

Better than watching *CSI*

Police recommend construction security system

By Brian Martin

Watching the Sonitrol security system being demonstrated isn't quite the same as watching *CSI*. It's better. The difference is that Sonitrol has real cops and real robbers.

Sonitrol, which has earned the description "state-of-the-art" in the security world, is ideally suited for construction sites.

It is quite different from its competitors. **Joe Wilson**, president and CEO of **Sonitrol Canada** says the other firms all use what he calls "pull technology." Sonitrol uses "push technology." It is proprietary technology and only Sonitrol has the rights to it.

With the traditional pull technology, when an alarm is triggered it is necessary for a security company to pull up existing video tape and try to see what has already happened. With push technology Sonitrol goes live to the site and can see and hear an event as it is unfolding. Sonitrol's technology involves infrared video surveillance cameras along with heat and motion sensors.

It is so effective, Sonitrol is able to give audio instructions to the police as they arrive at the site, directing them straight



Joe Wilson, CEO of Sonitrol, displays the equipment that allows his company to watch construction sites live and communicate with police as they respond to break-ins

to where the cameras show the criminal is hiding.

Most police departments no longer respond to burglar alarms that haven't been verified. They will react immediately to a Sonitrol alarm, however, since by its very nature it is a verified break-in. On average, some 98% of all burglary alarms are false. Sonitrol's rate

is around 3%, Wilson says. All police forces in the Lower Mainland will respond to a Sonitrol alarm.

There are two general types of criminals who bedevil construction sites, Wilson points out. "There are the scavengers who are looking to get anything they can take to a recycler for a quick return. They'll take any-

thing from extension cords to empty water bottles. They're a real pain in the butt – they actually do more damage through vandalism than they could ever steal.

"The second type is the professional criminal and he is coming to steal generators along with other expensive items such as skid-steer tractors and tools."

Normally, insurance companies, says Wilson, will insist a construction company have a watchman on duty. Now, he says, many of them are insisting on a watchman "or" a Sonitrol security system. In addition, some of them will give a reduced rate if a project is protected by Sonitrol. A watchman, who may or may not stay awake, costs about \$10,000 per month.

The number of cameras required depends, of course, on the site. A typical site will likely need 12 cameras. Including installation and all necessary equipment, it will cost around \$34,000 – about the price of a watchman for about three and a half months. Later the system can be moved to the contractor's next job. Monitoring charges run between \$500 and \$1,000 per month. Lease and rental arrangements are also available.

At a standard construction site, Sonitrol will install cameras mounted on poles around the perimeter of a project. To protect a marshalling yard being used, for example, for road building equipment, it will install a pole in the centre of the yard with cameras shooting in all directions. Audio surveillance can also be part of the package – allowing Sonitrol to hear exactly what the break-in artists are saying. The company can also place an audio system in areas not covered by the cameras – such as site offices away from the main construction or up on scaffolding.

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What if the bad guys simply cut the wires and disable the system? That is not a huge problem, says Wilson. "If it's cut there is an alarm. We supervise the wires."

Sonitrol is more than just a security system. Because it is live, it acts as a contractor's "eye on the project." If you want to see how a concrete pour is going, for example, you need simply take a look at a video monitor. There's no need to

waste an hour driving across town. In addition, the system provides a video record should one be needed later to settle a dispute or solve a problem.

Sonitrol has no end of recommendations from leading construction firms such **Stuart Olson**, **Ledcor** and **Guillevin International**.

Guillevin, electrical contractors located in Burnaby, say it complained to the **RCMP** that its branches across Western Canada were having regular break-ins. Its conventional systems were not catching them. The **RCMP** recommended Sonitrol.

Ledcor Construction is building Metro Tower III in Burnaby and it has used Sonitrol there for more than a year. In a letter to Sonitrol, **Mark Lopton** of Ledcor said: "We are quite surprised that we have not experienced any vandalism or break-ins to the construction site during this time. ... Last night we had a thief gain entry to our site at 1:30 a.m. Your monitoring staff detected him as he breached the compound and dispatched Burnaby RCMP who immediately responded with a K-9 team and apprehended the thief before he could cause any damage."

As they say, "nothing succeeds like success." You need proof? Sonitrol Canada from a head office in Surrey is adding \$300,000 per month in new business from one end of the nation to the other. ♦