



A CLEAR2THERE CASE STUDY

FISHER PUBLIC SCHOOLS IMPROVES SECURITY THROUGH LOW-COST CLEAR2THERE SMART PREMISES TECHNOLOGY

THE CHALLENGE

The Fisher Public School District provides pre-K through 12 education in the community of Fisher, Minnesota. Much like school districts across the nation, Fisher's administration is consistently challenged to provide a safe and secure environment for students, faculty and staff, while managing highly-constrained budgets. In early 2015, administrators recommended that the district update its security system to integrate advanced remote access control, video surveillance, and keyless entry through the use of electronic key-fobs and photo-id badges issued to faculty and staff. The existing security and surveillance system did not provide adequate video coverage or picture quality, and the electronic locks were easily circumvented.

"The school building is the site of many community activities, and over time we had reached the point where anyone could enter the building any time despite the existing security system," said Evan Hanson, superintendent of the Fisher Public School District. "We felt that there was a need to do a better job of controlling access to the building while still supporting the community culture that considers the school building as a community focal point and a shared resource."

In a competitive bid, Halstad Telephone Company, the local telecommunications and Internet services provider, proposed a comprehensive security and access control system using technology from Clear2there, a national leader in smart premise technology.

According to Mark Forseth, operations manager for Halstad, the review and selection process focused on functionality, usability, and cost.

"Halstad is very involved in every community that we serve, and that includes providing the latest technology in affordable and easy-to-use packages," noted Forseth. "In reviewing the requirements outlined in the RFP from Fisher Schools, we were

confident that the cloud-based Clear2there platform would address the key elements that the schools requested, while keeping within the budgetary targets."

After careful analysis and discussion, the school district selected Halstad's bid in April, 2015. Halstad offered the lowest bid in terms of cost, but was also able to include more flexibility and functionality than other bidders.

THE CHALLENGE

All levels of the Fisher Schools are located within a single building, with dedicated areas for primary, secondary, and high school classes. The solution that Halstad deployed provides administrators in each level to securely monitor and manage activities in their areas of responsibility directly from their mobile phones and tablets, as well as any Internet-connected computer.

A total of twenty-nine security cameras are installed throughout the property. These are used to monitor activity in the gym, lunchroom, hallways, building entry points, the bus loading area, and the playground. Video from the cameras is stored using an onsite Digital Video Recorder (DVR) for easy archival and retrieval.

Electronic locks are installed on five exterior doors. In addition, the school installed an electronic lock on the weight room to increase safety for students as well as make the facility accessible for use by community members. Through the smart-premise service, each door is tied to an access card reader that operates the door for authorized users. The system also allows administrators to remotely unlock or lock any door with the simple click of a mouse or tap on a smart phone. Staff can also program doors to be unlocked for specific times of day, such as morning entry times or during activities such as athletic events or theatre productions.

All faculty and staff carry electronic photo ID cards or key fobs that are programmed to interact with the access control system. Each card can be programmed to operate specific doors at specified days of the week and times of day. For example, a coach's key fob may be programmed for weekend hours to facilitate entry after returning from away games.

The system sends electronic notifications via email and text message, to alert administrators of select activities and situations such as access outside of typical hours, or a door that is held open for an unusually long time.

DEPLOYMENT & USE

The installation at the Fisher School was easily completed during the summer break. Halstad installed new wiring throughout the building to connect cameras, access panels, and electronic locks. Some existing door sensors were integrated into the new platform as well.

"Our technicians got into the school over the summer and completed the installation work in short order," continued Forseth. "No special training was required for the technicians to perform the installation of the Clear2there system. We were able to help keep costs down by reusing some existing wiring and sensors, while ensuring that the entire system would be seamless for users. The configuration wizards in the Clear2there system made the initial setup and customization work quick and efficient."

"The installation was completed on time and we were very pleased with the results," said Hanson. "The technicians were very professional and accommodating throughout the process and the Halstad team was very responsive in working with us to answer questions and make changes to the project as it progressed."

Staff members and administrators can view a live stream from any camera on the system. A unique playback function also presents the user with a slideshow view of time-coded images, enabling a quick review of archived video. Once a particular timeframe is selected, the recorded video can be reviewed in full and then downloaded to share, if necessary.

Other key features include activity logging for each ID and key fob, time of day programming for video recording, snapshot and video recording associated with events, such as entry outside of normal school hours, and the integration of motion sensors with specific cameras to trigger recording outside of typical parameters and timeframes.

The system employs a variety of strong security measures to control who can see video data, and who has access to activate or configure system controls. In addition, the platform employs technology and an architecture that prevents unauthorized viewing of the video to assure that the system cannot be hacked or misused.

Once the system was installed and configured, Halstad provided training to the school personnel responsible for maintaining and using the platform. This training included administrators, along with office and IT personnel and the school maintenance engineer.

"The training was very simple and straightforward," said Hanson. "The mobile app and computer interface are very easy to use. Once we were instructed how to log in, it was pretty easy to navigate our way through the system. With a couple of quick taps on the screen, I can see activity anywhere in the school, from any location. I'm not sure that the kids like it, but this provides us with tremendous peace of mind when it comes to safety and security in our school."

Hanson noted that the administrators are also pleased with the remote access control in the event of a crisis.

"The fact that we can easily lock-down the building, or open doors as needed, in the event of an emergency or crisis, gives a tremendous source of peace of mind for our parents, and the community at large," continued Hanson. "In addition, being able to go back through the video files to review an incident makes our job much easier when sorting out disciplinary matters."

In addition, Hanson said that the school plans to provide the Sheriff's department with access codes for the building as well as enable them to view the live video streams in the event of a lock-down or other emergency situation.

Another benefit of the integrated access control system is the ease with which the gym and other areas of the school can be used by the public outside of normal school hours.

"When a community group wants to use part of the school building for a meeting or event, we no longer have to worry about loaning keys out," said Hanson. "The responsible administrator can unlock and lock doors right from their smartphone, and even check out the video to see what is going on without going to the school."

THE PLATFORM

Halstad Telephone relies on Clear2there's smart-premise services platform for its smart school, business, farm, and home service offerings. Clear2there's platform employs a mix of cloud-based and locally hosted resources to efficiently utilize the Internet, mobile devices, the latest in surveillance technology, sensors, and control devices, to deliver simple and easy to use solutions.

The solution empowers users with mobile apps and computer applications that enable them to easily monitor and manage a premise from any smartphone, tablet or Internet-connected device. Typical features include video surveillance; process automation; remote monitoring, access, energy management, thermostat and lighting controls; water and flood detection; and event-driven alerts and automated responses.



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