes sense, right?) Outside, on the street, is generally considered a public place. As a municipality, many of the spaces you monitor will be publically accessible. So if you're using cameras to monitor lobbies or libraries, there is no issue about invading someone's privacy under most circumstances.



## **CAMERAS ON THE OUTSIDE**

Generally, cameras outside are almost always acceptable. That is why many privately-owned structures and facilities, have numerous security cameras at every corner, especially in densely populated urban areas. If there's an incident on the property – whether it's vandalism or burglary or a slip and fall accident – the property owner has a visual record of the event. Generally, as a municipality with the responsibility of upholding public safety, you have a strong, defensible case for monitoring and surveilling.





### **CAMERAS ON THE INSIDE**

When cameras move inside, they get a little more complex, but the logic still stands: cameras are allowed in areas where a person does not have a reasonable expectation of privacy. That's why the security cameras used by retailers to prevent shoplifting are generally acceptable. But what about when the camera is located in an area where one expects privacy, but that is also an ideal location for illicit behavior — like a restroom? Frankly, I recommend not surveilling these areas unless you have a serious and ongoing concern. If so, a good course of action is to warn visitors that surveillance cameras are in use — which will often dissuade them from engaging in the problematic behavior.



## TRANSPARENCY IS YOUR FRIEND

Let's be clear: the idea of someone watching us without our knowledge is more than a little creepy. If a member of your public thinks no-one is watching, and they learn that someone IS watching, they can get really angry; sometimes angry to the point of legal action. But there's a simple way to avoid this: tell everyone that you have Video Monitoring and Surveillance in place and that their actions are being recorded. This clearly informs your staff and visitors that they should NOT expect privacy in these spaces. Doing so has two important benefits: first, it's excellent rebuttal to anyone expressing a desire to be litigious. Second, it will help to extinguish problematic behaviors like vandalism, theft, and who knows what else.

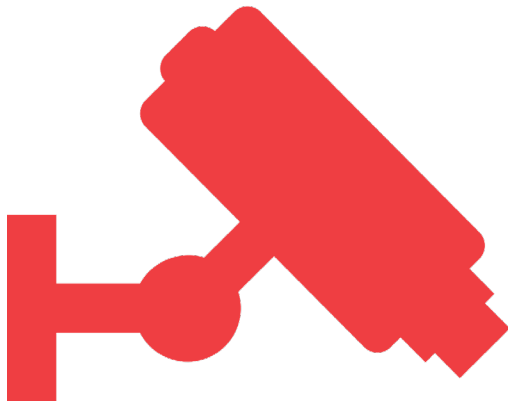


**Four common mistakes cities make – and how to avoid them.**



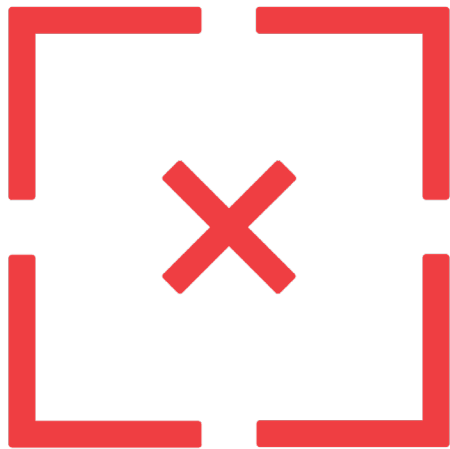
## ❌ **Choosing the wrong provider.**

I get it. It's **tempting** to think that your team can install and administer your Video Monitoring and Surveillance system. After all, they're smart people who understand technology. Also, doing it yourself is going to save you so much money, isn't it? It's not. A Video Monitoring and Surveillance system is incredibly complex and incredibly important. You need to choose a company with lots of experience designing, installing, and configuring these systems. Frankly, you don't want a tech company; you want a security company. It's not enough to hook up the hardware. You need a company that has experience protecting buildings and integrating complex systems. Yes, I work for a security company (a really good one with decades of experience), but that's not why I'm telling you this. You can waste a lot of time and a lot of money if you don't choose an experienced, competent partner for a project like these.



## ❌ **The wrong equipment**

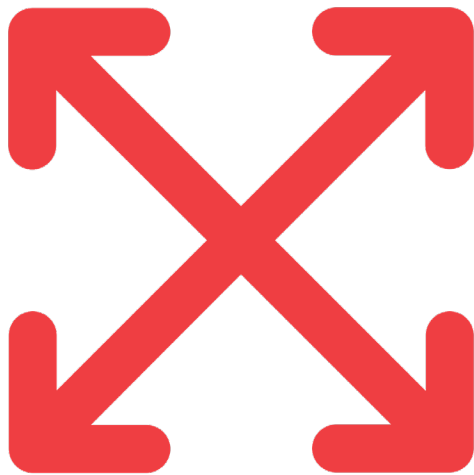
There are countless hardware options, and it's really easy to get wrong. Cameras without sufficient resolution or cameras that are stationary in locations where they need to be articulated. And while I keep talking about Video Monitoring and Surveillance system, audio has an important role to play. It's often a simple value-added service that can significantly expand the capability and value of your system. Consider the hardware used for storage and retrieval: digital storage is (thankfully) continue to decline in price. But even compressed HD video takes enormous amounts of storage. Then there's the networking required: it's now possible to have a fast, secure, and private wireless network of your very own. So spend time working with your technology partner reviewing the location, usage, and durability needed for each device.



## ✘ **The wrong locations.**

While placing digital security cameras sounds easy enough, it's anything but simple. A Video Monitoring and Surveillance system might use the very best cameras available, but if the camera is in the wrong place, you could have serious blind spots. With the wrong placement, portions of the camera's field of view could be blocked by trees or shrubs or by parked vehicles. Even well-placed cameras can be temporarily disabled by a rising or setting sun, which can create windows of opportunity for lawbreakers — especially for experienced criminals.

One of the most common mistakes is also one of the most **embarrassing** mistakes: not securing the security camera. Crooks will steal anything of value — including professional grade, high-definition security cameras. Make sure that your cameras aren't within easy reach.



### ✘ **Going too big, too soon.**

Just as you should learn to walk before you run, it's wise to start conservatively when you're creating a video monitoring & surveillance system. The time and expense involved in this initiative are far too great to risk a misstep or mistake. For our municipal clients, we recommend starting modestly, with a pilot program [\[link\]](#) focusing on a single location, such as in intersection with lots of accidents, or a community pool. After you've successfully integrated video monitoring & surveillance, it's simpler to expand your process and your network to include more locations. Scaling isn't just limited to the number locations: you can start with a basic level of coverage and add more devices, bandwidth, and functionality when you're ready.



## Planning for growth: Creating a scalable system

Technology doesn't stand still, and neither does your business. Which is why you need to create a Video Monitoring and Surveillance system that can scale as your business integrates video monitoring more tightly into its operations. There are three important aspects to building a scalable Video Monitoring and Surveillance system: data storage, network bandwidth, and system management,

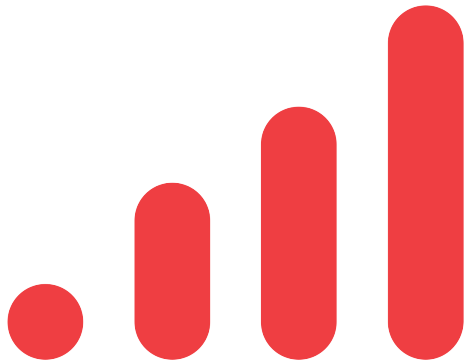
Remember that these are complex issues, and this e-book would be hundreds of pages if I covered them fully. You should, however, discuss all of these issues in detail with your vendor-partner before committing to a statement of work.





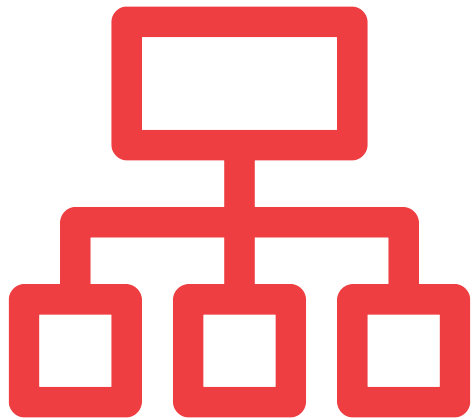
## Data storage

Video codecs are amazing. They're able to compress enormous amounts of raw data. However, IP cameras capture lots of data (especially HD cameras with audio), you should anticipate that your storage demands are going to increase over time. Discuss how much video capture data will be stored locally and for how long, and then do the same for cloud-based storage.



## Network bandwidth

This is incredibly important. Ask your Video Monitoring and Surveillance system partner how they recommend allocating bandwidth and how Video Monitoring and Surveillance system will integrate with your existing IT infrastructure. The last thing you need is the degradation of your network performance when you add a Video Monitoring and Surveillance system. The good news is that wireless networking continues to improve: the “pipes” are getting bigger, and the data is flowing faster. Take the time to map out the impact of that increases will have on your network, so you have clear metrics when it’s time to expand network capacity.



## System management

As your Video Monitoring and Surveillance system plays a larger role in your day-to-day operations, the importance of your management software becomes apparent: you need a system that can gracefully accommodate increases in cameras and capture data. While a mediocre system can manage five cameras, what happens when you need to control and monitor 50? A robust and stable management package is essential. You definitely need to choose a software platform capable of managing this growth. Good software will provide real-time usage metrics for throughput and storage capacity. A final aspect of managing your system is retention. You want a system that allows you to easily adjust retention requirements for your assets.

## In closing

Thanks to taking the time to read this ebook. I hope that by now you have a basic understanding of what's involved in implementing a Video Monitoring and Surveillance system for your city, and why you should consider it. If you have specific questions about any aspect of the information presented here, feel free to ask them on our website, **PASSmunicipal.com**, or reach out to me directly.



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