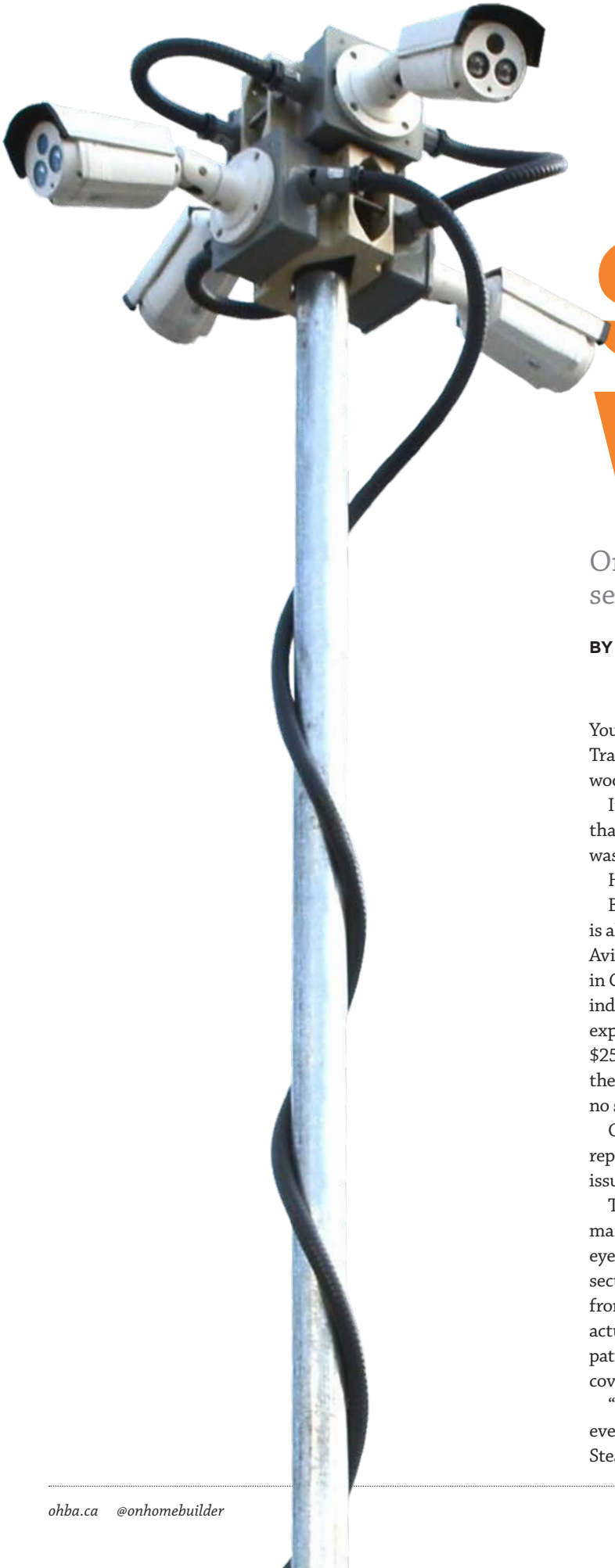


Smart Watch

Online video surveillance and security moves ahead of the curve

BY TED McINTYRE

You never know what might go missing from a construction site. Traditionally it's tools and appliances; oftentimes copper wire and wood. Sometimes heavy machinery.

In mid-March, crews with Barrie's D.W. Construction noticed that toilet paper and sanitizers had been stolen from its portable washrooms at its King Street and Bayview Drive jobsites.

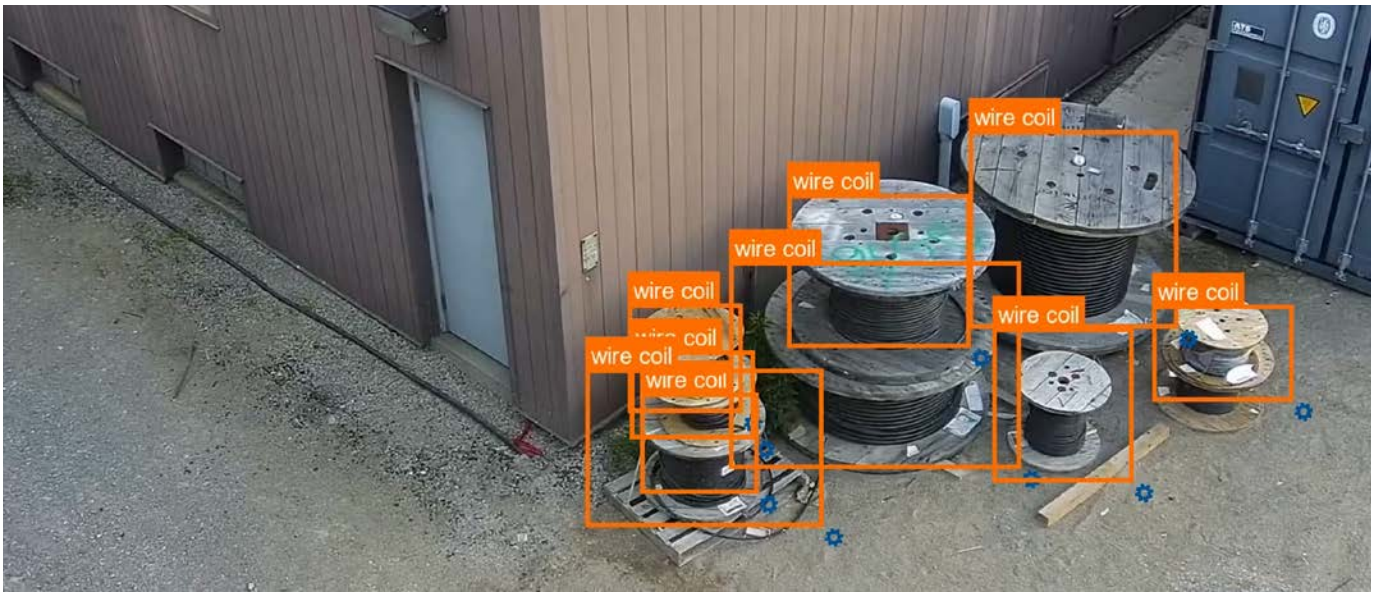
Hey, sometimes market demand changes a little.

But make no mistake—peddling stolen building supplies is always a thriving market. According to insurance provider Aviva Canada, $46 million in equipment is stolen annually in Canada—$15 to $20 million of that in Ontario alone. "An independent survey of 100 construction companies found they experienced an average of two thefts per year, with losses averaging $25,900 for licensed vehicles and $1,600 for tools," Aviva notes. "In the U.S., 70% of thefts are from worksites that have inadequate or no security. Only 25% of all stolen equipment is ever recovered."

Of course, it's not simply the cost of replacing stolen goods and repairing damaged property, it's the time required to address the issues and the possible resulting delays in a project.

To prevent such crimes, builders, developers and property managers are increasingly turning to technology and the unblinking eye in the sky of video surveillance. While the very presence of a security guard might be more likely to dissuade would-be thieves from ever attempting a crime to begin with, a perpetrator has to actually first see the guard in order to be deterred. Further, manned patrols are also more costly (not including the associated insurance coverage in case of accident or negligence).

"Security guards provide a valuable service, but they can't be everywhere at once," explains Blake Mitchell, V.P. of Marketing for Stealth Monitoring. "To get 24/7 coverage, you'd need to hire a team





High-tech Caliber Communications logs everything from worker movement to open gates, with hi-res video that can monitor equipment and ID faces and licence plates in the dark.

of guards. On the other hand, a virtual guard, on average, costs 1/4 of that. And using remote video monitoring allows for cameras to view multiple parts of the site at once from vantage points that may be impossible for guards to access.

"It also eliminates the guesswork (afterward)," Mitchell says. "Remote video can provide an accurate portrayal that is sometimes missing from human recollection. And unlike a typical security guard, the video service has an entire team that can monitor your cameras. Video cameras don't need breaks or sleep."

But it's the ability of a surveillance system to actively communicate with trespassers that is pivotal, Mitchell adds. "Live voice-down audio deterrents are just as effective in repelling intruders as security guards are. Subjects often flee before they cause damage, loss or liability."

Stoney Creek's rapidly expanding Caliber Communications has been front and centre in terms of technological leaps in the past two years. The first in Canada to be certified by international safety/security evaluator UL for its live video monitoring centre, Caliber has fully engineered and developed a CSA-approved modular unit and an innovative communications platform that operate through a cellular infrastructure.

Although builders rarely have internet lines available for several months on a new site, "with our cellular platform, our units can be installed absolutely anywhere across the country since we don't have to worry about pre-wired internet," explains Caliber's Marketing Coordinator Antonio Neglia. "So we only require power. And where there's no power, we use solar kits."

And speed kills in this industry, Neglia notes. "Typically with the hard-wired internet on site, you only have limited speeds of 1.5 to 3 MB per second. How many times do you watch the TV news and when they try to zoom in on a security camera image, it looks like a bunch of pixels. But we reach speeds of 50 MB on average. That means very high-res images

and video that can be streamed to our monitoring centre. We like to say, 'For everything we do, we want it to be court-quality evidence.' Because if you can't use it in court, well what kind of a result is that if you're in the security business? And we can supply it with date and time stamps and images of the person's vehicle and plate."

Caliber has also developed a proprietary system for two-way communication with individuals on site. "For example, if you're on a builder's site after hours, and it's evident you're there suspiciously and there's a high probably of crime about to be committed, we can say, 'Hey you in the black hat—this site is being monitored by Caliber Communications. Please leave the site immediately or we will dispatch police,'" Neglia explains.

Caliber has also developed a security reporting platform (syncroReports) that "is a game-changer," Neglia says. "Typically with security monitoring, the company will set up cameras and give you a report saying, 'All clear,' or 'This happened.' Sometimes it's accurate, but oftentimes you don't get the whole story, and there's no data to correlate to any of your staff, project manager or shareholders. People want to know what they're paying for and want to see results. Upon logging into syncroReports, you're met with an overall dashboard, with metrics that show number of deterrences made, police calls made (incidents), tracked licence plates, amount of log reports, active investigations and live camera views. We'll scan through the site and take photos around the site and identify such things as gates left open, workers showing up on site. They don't pertain to a crime at all, but they generate meaningful content."

There's also a health and safety monitoring element, including observing people who aren't wearing PPE or those who are maybe breaking health and safety codes. So we're also trying to prevent injury and loss of life."

MAKING AN ENTRANCE

Technology is also now on full display when it comes to condo access—and that display is as convenient as your cellphone. Founded by a pair of ex-Apple employees (which might explain the product's simple but elegant and intuitive design), Latch Smart Access provides residents and building managers with access to every door of



INSIDE THE PANIC ROOM

Ottawa firm is busy designing the ultimate safe space

The current pandemic reminds us that there is no greater responsibility than to protect one's family in times of strife. But threats can come in many forms.

"Even before COVID-19, we saw an uptick in panic-room interest. All of our new homes have a panic room option," says John Liptak, president/CEO of Ottawa's OakWood, noting that up to 20% of the company's new custom homes now include such ultra-secure facilities. "And it wasn't motivated by severe weather events in Ottawa; it was home invasion. A panic room is like an insurance policy—something you get for maximum peace of mind that you hope you'll never use. We expect a higher demand in the future."

OakWood Panic Rooms is a specialized design and build service within the company that harnesses key innovations in energy, technology and security to create high-quality, ultra-secure spaces for family members or employees during any emergency. And forget bunkers or holes in the ground—these can be concealed, luxury safe rooms and mini-fortresses.

"Simple, impregnable, short-term-emergency safe rooms start at $10,000," Liptak says. "But we've built complex underground bunkers for $2 million—fully appointed, net-zero facilities. They can be designed to meet the most stringent emergency and threat protection requirements, including natural disasters, bioterrorism, bomb attacks—even nuclear war! And design plans are reviewed by specialized professionals with top security clearance."

Secure electricity is also vital, as are washrooms and a water supply, Liptak says. "And surveillance is a must, so you can see what's going on outside."

OakWood can create a panic room by converting an existing space such as a den, walk-in closet or storage area, or with a custom addition. But the most cost-effective and efficient way is during new construction, "since all framing, concrete, mechanical, etc. can be planned into the work, and since a hidden room is easier to include in the design," explains Liptak, whose company's years of experience includes work for military and embassy clients.

And who are OakWood's go-to panic-room suppliers? "If we told you, we would have to hurt you," Liptak quips (we think).



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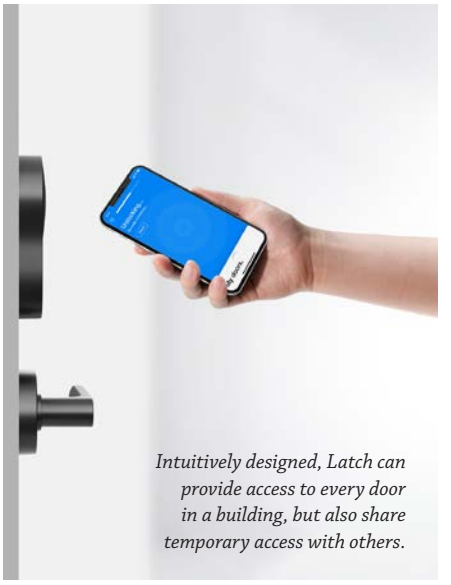


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Intuitively designed, Latch can provide access to every door in a building, but also share temporary access with others.

the building, from front entrance to base building to unit entry.

With Latch, residents can use an app, keycard or code to unlock their doors and share temporary access with visitors and service providers. For building managers, a single web-based platform makes it easy to let the right people in, handle lockouts and oversee staff from anywhere.

Last November, Latch announced plans for expanded app functionality and partnerships with third-party smart-device makers like Sonos and ecobee. It indicates a market opportunity where access and smart home technology can merge seamlessly into one unique platform, with residents able to monitor and control all the smart home devices in their unit, while building managers gain a holistic view of all the devices installed in their building, adding operational efficiencies.

And in a world where smart devices continue to grow and capture personal information, Latch has carefully designed its products—from access history to smart-home device data—to keep residents' privacy secure.

While demand in the U.S. continues to grow, with one in 10 new apartments being built with Latch, the opportunity is equally ripe in Canada. Last December, Latch announced its official expansion into the Canadian market.

"We're incredibly excited about our plans," says Latch Chief Operating Officer Ali Hussein. "We're re-imagining the way buildings, communities and people interact." **OHB**