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Better Image Quality for Healthcare Applications

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Video surveillance is critical to the hospital and healthcare environment. Surveillance challenges include expensive equipment, sensitive documents, pharmaceuticals, food services, retail areas, vast parking lots and structures, and lots of people, all active on a 24-7 basis. Staff, sick patients, visitors, newborns, long-term care patients - some with special needs such as Alzheimer's - all must be protected. Volatile environments such as emergency rooms can even be prone to gang violence in some areas. A hospital is like a city that never sleeps.

Complicating video surveillance at hospitals are privacy considerations along with mandates from other authorities having jurisdiction. Video system design and installation require sensitivity to healthcare market regulations. New camera capabilities such as enhanced privacy masking can help. For example, the door to a patient's room or an outside window can be masked electronically in a camera's image to ensure patient privacy.

Megapixel cameras are a useful tool to increase video surveillance effectiveness while minimizing costs in the hospital and healthcare environment.

Higher-resolution cameras such as 1080p HD (high definition) cameras offer a 675 percent resolution increase over analog or standard (VGA) network cameras, and that's with just slightly over 2 megapixels. Many third- and fourth-generation megapixel solutions offer resolutions beyond 1080p - 3, 5, 8, 10 and 20 megapixel resolutions. More resolution (or pixels) means more information, which translates into greater detailed coverage, increased system functionality and better and more efficient forensic investigations.

Megapixel Cameras Offer Mega-Capabilities

The two most useful megapixel camera features to help hospitals improve security are clearer, more detailed images and the ability to monitor large areas without interruption. Only megapixel surveillance cameras meet these demands. Megapixel cameras are available in many configurations and image sizes that offer resolutions beyond what we refer to today as high definition (HD). A single megapixel camera can monitor a wide field-of-view continuously and provide the ability to electronically zoom-in on any area of the image - all while recording the full scene.



Megapixel technology allows fewer cameras to be deployed while potentially increasing coverage areas versus conventional camera technologies. For vast open areas, such as parking lots and facility grounds, megapixel cameras are also available in 180-degree and 360-degree panoramic models to provide unmatched coverage capabilities.

Many hospital and healthcare applications are perfect for megapixel cameras. Entrance and egress points of a healthcare facility's grounds and physical structures are important as they are the front line of defense for security professionals. However, internal areas such as emergency rooms, nurseries and areas where controlled substances are stored also require continuous surveillance. With the high volume of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, identity management is a major concern. With megapixel cameras, security personnel can zoom-in on license plates, faces, possibly even ID badges to identify individuals. This level of detail becomes more important in an environment where uniformed staff can be difficult to identify.

The layout of the facility and its physical characteristics determine the number of cameras needed to provide adequate coverage, and each facility will differ based on these characteristics. The number of security personnel deployed will also vary depending on staffing requirements for foot patrols to complement electronic patrols via video surveillance. One thing is certain: By deploying megapixel cameras, fewer cameras can be used to cover larger areas. This reduces the number of video displays that security personnel need to watch during "live" shifts. As a result, the manpower required for both manned and unmanned video surveillance operations can be reduced, thus freeing these resources for other important security concerns.

Megapixel IP video cameras capture continuous views of large areas. In contrast, a standard-definition pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) camera deployed to watch a large area might miss something. Typically, PTZ cameras are set on a pre-programmed "tour" sequence that provides various views. The problem is that something could go unseen if the PTZ is pointed in the wrong direction. Operators are also needed to direct a PTZ to zoom in on an incident in real time. In the case of megapixel cameras, every incident in the field of view is captured whether the operator is actively viewing the incident or not. System operators are able to zoom in on archived megapixel video by enlarging sections of an image - something that cannot be done with standard definition IP or analog video because there simply isn't enough resolution and the image would become pixilated.

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