

# Emerging Trends

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## More Than Just a Security System

Video surveillance extends its reach beyond security

Restaurant security systems offer protection for a variety of risks, including theft, burglary, criminal damage, employee misconduct and fire. I had a great discussion with Michael Vezina, Senior Vice President of Life Safety Engineered Systems, about current and future trends within the security industry. He indicated several areas of future growth with CCTVs and revealed that internal theft-deterrence technology is making great strides.

## Internal Theft

The National Restaurant Association notes that up to 75 percent of bar and restaurant employees steal from their employers. To minimize internal theft, it is becoming common practice to video monitor walk-in coolers and freezers while the doors are open. Dry storage rooms are also being surveilled. Of course, the bar area has long been covered for possible internal theft and robbery incidents. Camera systems can also tie into point-of-sale (POS) systems, enabling video recordings to assist with fraud detection by tracking suspicious activities, such as irregular transactions.

## Fire Protection

Restaurant fire alarms activate when the fusible links are broken in the cooking hood's fire protection system (Ansul), when the sprinkler system is triggered, when any automatic fire detection devices (e.g., smoke, heat and duct detectors) go off or when a manual pull station is used. Building codes continue to evolve and require restaurateurs to ensure compliance across their portfolio. For instance, some jurisdictions now require carbon-monoxide detection in new and existing buildings.

## CCTVs

CCTVs, or closed circuit televisions, have long been used to deter criminal acts in or around a restaurant. Just having cameras visible on exterior entrances, parking lots and sidewalks goes a long way in deterrence. Most criminals will move on to an easier target once they notice the cameras.

According to Vezina, the biggest emerging trend in the industry is the use of video surveillance systems in non-security functions. Improved image quality (far beyond HD), digitization (switching from analog to digital IP cameras) and reduced costs have created an environment where live or recorded video can assist restaurants with operations, food preparation, risk management and overall brand protection. Corporate chefs and other concept product developers can tap into a live or recorded CCTV feed to monitor food prep and offer real-time adjustments. They, along with regional operations staff, can also monitor the entire cooking process from prep to cook to delivery to ensure product quality. The best part is the footage can be viewed on any smartphone.

CCTV cameras also can provide valuable slip-and-fall video evidence for litigation matters. It is now a best practice to monitor exterior areas, such as parking lots, sidewalks and entrances, along with dining rooms, hallways, self-serve beverage station, and condiment and service counters. With the cost of legal matters skyrocketing, it makes economic sense to purchase a system with enough cameras to cover all these areas. Avoiding or winning one slip-and-fall case or criminal incident thanks to video evidence can literally pay for dozens of CCTV systems.

CCTV technology also can improve operations in the drive-through area and at registers. Video software can track car and customer queue time. Data can lead to new methods to shorten the time it takes for customers to order and receive their food. The data can be compiled over time to determine progress and adherence to corporate policies. Video software can also provide heat maps, showing traffic patterns of customers within the restaurant, which can be used to optimize layout configurations.

### Moving Beyond Security

Cameras are everywhere. Everyone has a smartphone that can take high-quality photos and videos of anything at any time. Restaurants will continue to seek ways to lower costs and increase customer satisfaction while protecting their brands. The use of CCTV cameras and the data they provide will continue to increase in our industry. RFMA has numerous security system vendors. Feel free to reach out to them to learn more.

Special thanks to Michael Vezina from Life Safety Engineered Systems for providing valuable input and insight for this article.

I'm always looking for feedback. Please feel free to contact me at (972) 805-0905, x-3, or email [jeff@rfmaonline.com](mailto:jeff@rfmaonline.com).

Dover and out.

