



Irish Day Parade Kickoff

ORGANIZATION

City of Long Beach, NY—
Long Beach Police Department

TECHNOLOGY

Video Surveillance

CHALLENGE

Monitoring a dense crowd at a popular street festival

SOLUTION

AgileMesh/Firetide wireless mesh network

INTEGRATOR

Telecom Communications

MORE INFORMATION

www.agilemesh.com
www.firetide.com
www.lbpd.com

Irish Day Festival, Long Beach, NY “Event Mesh” Keeps 30,000 Visitors Safe With Real-Time Video Surveillance

Irish Celebration Attracts Huge Crowds in Long Beach

In Long Beach, New York—a suburban city located on a barrier island off the South Shore of Long Island—Irish Day is a long-standing annual October event. Sponsored by the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the festival was launched 17 years ago as a small gathering and celebration in the West End area of the narrow seaside community. It has since grown in size and attendance far beyond its humble beginnings. The event begins with a parade and then continues with a street fair. A three-quarter mile section of the city is closed to vehicular traffic to accommodate the vendor booths, food stands, rides, and attractions that are set up along the roadways. The 2007 Irish Day Festival attracted over 30,000 visitors, and the enormity of the anticipated crowd offered quite a challenge to the Long Beach Police Department (LBPD): how does a 78-person police force keep tabs on such a huge throng of people?

According to Long Beach Police Sergeant William Dodge, “We know from experience how hard it is to watch over and secure thousands of people who are tightly packed along the festival streets. Since it’s impossible for a police officer to see more than 10 to 15 feet around in any direction, no one has the big picture of what’s going on. We realized that the time had come to try out a new solution—to bring in extra help via wireless mesh and video surveillance technology.”



AgileMesh unit with integrated Firetide technology

Wireless Mesh Keeps Visitors and the Long Beach PD Smiling

In preparation for the festival, Long Beach police reviewed the statistics from prior Irish Day celebrations: 92 summons and seven arrests in 2006, and 27 summons and nine arrests in 2005. The goal for 2007 was to lower considerably the number of unlawful incidents—mostly public drinking and fighting. To that end, the LBPD enlisted the help of Telecom Communications, a local systems integrator, who recommended using a rapidly deployable video surveillance system from AgileMesh. AgileMesh incorporates Firetide wireless mesh technology into its video surveillance systems to create portable video surveillance networks.

The next step in the process was to make sure that the public was aware that the Irish Day festival would be secured with this real-time wireless video surveillance system monitored by the Long Beach police. The LBPD sent out a media alert several days in advance of the event, and local media outlets dispatched the news that the LBPD would have extra “eyes” watching the crowds. The police department even invited the media to visit the “incident command post” located in the heart of the festival, to view demonstrations of the cutting-edge surveillance technology.

Irish Day Festival

According to Sgt. Dodge, "It worked stunningly. We found that people behaved better because they knew that their actions were being monitored. We told them so beforehand! Drinking and rowdiness were dramatically reduced this year." Mark Satinsky, co-founder of AgileMesh, added: "Our law enforcement customers frequently use this equipment for temporary events such as street festivals, political rallies, and various sporting events—golf tournaments, football games, etc."

Overcoming Obstacles with Creative Solutions

Once it was determined that the rapidly-deployable AgileMesh/Firetide mesh network and surveillance equipment would be used, the logistics needed to be handled. Although AgileMesh equipment has self-contained power for short deployments, finding the electrical power to run the system for the duration of the festival was the first big issue. The LBPD had to identify a variety of power sources.



Wireless cameras monitor the festival

"We had to get creative," said Sgt. Dodge. "In addition to AC/DC plugs, we used power generators, car batteries, and the batteries of the bucket trucks we used to mount some of the cameras." The second challenge was finding places to mount the cameras out of the way of the swarm of people, and yet positioned well so that the video "eyes"

would be effective. After performing a survey ahead of time to choose likely places to put the cameras, LBPD deployed the system on strategically positioned rooftops, light posts and bucket trucks.

On the day of the event, the entire AgileMesh/Firetide network was deployed in only two-and-a-half hours. The highly encrypted, rapidly deployed system spanned three-quarters of a mile and supported 12 video cameras, including six pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) cameras to secure several beer gardens set up for the event. The mesh network provided wireless connectivity from surveillance sites to the mobile incident command post, where the real-time video output from the cameras was monitored by the LBPD for the entire day.



Preparing for the installation

A Great Day for the Irish and for the LBPD

"The AgileMesh/Firetide system performed spectacularly during the event," said Sgt. Dodge. And the results were impressive. Since the City of Long Beach and its police department intentionally publicized the fact that they would be using technology and cameras to secure the event and people knew they were being "watched," the crowd's behavior was discernibly better than in previous years of the gathering.

In addition, the cameras and wireless mesh network gave the LBPD many extra sets of "eyes." "Because we were able to see, in real-time, what was happening up and down the streets, we were able to avert any problems," said Sgt. Dodge. "People are packed in so tightly that without this equipment, we would never have been able to see what was going on. The surveillance system was instrumental in keeping the festival safe and secure for visitors and made our job much easier."

A Solution with Future Dividends

The tangible success of using wireless video surveillance will act as a springboard for future projects that are under consideration by the LBPD and the City of Long Beach. The Long Beach Transportation Department is looking to AgileMesh and Firetide to help secure the city's bus routes. Another use for a city-wide wireless mesh network will be to equip the LBPD with mobile access to the network so that police officers can receive important data in their police cars. Long Beach is hoping to have a city-wide network deployed by the end of 2008.



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