Genetec™

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk

Iconic amusement park keeps thrill-seekers safe with unified security

Industry
Sports, Entertainment, Venues

Location
Santa Cruz, California, United States

Products
Security Center, Omnicast, Synergis

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk ramps up response efficiency using video and access control monitoring within Security Center

The Santa Cruz Seaside Company operates numerous hospitality and leisure businesses in California, United States. One of them is the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk amusement park which has been making people laugh and scream since 1907. Touted the "Coney Island of the West", the seaside park features about 40 rides, 30 restaurants, 15 retail shops, arcades, miniature golf, bowling, and conference and banquet facilities.

As an admission-free park, guests can enter through multiple entrances including directly from the beach to buy food, purchase ride tickets, or simply walk around and enjoy the surroundings. Unlike gated parks which typically have a main security checkpoint, the park's security team must be hyper-vigilant in order to spot potential security incidents before they can develop. Security operators constantly monitor video cameras and work directly with field officers via radio to handle any security or guest relations issues.

Tackling the inefficiencies of aging security infrastructure

While video surveillance technology helped the security teams watch over the large park, aging equipment began compromising their efficiency. For instance, video servers would lock up and crash, causing operators to lose sight of certain areas of the boardwalk for periods of time. They kept the system working with various fixes, but when repair costs kept climbing, management knew it was time for an upgrade.

As the search for a new video management system began, the team prioritized openness, reliability, and a vendor's reputation in the market. They also kept one thing in mind—their aging access control system would soon need replacing too.

Making the move to unified security

After narrowing the decision down to two solutions, the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk team chose the Genetec Security Center platform because of its unique ability to unify video surveillance,

access control, and other systems. The flexibility of the platform was a key selling point and enabled them to choose their preferred cameras and door hardware.

Today, their team uses the Security Center platform to manage over 400 cameras and 220 doors across the entire amusement park. With information and intuitive tools available in one interface, the team at Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk is more effective than ever before.

From one single interface, operators actively monitor cameras and doors, respond to alarms, handle investigations, and export video evidence. This ensures that every security incident is effectively resolved without having to switch applications.

Working faster with a unified security view

"Like any busy amusement park, our guests sometimes become separated from their groups. When this happens, we are now able to use the Security Center Omnicast™ video surveillance system, along with assistance from our field officers, to quickly reunite guests with their parties," said Will Graham, Security Technology Administrator at Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. "There's almost a competitive nature at play between our field officers who are searching on foot and our camera operators who are reviewing video; everyone works hard to find the missing item or person first. Thankfully, all we need is a quick description and general area of the last known location and we can locate people in seconds."

Investigations have also been expedited thanks to the platform's unified view. In the past, investigators would run through a series of steps when looking into reports of theft or vandalism. These steps included retrieving access control logs and searching through video in separate systems, and then trying to match the information to identify a suspect.

"In some cases, we would ask ourselves: 'Is the cost of that stolen or vandalized item worth the time we're going to spend investigating?' Sometimes, the answer was no. Using the Security Center platform, all door events are linked to video which means our team can quickly gather the information needed and solve cases faster", explained Will Graham.

Automating alarms to keep operators informed

No matter what comes up, the security team can quickly handle potential threats using Security Center. If motion is detected near a perimeter after park closing hours, the platform will trigger an alarm and display live video and a 10-second replay of the event on an operator's monitor.

"Retrieving video to see what triggered an alarm used to take us between 15-30 seconds. By then, a trespasser could be long gone. Now, our operators get an instant view of the event as it's unfolding. So before sending an officer to check on the area, they can quickly identify if it's an actual threat or a false alarm," said Graham.

Safety procedures have been improved as well. When certain fire alarms were triggered in the past, the external alarm monitoring service would immediately alert the local fire department who would reach the park within minutes. The problem was that the

park's security teams didn't have direct visibility on the fire panels and would only be notified upon or after the firefighters' arrival, causing delays and confusion.

By linking the fire alarm outputs to the Security Center Synergis™ access control system, operators now receive instant notifications when smoke is detected. This gives them a head start to retrieve video through the Omnicast system to verify an alarms authenticity. When firefighters do arrive, an officer can be waiting to brief them on the latest developments and escort them to the location, adhering to city codes and policies.

Using access control to boost customer service

Taking advantage of the security platform's innate flexibility, Graham and his team have found a way to deter employees from using guest parking during the busiest months of the year.

Typically, an employee will scan their access control card at the entrance of the employee lot, which prompts a barrier gate to open. At the end of their shift, they scan their card again to leave from any one of three main exit gates that are shared between employees and guests.

During the busier months, however, employees are prohibited from using this employee lot at certain times of the day to free up spots for more guests. While the employee entrance gate is disabled, the shared exit still works to allow guests and exempt employees to leave.

With their older access control system, some employees figured out that they could go directly to guest lots, pull a parking ticket which prompted the barrier gate to open, park all day, and then scan their access control card at one of the shared exits to leave. The security team had little visibility over who might have been doing this and investigating each occurrence was very time-consuming.

"Using the Synergis system, we set up a rule that says if an employee has not scanned their access control card upon entering the gated employee lot, then they are not permitted to leave from any main exit. If attempted, the event gets flagged in the system and they are either forced to pay for parking or must use the intercom to explain their story to parking staff. Now, we're able to see who the culprits are and address the issue with them to free up spots for our guests," said Graham.

Managing cardholders with ease

The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk maintains a year-round workforce of around 300 full-time employees and concessionaires, as well as 2,000 part-time and seasonal employees. Using the Synergis access control system, managing cardholders has become much easier.

Graham and his team have set up different door schedules and rules and created over 200 cardholder groups with unique access privileges that accommodate various roles and responsibilities. Each cardholder is assigned to one or more groups, ensuring that staff can easily move around buildings while the park remains secure.

One of these groups includes supervising officers from the Santa Cruz Police Department. Their credentials allow them to access parking lots, as well as an onsite holding cell that Boardwalk security will use to detain rowdy or intoxicated individuals.

The Human Resources (HR) department can also manage employee credentials using the Security Center platform. When an employee leaves or is terminated, they can quickly deactivate the access card. They can also retrieve video to handle preliminary investigations of disputes between employees.

Giving other departments eyes on operations

Sharing system access has been a big advantage for Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. Beyond two main security control rooms that are used by the investigations and security teams, 10 remote security desks have been set up for other departments.

For example, the food services department uses the security platform to check-in on staff and handle initial employee investigations if they suspect something is amiss. The loss prevention team primarily uses the video system to audit employees who are short or over on cash registers at the end of their shifts. They also take over full-scale investigations after other departments' preliminary searches reveal criminal intent.

The parking staff office actively monitors parking lot cameras to ensure guests have a smooth parking experience. According to Graham, "They use the Omnicast video system to monitor the number of cars entering our parking facilities. So, if they see that one lot is filling up, they will advise an attendant to open another one."

Enhancing the platform with Genetec Advantage services

The next step for the Santa Cruz Boardwalk security team is to install new door hardware to complete the access control migration. Graham and his team want to keep working on optimizing the platform, implementing new features, and adding customizations to simplify and speed up tasks for all departments.

As the team continues to enhance its security platform, the Genetec Advantage maintenance package gives them peace of mind. According to Graham, "I love that I can call the Genetec support group and immediately get help. There have been a few instances where I couldn't figure out how to troubleshoot an issue, and the support team was quickly able to walk me through how to resolve the problem. It's nice to rely on experts for tips or adjustments that ensure the highest performance of our system."

Graham also browses the Genetec technical assistance portal from time to time. "I've referenced at least 15 articles that have helped me in some way or other. From known issues to common fixes and other tips, the knowledge base has been very helpful any time I need information," continued Graham.

A future full of confidence

"Using Security Center has definitely heightened our response efficiency at Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. Everything from video surveillance and access control to alarm management has been consolidated into one solution— it's just a better, more effective way to work. And we're confident that with this unified platform, we'll be keeping our guests happy and safe well into the future," concluded Graham.

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