

Naperville Police Department

Securely managing digital evidence in the cloud



Name

Naperville Police Department

Industries

Law Enforcement

Location

Naperville, Illinois, USA

Products

Security Center, Genetec Clearance



Naperville Police Department speeds up investigations and strengthens community collaboration using Genetec Clearance

Naperville is a bustling city, situated about 28 miles west of Chicago in the United States. Just under 150,000 people call Naperville home, making it the fourth largest city in Illinois. With highly rated public schools, a pleasant suburban feel, and an extensive parks and forest network, the city has become known as a great place to raise a family in America. Living in a community with a good sense of safety and well-being is also part of the appeal. That's why the Naperville Police Department (PD) works around the clock to always keep residents, visitors, and businesses protected.

The challenges of keeping video evidence on disks

At the Naperville PD, the Investigations Division is responsible for investigating crime and implementing community programs. When a crime occurs in the city, the team begins the process by collecting evidence, following up on leads, and conducting interviews to close cases as quickly as possible. Having video cameras recording each interrogation helps to build strong cases and supports prosecution by the State Attorney's Office (SAO) down the line.

Like many police departments, the Naperville PD had been using an old, legacy video recording system in their interrogation rooms.

Before and after interviews, an officer would have to manually start and stop the video recording. Multiple copies would then be saved on disks and submitted to the Evidence and Property Section for long-term storage. When a case involved many different interviews, investigators spent a lot of time manually managing that digital evidence.

Matt Egan, Commander of the Investigations Division at Naperville PD, shared how their experience evolved: "There were a lot of hours spent recording interviews, burning copies onto CDs, and submitting those disks into evidence. If we needed to retrieve the CDs to review the interrogations, we'd have to submit a request to the Property and Evidence team. Sometimes there could be delays because authorized individuals from our Property and Evidence Section are not always available on weekends."

Jason Zbrozek, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division at Naperville PD continued: "We wanted to get away from CDs for storage. We were concerned about the security of digital evidence because disks and thumb drives can be copied or misplaced. We were upgrading our six interrogation rooms and needed a modern, efficient, and secure way to manage our digital evidence. We examined numerous products and found Genetec Clearance™ to be the right fit for our price range at the time.

Strong data security and cloud storage were also big factors in selecting Clearance.”

Genetec Clearance is a digital evidence management system that makes it easier to securely collect, store, and share digital evidence. As a cloud-based system, police departments can get Clearance up and running quickly, access files from anywhere using an internet browser, and keep costs within budget through an affordable subscription payment.

Streamlining digital evidence management with Genetec Clearance

Today, the Investigations Division at Naperville PD are using Genetec Security Center to manage video from all their interrogation rooms. When an interview is about to start, the investigator flips a switch within the interrogation room and the video recording begins automatically. Upon completion, the video is exported into a Genetec Clearance case file, in a few clicks.

Keeping interview recordings secure is straightforward with Clearance. Specific user permissions are assigned to officers and detectives who are actively involved in the case and need access to recordings. Mostly, they are given the proper rights to view and share video files with other authorized users within the Naperville PD or the SAO. They can also tag recordings with keywords to quickly find evidence.

“We have found that the retrieval and sharing of evidence are very easy within Clearance. When we search using the case number, we’ll immediately see all the interview recordings that are available to review. We’ve also been very happy with the data security features within Clearance,” explained Deputy Chief Zbrozek.

Since implementing Clearance, investigators have been working more efficiently on casework. Not only can detectives collaborate with ease, but they can access the files at any time. All user interactions within Clearance are automatically tracked. At any point, a digital audit trail can prove that the proper chain of custody for the evidence was maintained.

“Clearance has given our detectives more time to work on other important investigative tasks. If we have a few detectives working on a case and they’ve conducted many different interviews, as soon as we upload them into Clearance, everyone has access to the evidence. Since Clearance is very user-friendly, our detectives and officers save time and energy, so our investigations run more efficiently,” added Commander Egan.

Capturing evidence from the field

When Naperville PD detectives are hot on a case, they’re often out in the field. Now, when they need to record an interrogation outside of the precinct, they can use the Genetec Clearance mobile app on their phone to easily collect and store the evidence. They simply record the interview and then upload it to the case file in Clearance when they’re done.



“Almost all the detectives have the Clearance mobile app on their phones so they can record interviews while in the field. That’s one of the top benefits of Clearance. The digital evidence management system not only offers us secure cloud storage and easy retrieval and sharing of evidence, but the mobile app simplifies evidence recovery in the field,” said Deputy Chief Zbrozek.

Modernizing community engagement with the Clearance camera registry

Implementing Genetec Clearance has led to other big community initiatives. Naperville PD has officially launched a Community Camera Registration Program. Businesses and residents can now voluntarily enroll in the program, sharing the number and location of video cameras that they own. These are plotted on a map within Clearance, making it easy for detectives to quickly locate sources of video evidence within a certain vicinity after a crime occurs.

Using Clearance, they can email camera owners and request that they share a select video. The user simply clicks on a link and securely uploads the video via a web-based portal. Once complete, the detective will be notified, and they can quickly log in to Clearance to view the evidence, without ever leaving the precinct.

“I can see definite labor and time savings with the Clearance camera registry feature. Canvassing neighborhoods, especially during major cases is a long process that sometimes must be repeated several times. The ability to ask for any surveillance video from residents and businesses without having to drive to the location will save us hours of work,” said Deputy Chief Zbrozek.

While the program is still in its infancy, Naperville PD has been able to register dozens of businesses to date. These are mostly residential participants, but local businesses are also showing interest in the program. From the start, Naperville city officials, the public relations team, and business alliances were fully supportive of the initiative, and they’re all still working hard to push the message out to the broader community.

According to Jim Pacetti, Crime Prevention Specialist at Naperville PD, “Many businesses that I spoke with are interested in joining the camera registration program. We don’t have control of their cameras, but we can know where the cameras are located and submit a request for video footage if needed. They can then look through their video recordings and send us whatever they have, and they can do it on their own time without disrupting business operations. It’s just a smoother, more convenient process for everyone involved.”

Moving ahead with cloud-based evidence management

In the future, Naperville PD might consider expanding the use of Clearance. There’s a possibility to pull other sources of evidence into the cloud-based system, such as their body-worn video. They can also connect the evidence management system to their other public safety systems. This can be done with their record management system (RMS) to further consolidate case-related information within one easy-to-use application.

For now, it’s full steam ahead for the camera registry program as well as getting more officers trained to use Clearance. “We’re using Clearance to record about three to five interviews every day. But this trend has been increasing due to the best evidence rule, so our State Attorney’s Office is requesting that more interviews be recorded. Clearance has helped us fulfill this increased demand, and the community registry program strengthens our investigative efforts. Anything we can do to connect with the community and save time for our officers and detectives, is beneficial to our mission to protect the people and businesses of Naperville,” concluded Deputy Chief Zbrozek.



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