



January 2020 | Case Study | Backeye®360 camera

Portland Fire Department fits 360-degree Cameras to its Engines.

Millions of people in the US rely on the help of the emergency services with an estimated 1.7 million calls made to 911 each year. For those responding to these calls, arriving quickly and safely at their destinations is essential. One fire department in Portland, Indiana has recently enhanced the safety of its vehicles by installing technology that will eliminate driver blind spots and help prevent collisions.

Founded in the 1880s, the Portland Fire Department is a combination department that currently employs nine full-time personnel and 24 part-time paid, on-call firefighters. It provides fire protection to an area of over 120 square miles, including the City of Portland, Wayne Township, and parts of Greene, Jefferson and Pike Townships.

Its focus is on providing the highest quality services to the community, including fire suppression, basic life support, non-transport EMS, auto extrication, rescue and special operations, hazardous materials response at operations level, fire code enforcement, and

fire investigations. It also provides fire safety programs to local schools and conducts group tours of its fire station.

For the emergency services operating fire engines, trucks, tankers and utility vehicles, minimizing and eliminating the risks from incidents on the road and at emergency scenes is a vitally important concern.

In the US, fire truck incidents are the second leading cause of on-the-job deaths for firefighters, with more than 30,000 collisions causing over 50 deaths. Research has shown that incidents and collisions are most likely to occur at slower speeds, due to two core issues – limited visibility and blind spots on reversing or maneuvering vehicles.

All round vehicle visibility has been proven to reduce collisions and improve safety considerably. While mirrors have traditionally been used for detecting blind spots, they do not eliminate them completely. Research has also shown that in the time it takes to scan four mirrors, assess and then react to hazards, even at speeds of 3mph a vehicle could travel as far as 33 feet.

The Portland Fire Department, which is headed up by Fire Chief Mike Weitzel, recently took the decision to install safety technology from Brigade Electronics on its two front line engines to address the issue of blind spots, dramatically improve visibility for drivers and help to enhance training for its personnel.

Having worked with Brigade previously in 2010, Chief Weitzel felt confident in the company's expertise to supply the most appropriate systems for the department's needs. He said, "Safety is an extremely high priority for us so choosing a system that ensures our firefighters and the public are as protected as possible is essential. Brigade is a local company and we have worked with them before, so we knew they offer a great service and would be able to provide the right information and advice to ensure we fitted high quality safety systems that get the job done."

The Portland Fire Department chose Brigade's Backeye®360 camera monitor system for its two front line engines along with an additional monitor in the reverse of each vehicle so firefighters could still see around it when they were at the scene of an incident. The Backeye®360 provides a real-time surround view of the engine in a single image. This eliminates blind spots and saves the driver from having to process information from several monitors or mirrors in quick succession, making it much easier to spot and assess possible hazards, such as objects and people.

Discussing the installation of Brigade's system, Chief Weitzel continued, "The systems are extremely beneficial to us and work in a number of ways to improve safety and training. They aid us with investigations if incidents do occur and, because they have recording capabilities, it means we can review footage from incident scenes for training purposes. In our field of work the public doesn't always see our lights or hear our sirens so it's good to know we have the ability to review any incidents that may occur.

"These products have given our firefighters increased support both on the road and at the scene of an incident. The implementation of the Backeye®360 from Brigade Electronics will mean we can continue to serve the public in our community in the safest way possible."

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