

Case Study



Dickinson County Sheriff, Kansas

Sheriffs Department's Side-by-Side Comparison Proved L-3 In-Car Video Solution to be Robust, Reliable, Fast, and Easy to Use

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Undersheriff Hoffman

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"The time it takes to retrieve and copy a DVD is now five minutes instead an hour," "The difference is incredible!"

Sgt. John Harwood

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Dickinson County Sheriffs Department was beginning to see recording problems with their legacy in-car video cassette recorders. At the same time repair costs associated with their in-car systems began to mount, and the storage space needed to house the multitude of archived cassettes was running short.

Background

Resting in the center of Kansas and serving a population of 19,300, Dickinson County Sheriffs office has 11 mobile units that patrol 852 square miles. They rely on flawless video recordings as a key component of their case file system and citizen complaint review. In addition, DCSD has a mandatory 120-day archive policy for all video. This policy results in file storage requirements in the thousands of cassettes, and takes up significant space. For those reasons, L-3 proposed its all-digital, wireless FLASHBACK™ DVR solution as the best way to meet DCSD's requirements. Before implementing the L-3 solution department wide, however, DCSD decided to test the proposed solution in action, side-by-side with their existing VHS systems. They piloted five L-3 Digital In-Car Systems while still running legacy VHS systems in the remainder of their mobile units.

Solution

To address reliability issues, L-3 Mobile-Vision installed their lightweight, compact FLASHBACK™ Digital Video Recorder with solid-state flash memory. The system is designed with 30-second pre-and-post record capability that records automatically BEFORE and after a stop is made – ensuring that events preceding and during arrest or citation are captured. With no moving parts to be concerned with, reliability and durability were addressed at once. Adding to the benefit of the solid State system were the the VoiceLink Plus™ wireless microphone and Nite-Watch™ camera. This unique combination delivers both high-quality audio and video. Additionally, automatic pre-record can be activated based on preset protocols – including wireless microphone, light bar, siren, or via two available auxiliary inputs.

Results

Dickinson County had heard good things about L-3 Mobile-Vision's digital video solution from other police and sheriffs departments, but what they witnessed firsthand was far better than they had expected.

For one thing, the FLASHBACK Digital Video Recorder is incredibly durable. Dickinson County knows this because during their pilot, one of their officers was involved in a high-speed chase in pursuit of a suspect. During the course of the chase, the car lost control, crashed and caught fire instantly. As is the case with such events, a follow up investigation was initiated. "When I saw the car soon after the crash, it was charred from fire and severely damaged. I was sure the video evidence was lost," recounts Sgt. John Harwood, who arrived shortly after the accident. "I was surprised to find that we were able to retrieve the data up to point of impact. The speed the officer was traveling, the reason for the evasive maneuver that lead to the crash. It was all there. I was very impressed by that."

Undersheriff Gareth Hoffman sees preservation of evidence and documentation a bit differently. "As an administrator, I consider in-car digital video as a good insurance policy," says Hoffman. "If we're doing things right it helps us prove it. And if we're doing anything wrong (if a mistake has been made), we can see EXACTLY what went wrong and deal with it, instead of relying on hearsay."

L-3 also solves a host of other issues time and space-constrained departments face. "The time it takes to retrieve and copy a DVD is now five minutes instead an hour," reports Sgt. Harwood, who in addition to being an on-shift commander, also acts as the administrator for the L-3 DVR solution. "The difference is incredible!"

What may be even more incredible is that you don't have to trade off quality for ease of use and durability. Says Harwood, "Pre-record capabilities have been tremendously useful from a preservation of evidence standpoint. But the quality is also very good. We can see suspects' faces clearly. And we can easily see what they are doing before, during and after stop. We are very satisfied with L-3."

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