



## DVRs, iPhone/iPad app technology used to promote officer safety in the field

Written by Mike Scott

**Law enforcement agencies can now use digital video recorders (DVRs) in local mass transit and rail vehicles thanks to a new technology offered by a domestic supplier.** [Apollo Video Technology](#) introduced a series of DVRs that come equipped with an array of new features and extensive capacity that allows for peak performance. The RoadRunner MRH Series DVR records up to 16 cameras simultaneously with high recording rates, high resolutions and compression that is useful for both networking and remote access.

There are numerous ways that departments can view the cameras with remote access available from virtually anywhere," said Apollo Video Technology Sales Operations Manager April Johnson. "They can store all the information they need on their (preferred) devices."

Some of the key features of the DVRs include maintenance-free operation and system-wide remote updates. On-board storage is available for months at a time. "There are several options for remote viewing," Johnson said. "The first prototypes we did for customers were very well received. Department personnel who use fleets of all sizes wanted to see how they could install it."

The remote viewing feature allowed Dade City, Fla. Police Department to use the RoadRunner DVRs for in-car video, as well as an important component of the department's perimeter security system, according to Capt. David Duff. Dade City installed 14 cameras inside its facility and throughout the adjacent parking lot as a way to better protect its officers through video capabilities and data retraction.

There are a number of examples for how the DVRs have been used as a way to enhance officer safety. One suspect was seen disposing of crack cocaine while in the facility's holding cell by video camera. The Dade City Police Department's parking lot is also commonly used as a drop point for domestic situations and with cameras installed in those parking lots, physical altercations can be viewed, assessed and recorded for future use. "It's a very comprehensive system and easy for us to use," Duff explained. "We don't have (training) issues because most of our officers are very computer literate. It has been dependable for us."

Apollo Video Technology also jumped on the trend of more departments using Apple technology to communicate in the field. It released the RoadRunner Mobile App for the iPhone and iPod Touch earlier this year. That application allows transit officials to view live video feeds from buses, trains, public safety vehicles and transit facilities instantly through their [Apple](#) device with Wi-Fi capabilities.

It is just another example of getting information quickly and accurately. "It allows transit managers and first responders to quickly view live video feeds of any transit vehicle within their network and respond immediately," said Apollo General Manager Rodell Nothbohm.

While the need for larger departments is expected, smaller departments also have expressed interest in using the new RoadRunner technology. With many small to mid-size departments requiring its officers and administrators to multi-task and be responsible for more than ever before, the need for using cellular and remote types of technologies is significant. "We have clients where there are so few officers available that they need that technology not only to better meet the needs of residents in the area, but also to enhance officer safety," Johnson explained.

While the data available may admittedly be anecdotal rather than research-based, Johnson said Apple-powered cellular and Wi-Fi enabled devices are being used by law enforcement agencies at increasing rates. The ability to download apps and the ease of use are the main reasons this trend has taken hold nationally, although price is also favorable for all the functionality the Apple devices allow.

"I think many of our clients are going, or have gone to the iPhone or iPad Touch," Johnson said. "At about \$200 (for the iPad Touch) it is a low cost of entry for a powerful device. The recurring cost that departments are more concerned about is the limitation that not having such access would provide."

However, with many new cellular and Wi-Fi devices entering the market, the Woodinville, Wash.-based company is keeping a close eye on other types of phones that public safety clients may be using to communicate remotely with in the field. Phones such as the Google Android and other Windows-based and BlackBerry devices may require potential research and development investments by technology suppliers based on market share growth within the law enforcement market. "It is something we are keeping a close eye on," Johnson said. "There's really some significant mainstream interest, but with all the apps it makes sense for us to go this route now (focusing on Apple products). We are going to closely follow the cellular phone market."

Dade City has also installed Apollo Video's DVRs in each of its new police cruisers, generating high-quality video. As with many police departments, every car in Dade City's fleet runs video from the time the vehicle starts until it shuts off. Past video systems the city used required costly upkeep that was more expensive than the cost of the videotapes, Duff said. In the last year the DVRs were installed in all nine new department vehicles.

The technology is affordable because Duff packages it into the overall cost of new vehicles because he has nowhere else where it could be affordable from a budgetary perspective. When he defines the RoadRunner DVR as part of the specs in the car, it generally comes through purchasing without the need for a large grant or other non-traditional funding.

Dade City used some of its funds from Public Safety Impact Fees to pay for the Apollo Video technology as part of its facility security system, Duff said. "In six years, just two DVRs have had minor issues and in some cases, you get microphones that need replacing because they can get pushed around if there is a (physical) situation.

With the MRH DVR, the utilization of high-end compression capabilities allows for resolutions up to 4CIF to be maintained. Departments can record up to 480 images per second whether they use eight, 12 or 16 cameras. A GPS option provides a map display of historical route location data and graphs of vehicle speeds. Recording options are available from one to 16 cameras and fleet-wide software compatibility is standard. "Even with line of sight connectivity, it is affordable for most departments," Johnson said.

With the help of the DVR and Mobile App for Apple devices, public safety personnel can gain access to live video feeds of strategically placed cameras while making quick adjustments of camera angles from their Apple devices. This ensures that all cameras are recording properly but it also allows professionals to adjust "on the go" if an incident is occurring.

**Originally Printed in Public Safety IT Magazine, July 2010**