

Security for Your Utilities

- It's Affordable, and Necessary!

A small town in Kansas purchased eight (8) cameras that monitor different locations and display those sites on a single monitor. The security camera package only cost \$250!



Public water and wastewater utilities are important assets to any community. Water and wastewater facilities protect public health. These utilities are also essential to public safety and welfare. It is critical that public utilities take necessary steps to ensure the security of these facilities.

Yes, security is affordable and necessary for all communities. Still, many small communities have the “I can leave my door unlocked – nothing ever happens here” attitude. This might be true to an extent. A small community in the center of Kansas is not likely to be the target of an international terrorist. Instead, it’s the more local vandals who may be

looking for a quick dollar by stealing and scrapping metal.

I was at a small town in northeast Kansas a few years ago and accompanied the assistant administrator to check the sewer treatment facility. He then told me he also had something he wanted me to see at the city's lake. We drove up to a power pole where vandals had cut the ground wire off the power pole from the ground level to about six feet above ground. They had done this on several poles. I was perplexed due to the value that could be obtained for such a small amount of copper wire. It would not have even paid for the gas to drive out to the lake. Thieves are becoming bolder as many communities find air

conditioning or other units vandalized for the purpose of someone obtaining scrap metal.

Recently I stopped by to check on a sewer project; I met with the wastewater superintendent. We went into his office. I noticed a monitor with eight screens from a recently installed camera surveillance system. We reviewed the city’s present wastewater improvement project. I asked about the security camera system as I found it very interesting. The superintendent had researched security systems and found what he was looking for online. The system with eight cameras, the recording device and wiring was available for only \$250! In the options available at the time of purchase, either outdoor or indoor cameras or a combination could be selected. This city purchased five outdoor and three indoor cameras.



These photos show a camera for outdoors and the other is for an indoor application.

The system with eight cameras, the recording device and wiring was available for only \$250!

The city installed the system themselves. They placed one camera in the office and two in the shop. The outdoor cameras were placed to monitor the equipment shed, mower shed, entrance to the shop, the storage containers, and tree burn site. With these the operator can see who enters and leaves the property. If someone dumps something other than tree or grass clippings the city can capture the license tag number. This also works well to ensure no one steals the scrap metal or other equipment. The monitoring system can record for up to six months before the files are overwritten. A wireless system was available for \$400, but it was decided it was not needed and instead this city in northeast Kansas chose the hard wire system.

Another community I recently discussed security cameras with had purchased a system from the local phone company that installed the cameras; the cost was approximately \$2,000. I understand there are different grades of cameras available such as those that work in daylight or at night.

Another location I would recommend monitoring is the local drop box for bills. Those paying bills could be monitored as well as anyone who attempts to break into the billing box. Cameras would also work well as security in case an irate customer comes into city hall or the water district office.

Other measures

Other possible uses for security cameras might include monitoring meter readings, flow meters and just about anything else you might want to check on and save driving.

Another security measure is to install key pads entry locks on doors. This reduces the need to have the multiple keys to carry. Codes on key pad door locks can be changed very easily. Most small-town fire stations are equipped with key pad entry so that every firefighter does not have to have a key to get into the building. A lot of communities leave walk-in shop doors unlocked and garage doors open in warm weather. Garage door openers are fairly inexpensive as well, and each vehicle can have a door opener.



Touch door lock keypads provide a benefit of numerous people not having to carry a key but instead have a code. And the code can be changed when the utility decides.

Several years ago, the shop in another small Kansas town was broken into; several pieces of equipment were stolen, including an air compressor and generator. They added bars on the windows and anchored them well.

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Security bars for windows can be easily made and installed. They provide security very inexpensively.

Bars

Many years ago while working in Marysville shortly after the city's new wells were installed, windows were broken and someone tried to enter the well house. Bars were quickly installed on those windows. Since then the city has also added fencing around most of the wells sites.



The chain-link fencing with barbed wire are a good deterrent for illegal access or vandalism.

Fence

Fencing is required around wastewater treatment facilities. The fencing should be checked by operators when making their daily rounds to ensure it is secure. Signage is also required on wastewater treatment facilities.

Keep Out

Another security measure I recommend is to have addresses for all of the system's facilities. This includes wells, lift stations, lagoons/treatment facilities and maintenance shops. If an issue arises, addresses assist first

responders such as police, fire and emergency medical services in going to the right location. If you need help at a lift station for example, and you call 911 and say, "I need them at lift station #1!" Most responders would not be familiar with "lift station #1", but if the call would include the address, e.g., "I need help at the lift station at 810 Main", the response will be made much sooner.

Facility Address

Most public employees have been issued ID cards by their counties in response to need for mutual aid. The

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This sign at a wastewater lagoon in Kansas alerts people to not enter the facility.



It's easy to install an address marker such as at this lift station. A physical address helps first responders to find the location rather than being directed to "lift station No. 1", for example.

ID cards should have information about the employees such as if they are certified operators, firefighters or EMTs or other classification. The card can be scanned and the information is available whenever most needed. The ID card is also useful to help identify the carrier as a utility employee if there is need to enter homes or businesses. Most residents of smaller town know the employees. However that is not always the case.

Security can be as simple as locking the doors when someone leaves the utility pumping station or shop to being as complex to require ID swipe badges to enter facilities and security guards. It's up to each community to decide what level of security is appropriate.

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