

A CLEAR2THERE CASE STUDY

HELPING WEST LIBERTY VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT BE READY TO ROLL

THE CHALLENGE

According to the “U.S. Fire Department Profile,” published by the National Fire Protection Association in April 2017, sixty-six percent of the 29,727 fire departments across the nation are classified as ‘all volunteer.’ The fire department in West Liberty, Iowa, is one such department that provides first responders to accident scenes, structure fires, and other emergencies.

As is common with most volunteer departments, the West Liberty firehouse is unattended much of the time. A concern shared by many fire chiefs across the country, including Robbie Rock, West Liberty fire chief, is the risk of break-ins for the purpose of theft or vandalism at the firehouse.

“It’s an unfortunate reality that firehouses are a common target of break-ins, and critical equipment can be stolen or vandalized,” said Rock. “The last thing we want is to arrive at the firehouse in response to an emergency only to find equipment broken or missing. This puts the public at risk and makes our job more difficult.”

Due to these mounting concerns, the fire department researched ways to provide better security for the firehouse. The existing solution utilized pushbutton combination locks and keys issued to personnel. The department wanted a solution that would provide access control, alerts for unusual activity, and tracking of who was accessing the firehouse and when.

“We had actually decided to install an independent security system for the firehouse when I learned that the City of West Liberty had selected an access control and surveillance service package provided by Liberty Communications for City Hall and the police station,” continued Rock. “After I met with the city manager to learn more about the system, I was ready to dig deeper into whether this was appropriate for the fire department as well.”

Rock contacted Rick Sexton at Liberty Communications to find out how a similar solution could address the security needs of the fire department. Sexton provided a demonstration of how the company’s access control and surveillance services would simplify managing and tracking access, and do it in a way that was easy to operate.

Liberty Communications has been serving the West Liberty and West Branch, Iowa areas for over 100 years, and delivers Internet, telephone, digital television, and automation and monitoring services throughout its service area. The company relies on the Clear2there smart premise services platform to deliver a wide range of smart home, smart farm, smart business, and smart healthcare solutions to its customers.

THE SOLUTION

To address the fire department's requirements, Liberty Communications installed a series of access readers and surveillance cameras to manage access to the firehouse itself, as well as a number of areas within the firehouse that house valuable supplies and equipment. The fire department also shares their offices with paramedics that have a separate access-controlled room to store their critical medicines and controlled substances. Each firefighter that requires access to the building carries a key-fob that provides them with access to open the doors that they are authorized to enter.

A simple and secure gateway device is installed at the firehouse to enable communication with the cameras and access controllers. The solution does not require servers or other computer equipment at the site, and all video feeds and administration functions are secured in the Liberty Communications' data center.

Surveillance cameras were installed to monitor activity as well as record images when key-fobs are swiped. When motion or activity is sensed by the cameras, video is recorded and stored. The system is also able to provide text, email, and telephone alerts to specified parties in the event of unscheduled or unusual activity at the firehouse. Video clips and snapshots can be accessed remotely over a secure connection to facilitate immediate response when necessary.



"With this new system, we can check on activity at the firehouse in real time, or go back and see who was in the building at any given time," continued Rock. "This provides us with a level of information and accountability that we never had before."

"The implementation and configuration of the system for West Liberty Fire Department was a breeze," said Liberty Communications' Sexton. "The Clear2there platform has an ever expanding library of configuration templates and wizards for installers as well as end users. Mr. Rock and his team were able to effectively manage their system with minimal training, and they are very pleased with its operation."

Rock and the system administrators have the ability to add and delete key-fobs from the system using any smartphone, tablet, or computer in just a few simple steps. Time-of-day access can also be established for any key-fob just as easily.

The smart premise solution from Liberty Communications has the flexibility to provide additional services such as thermostats, water sensing, lighting control, and a variety of other automation services within the same management platform.

"The system is very easy to understand and manage, but if I do have a question or an issue, I can call on Liberty Communications for a quick response," concluded Rock. "Working with the local telecommunications provider not only supports our community, but I know that they are invested in West Liberty and will go out of their way to ensure that we are up and running all the time – just like we do for our community."

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