

CASE STUDY

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, North Carolina, USA

Serious about ALPR. Serious about Service.



Customer Profile

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) provides public safety services for the city of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County in North Carolina. With 1,717 sworn officers, it is the largest police department between Washington, DC, and Atlanta, GA. The department was formed in 1993 by merging the Charlotte City Police Department with the Mecklenburg County Rural Police Department, and the officers patrol the entire 438 square miles of Mecklenburg County, protecting the more than 800,000 citizens who live there.

Background

The sheer size of both the CMPD and the geographic area the department protects creates logistic and operational challenges in coordinating divisions, districts, and personnel. To streamline operations, the CMPD's command staff has established a unique infrastructure to help field officers by anticipating problems and providing real-time intelligence, allowing them to respond more quickly to criminal activity.

Solution

For years, the CMPD has utilized technology toward public safety. The license plate recognition (LPR) technology was first introduced by the department in 2006 with the installation of LPR cameras on four marked police vehicles. As the host city for the 2012 Democratic National Convention (DNC), Charlotte enhanced their technology infrastructure to ensure public safety during the convention. Since the DNC, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department has dedicated this technology to assist with law enforcement and resolving criminal investigations. With funding from the DNC federal security grant and Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant, the CMPD was able to enhance their investment in automatic license plate recognition cameras and software from NDI Recognition Systems (NDI-RS).



In total, the department increased their LPR technology to 89 fixed LPR cameras, 13 Road Warrior LPR trailers, four mobile systems, and two portable Rapid Deployment System (RDS) units. The NDI-RS technology is overseen from the CMPD's Real Time Crime Center (RTCC), a 24-hour command center staffed by trained detectives who support the CMPD's field officers. The LPR technology is also monitored by trained patrol officers and supervisors in field services.

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The RTCC also monitors more than 800 video cameras throughout the metropolitan area. Those cameras include units owned by the CMPD, the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and local businesses and other partners. Under specific policy and guidelines, the CMPD reserves the privacy of citizens by restricting the use of their technology to law enforcement purposes and enforces retention periods for all camera and LPR footage.

The RTCC primarily focuses on crimes in progress and priority alerts. LPR cameras alert the RTCC to suspect or wanted vehicles, and the RTCC officers can use the video camera system to view activity. All the video cameras have pan-tilt-zoom capability, so RTCC officers can follow incidents and relay information and intelligence to officers in the field. A dedicated workstation provides access to the NDI-RS back office system, the Vehicle Intelligence Server and Communications Engine (VISCE), but every workstation in the RTCC can access the LPR systems as well as selected trained patrol officers in the field.



Results

The RTCC is able to support the officers in the field with real-time crime analysis and visual reconnaissance. The center offers both a real-time awareness of conditions in the field, coupled with a wide-ranging surveillance capability. RTCC officers can provide field officers with alerts and background information on suspect vehicles based on license plate information drawn from the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and state and local databases. In addition, they can monitor situations using video cameras, document criminal activity, track fleeing suspects, and provide information to assist in pursuits.



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