MAKING BETTER BUSINESS DECISIONS
IN HARRIS COUNTY TEXAS

Third-largest U.S. county embraces analytics to streamline security systems and reduce false alarms

Case Study

> When we first started this project, we had four different access systems, four or five video management systems, and two different intrusion systems. It was costing our constituents money to have multiple employees manage all those different systems.
>
> **- NEMIAH MCGEE**
> Senior Manager, Public Safety Security Technology, Harris County

Honeywell

SECURITY PLATFORM CREATES IMPROVED SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

With a population of almost five million people, Harris County in Texas is the third-largest county in the United States. More than 15,000 employees in numerous public buildings across the county's 1,777 square miles, including the county seat of Houston, support residents with services that range from public safety and jails, to law enforcement and courts, to library services and licensing facilities.

BACKGROUND

The problem? A lack of consistency in security products and transparency in systems used throughout the various buildings, which resulted in decreased operating efficiencies and more work for employees. When county officials first started thinking about modernizing their equipment four years ago, they reached out to Texas-based integrator ESI Fire and Security Protection for help.

SOLUTION

ESI, whose corporate motto is "security goes beyond reacting to crime," recommended an integrated system of security components from Honeywell and other third-party manufacturers that would tie together the disparate security systems, facilitate better business decisions, and allow Harris County officials to streamline operations.

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SENIOR MANAGER, PUBLIC SAFETY SECURITY TECHNOLOGY, HARRIS COUNTY

In addition to upgrading the access control on doors, ESI installed Honeywell's Pro-Watch security management system, Pro-Watch networked video recorders (NVRs), and Honeywell cameras, as well as third-party access control components such as Invixium thermal readers and Silent Sentinel thermal cameras with AnyVision recognition.

The installation provided immediate benefits: central station managers now have improved situational awareness for all the facilities throughout the entire county—from a single central control station in the network operations center. With more detailed information available at their fingertips, security officers are better able to do their jobs and more effectively serve the community.

"When all the pieces are integrated, everything works better."

– JIM MCMILLAN
ASSISTANT CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER HARRIS COUNTY

The project continues to evolve. The incorporation of analytics in the central station has increased intelligence provided by the integrated equipment, dramatically reducing false alarm events. Previously, the county reported a high volume of false alarms to emergency responders because operators simply didn't have eyes on site.

Since the county added analytics capabilities to their video surveillance, the system displays a clear image from the specific camera that's capturing the movement causing the alarm, which allows security operators in the central station to see what's happening. That lets them determine instantly whether there's really an intruder inside a building—or perhaps just an animal—and allows them to make better judgments about whether to call in a request for emergency response.

"That information has been crucial to improving the county's operational efficiencies. These technologies allow real-time monitoring which helps reduce or eliminate monetary fines that can be associated with falsely deploying first responders to a non-emergency event."

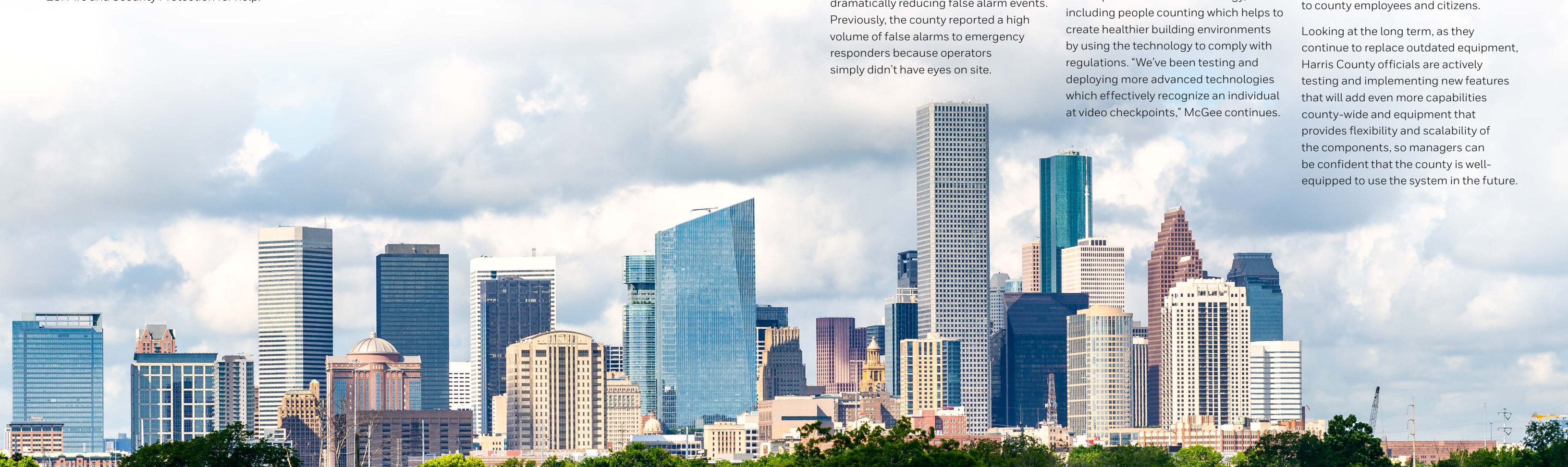**– JAMES HUMBERT**
Business Development Manager at ESI

County officials are finding that they can do things with analytics that they couldn't accomplish with older technology, including people counting which helps to create healthier building environments by using the technology to comply with regulations. "We've been testing and deploying more advanced technologies which effectively recognize an individual at video checkpoints," McGee continues.

These technologies provide frictionless entry for employees and efficiently validate required compliance efforts for the county.

"We use Pro-Watch to help streamline these efforts. For example, we don't have to pull employees away from their jobs to come in and have pictures taken again if they're already in the system. So far, whether we're using it to monitor a small area or large area, it works great."

In the short term, they expect to deploy more analytics and biometrics in more situations such as managing entrance queues at the courthouse, letting a precinct know when a public park is reaching capacity, or maintaining occupancy at a library to comply with current social distancing regulations, effectively averting potential problems before they occur. By delivering solutions that address certain real-world scenarios and not just triggering bells and alarms, Honeywell solutions are identifying circumstances for concern, which empowers security officials to preemptively catch and proactively manage a situation before it escalates and causes any real harm to county employees and citizens.

Looking at the long term, as they continue to replace outdated equipment, Harris County officials are actively testing and implementing new features that will add even more capabilities county-wide and equipment that provides flexibility and scalability of the components, so managers can be confident that the county is well-equipped to use the system in the future.

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