

High-definition camera system allows better jobsite surveillance

A new high-definition Web camera system provides sharp images that help contractors and owners remotely monitor and record progress on construction projects.

"I was impressed with the functionality of the camera and clarity of the picture," says Paul Walker, information technology director at Hoar Construction, Birmingham, Ala.

Walker says the Megapixel Advanced system from EarthCam Inc., Hackensack, N.J., has not disappointed him. "With this 8-megapixel camera, [the image] is crisp, and you can get a lot of details out of the images that you couldn't get from other cameras," Walker says.

Hoar began taking Webcam images of its projects about six years ago. Cameras typically are mounted high above the action. The company makes the images available at its Website, which allows the public to watch the project evolve.

Hoar also uses the system to document how much work is completed.

"We can watch as each floor is being poured and check how much progress is being made on an hourly basis," Walker says. "Outside the marketing piece and show-and-tell, it can help with the management process on a particular project."

Brian Cury, founder and CEO of EarthCam, says higher resolution produces better shots for documentation, archiving and time-lapse movies. EarthCam manages the imagery and content on EarthCam servers. The servers communicate with the camera regularly. If something is amiss, EarthCam can reboot the camera and correct any problems, Cury says.

"Every five minutes we give them a slice of whatever happened that day," Cury says. "The information you can glean from documenting a project from start to finish is invaluable."

EarthCam gives the construction firm tools to compare images, create slide shows and add text, which provides the project manager an opportunity, among other things, to mark up a photo of an unlocked gate, add a reminder to improve after-hours security and then circulate it to the appropriate people on his or her team.

Owners and architects can monitor progress without leaving the office, which saves time and money formerly spent on fuel, Cury says. A civil contractor or department of transportation might use the camera to keep an eye on safety during a road-building project, he adds.

The 8-megapixel camera is built to withstand dust, sand and severe weather. It is protected by a heavy-duty sealed enclosure as well as a heater and cooling fan. The system comes with a windshield wiper and washer-fluid tank, so someone can remotely wash the glass or program the camera to clean the lens at set intervals or in inclement weather.

The construction firm buys the camera and pays EarthCam a management fee while the camera is operating at a jobsite. The camera and one year of software support for the 8-megapixel system costs between \$5,000 and \$10,000. The company provides a Website, documents weather conditions and time-date stamps the images. EarthCam offers a variety of Webcam options, including a 72-megapixel panoramic camera.



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