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# Widespread Texas Border School District Upgrades Security from Analog to IP with Milestone Video

**“Using Milestone IP video ensures that we have the infrastructure and software necessary to grow in a way that makes the most sense for our district. The way technology was going we didn’t want to get left behind with analog. We wanted to get ahead and stay there. We’re always thinking of things we can do to help provide a safe environment. It puts our parents and students at ease. Peace of mind is an important foundation for learning.”**

–Rene Flores, Security Management Coordinator, Mission CISD



**Challenges of Old Analog System:** Previously, the Mission Consolidated Independent School District (Mission CISD) in South Texas had an analog surveillance system. However, the efficacy of that system was hampered by several limitations. The image resolutions produced by the cameras were too low for consistently accurate identification, which severely hindered after-the-fact investigations. In addition, because the pan/tilt units often faced the wrong directions at critical junctures, there was a strong possibility they would not capture events in a way that could assist an investigation. For these reasons, Mission CISD made the decision to upgrade to a new digital video system.

**Multi-location Solution:** In October 2011, after five years of evaluating several internet protocol (IP) camera management software systems, Mission CISD embarked on a pilot project; it added a wing to the high school and installed the first IP cameras, controlled from a monitoring station running Milestone XProtect® Corporate video management software (VMS). In 2013, the board of trustees chose American Surveillance Company Inc. to assist with Phase I, which included camera installation and Milestone system configuration for a number of Mission CISD’s campuses. That same year, the Board of Trustees approved a \$1.7 million Safety and Security Initiative to be added to the budget.

Mission CISD and American Surveillance chose Arecont Vision as their camera provider based on the company’s wide selection of high quality megapixel products, which offer 180 and 360-degree panoramic options and audio-enabled models.

In 2013, Mission CISD created a command center manned by two certified technicians. The technicians have seven monitors each and are in charge of maintaining the cameras and ensuring the servers are fully operational. Some of the new camera features include motion detection, day/night functionality, vandal-resistant housings and remote focus/zoom.

As of early 2015 Mission CISD uses more than 600 IP cameras and 260 analog cameras, with encoders to convert analog video to digital. There is a dedicated server at each campus, with multiple servers in a few select locations. The new system provides perimeter protection around each campus, and cameras are deployed at various points of entry in school gymnasiums, cafeterias, libraries, hallways and playgrounds.



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**IP Network Advantages.** The Milestone technology provided a significant upgrade to Mission CISD's system in a number of ways, especially with the fact that the system can be easily accessed locally at different school locations, while keeping the operation center overview and management centralized. In addition to an increase in the number of cameras deployed, Arecont Vision cameras provide a much higher video quality than the district's prior analog system.

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### Institutional Profile

The Mission CISD comprises 41 square miles along the U.S.-Mexico border. It serves almost 16,000 students in four high schools, four junior high schools, 14 elementary schools and two special needs schools, and includes administrative offices and several other departments. The district is supported by the Maintenance, Child Nutrition, Transportation, Warehouse and Technology Departments.

### Open Platform Gives Big School District Flexibility

Rene Flores is the Security Management Coordinator at Mission CISD. He and Kevin Le, a special systems tech at Mission CISD, looked at a number of different VMS solutions, but each of these required the district to purchase all the products as one package deal. The Milestone open platform offered much more flexibility and choice.

"With Milestone, you're not tied to one vendor," Flores says. "We can choose different cameras for different campuses. This is great for us because each campus provides its own unique set of security challenges, and we need to have a system that's adaptable."

Another important criteria for Mission CISD was to have a system that could accommodate an expanding school district.

"The Milestone open platform lets us easily add to and manage our system. It's both adaptive and very user friendly, which means we can add users when we need to with minimal training," reports Rene Flores. "We're building a new college learning center for the incoming school year, and we're remodeling an old high school and adding on to several other facilities. These will all require new cameras and I want to make sure that we get it right from the beginning. Using Milestone ensures that we have the infrastructure and software necessary to grow in a way that makes the most sense for our district."



### Analog to IP: A Significant Upgrade

Jaime Escobedo is President and CEO of American Surveillance Company Inc. He says the power and clarity of the new cameras is a vast improvement over the previous analog hardware deployed by Mission CISD.

"Mission CISD has a complete field of view 100 percent of the time, with an important digital zoom capability for investigation needs," Escobedo says. "With one Arecont Vision camera, Mission CISD can now cover the same area as six or seven analog cameras used to. The resolution of the video now is so high that you can easily see all the details that you need to help resolve

disputes or handle situations, both live and after the fact."

Since the 180- and 360-degree cameras capture a wider field than the previous analog cameras, there was no need for pan/tilt cameras that present field-of-view challenges. Another limitation with the district's analog system was it could not be accessed remotely, and the digital video recorders (DVRs) were not interconnected on a single system. The Milestone system has resolved these issues.

### A More Robust System Makes Kids Safe

After seeing the success of the pilot project in 2011, some of the district's elementary schools had available funds and inquired about upgrading their security systems, which they did in September of 2012. The watershed moment occurred two months later when 20 children were killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary massacre in Connecticut. The next month, the Mission CISD Board of Trustees approved



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## Milestone Customer Case Study



district-wide surveillance cameras running on Milestone VMS and began a thorough overhaul of the security system.

“Sandy Hook had a huge effect on our district,” Flores says. “It brought into sharp focus the fact that we need to do everything we can to ensure the safety of our children, teachers and parents,” Flores says. “With our new cameras and the Milestone system, you can’t just sneak into a side or back door anymore. We can keep track of everyone and have a visual log of who goes in and out.”

### **Easy To Manage and Add Cameras, Remotely**

Mission CISD is a sprawling school district, which presents a challenge for its security system. However, Flores says the Milestone system is fast, efficient and scalable.

“It’s very easy to manage and add cameras,” Flores says. “Once we install a device and put the IP address in, we are amazed at how quickly the system picks it up. I plug into the network then we configure the IP address according to the appropriate campus. After the configuration the technician installs the device, placing it where the principal wants it. Then we go into the Milestone software, add new hardware, it automatically discovers the new camera on the network and goes live displaying the video. It only takes about five minutes.”

Flores says one of the system’s indispensable features is Milestone Federated Architecture™, which allows viewing and managing all the widely distributed cameras and servers at one central location.

“Milestone Federated Architecture is such a critical tool,” Flores says. “It enables me at anytime to pull up the feed from any campus to see what’s happening, or to troubleshoot a problem with a camera or a server all from one convenient location.”



The integrated map features allow Flores to quickly toggle between different security points with a simple click of a button. In addition, he has Milestone Mobile activated on his phone so he can log in remotely if necessary.

“Right now most of the principals have Milestone Web Client on their laptops,” Flores says. “But many of them have already asked me to make sure they get Milestone Mobile on their phones or iPads for the coming year. They’re usually walking around their campus, checking in on different buildings. They want to be able to monitor security wherever they are, whether they’re in their office or not.”

### **Ease of Use Minimizes Training**

The ease of installation and system uniformity means Mission CISD does not have to worry about different configurations for different campuses.

“We go to schools and install Milestone on a computer,” Flores says. We give administrators rights to the cameras and a quick run through. It’s not often that they need extra training. Once you open the Milestone software, it’s very user friendly.”

Milestone gives Mission CISD numerous options for controlling user access to the video. In this case, access to the XProtect Management Application from which the entire system is controlled, is only allocated to Flores, Le and a couple of school officials.

“We give access to a very limited number of people,” Flores says. “Principals have access to their campus feeds, but we wanted access to the Management Application to be locked down tight.”

The ease of video playback helps in more ways than one. If an employee gets hurt on the job, Milestone video logs are an important piece of Mission CISD’s risk management strategy.



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## Milestone Customer Case Study



Flores says Milestone has been a very approachable and accessible partner to do business with. "We can tell Milestone our concerns and what we want to work with. We learn from them. It's a very solid relationship."

### **Working with Law Enforcement**

Mission CISD covers the Mission, Palmhurst, Alton and McAllen police departments. Milestone allows Mission CISD to work seamlessly with the different police departments to assist them with investigations.

"Sometimes the police will contact us for access to videos for a case they are working on," Flores says. "They give us a time frame date and a brief idea of what they're looking for. We can drop the video into their desktop and the files are exported with a viewer. It's that easy."

Mission CISD runs so many feeds at one time that they have programmed the system to store video for a maximum of 30 days before writing over the data, which is efficient.

"Sometimes, if we've been asked to provide video footage for an ongoing investigation, we'll make sure it gets stored for longer than 30 days," Flores says. "The great thing about Milestone is all we have to do is click once, and it knows to save that video for an extended period of time."

### **More Monitors Not More Complicated**

There are seven monitors dedicated to each server at the command center. Le says that if he switches any monitors that were showing different campuses, the settings will stay the same without requiring any reconfiguration.

"We have the screens changing every 10 seconds with the Milestone Carousel feature," Le says. "They populate one after another with no manual work necessary. The system automatically rotates all the cameras so you can see in real time what's going on in every part of the campus."

### **Certified Partners Ensure Expertise**

Flores says working with certified Milestone integrators ensures that installations are done by people with a depth and breadth of knowledge about all aspects of the process.

"When dealing with Milestone, we can be assured that we'll never work with a fly-by-night partner," Flores says. "Anyone can install a camera, but IP cameras require specific configurations. When we work with integration partners certified by Milestone, we know that they bring a deep knowledge of both the cameras we're using and the Milestone system."

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### **About Milestone Systems**

Milestone Systems is a global industry leader in open platform IP video management software, founded in 1998 and now operating as a stand-alone company in the Canon Group. Milestone technology is easy to manage, reliable and proven in thousands of customer installations, providing flexible choices in network hardware and integrations with other systems. Sold through partners in more than 100 countries, Milestone solutions help organizations to manage risks, protect people and assets, optimize processes and reduce costs. For more information, visit: [www.milestonesys.com](http://www.milestonesys.com).