

CASE STUDY

West Midlands Fire Service

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

Making the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier

Overview

West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) is the second largest fire and rescue service in the UK, and one of only a handful that run all their stations with full-time firefighters, 24/7. Established in 1974, WMFS has 38 fire stations and is responsible for 2.83 million residents across seven local authority areas in the West Midlands.

Their vision is 'Making the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier', reflecting the evolving role of a modern-day firefighter for whom emergency response, though critical, takes up only a fraction of their time on duty. Prevention activity (keeping people, especially the vulnerable, safe from fire and other dangers) and protection (keeping businesses and their staff safe) are what the service describes as 'upstream firefighting'.

Crews at the service have been praised for their impressive response times, which recently averaged 4 minutes 40 seconds for emergencies in which people or buildings are in danger - believed to be the best in the UK.

One of the primary routes chosen by the service to maintain and further their operational excellence was the adoption of Body Worn Cameras (BWCs).

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The Challenge

In order to sustain and improve upon the Service's response successes, more detailed accounts of incidents and emergencies were necessary. Training for both new and more experienced firefighters required footage of real-life incidents to put learned techniques into context, and share best practice across stations.

Additionally, Fire Safety and Investigation Officers sought improved methods for gathering evidence and to aid the police in securing evidence for convictions.

"We're committed to operational excellence and providing the best possible response and service to the communities of the West Midlands. These cameras will play a key role in helping our firefighters and incident commanders be the best they can be."

*Gemma McSweeney - Watch Commander,
West Midlands Fire Service*

Key Benefits

- ✓ HD video & audio recording
- ✓ 8-14 hours continuous recording capacity
- ✓ Secure and encrypted storage
- ✓ Klick Fast compatible
- ✓ Pre-record function available
- ✓ Discreet yet functional & durable design
- ✓ Easy to use hardware & software

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It was also important to find a method by which aggression from members of the public during some call-outs could be reduced.

The Solution

Following extensive trials of various Body and Helmet Worn Cameras, evaluations of day-to-day operational use concluded Edesix VideoBadges as the winning camera.

Each responding fire service vehicle has been equipped with VB-300 cameras for the Officers to capture their view of incidents and emergency call-outs as they are tackled. Footage can then be used to support learning and development, as well as helping fire prevention campaigns and safety activities.

Each Watch Commander assigns themselves a VideoBadge at the start of their shift using their ID tags, and proceeds to charge it in a dock within the Fire Engine, thereby ensuring that a BWC is always ready to go and at hand if an emergency is called.

The VideoBadge is attached to the Officer's protective gear whilst en-route to the scene, with recording activated upon arrival.

130 degree wide-angle lenses capture crew members and their actions in detail, under direction from the Watch Commander.

Following an incident in which footage has been recorded, the VideoBadge is docked at a local PC for footage review, and can be uploaded to a central server at WMFS headquarters. Footage is managed using VideoManager, which allows the implementation of an automatic deletion policy to remove unnecessary videos after a specified time period.

Results

Watch Commanders attending callouts throughout the West Midlands are now equipped with VideoBadges to help share best practice techniques and complement firefighter training, ultimately improving the Service's operations well into the future. Videos and their associated data are managed at each fire station using VideoManager, with important footage forwarded to a central server at the West Midlands Fire Service headquarters.

In April 2016, a VideoBadge worn by a Watch Commander attending an emergency call to a gas explosion, captured their perspective of the crew tackling the blaze and showed the sheer extent of the damage following the explosion.



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Key Success Factors

- ✓ Confrontation prevention
- ✓ Quicker & just handling of incidents, insurance matters and complaints
- ✓ Less aggression by members of the public towards users
- ✓ Highlight training requirements
- ✓ Evaluate protocols
- ✓ Improve best work practices

Interested?

If you think that VideoBadge can help your company in any way then please feel free to give us a call on:

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or alternatively send an email to:

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