



# **Cambridge City Council**

## **Guide for**

### **Domestic Users of CCTV**

**March 2011**

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## 1. Introduction.

This guide is intended for those who want to install a CCTV system in or around their own home as an aid to security. People who run businesses from their home should refer to the **Guide for Commercial Users of CCTV in small businesses**.

It has been written to give you guidance on best practice for the use of the system and to avoid operating a system, which is unable to deliver useable evidence if an incident, should occur on or to your property.

The guide is designed to be straightforward and aims to avoid too many technical terms or jargon.

Please read it and make sure that your system is operating to its best performance and that the pictures obtained are clear and suitable for the intended purpose.

**Please Note: If you are a Cambridge City Council tenant you MUST have written permission from the Council (City Homes) before you put up a camera. (See section 3)**

## 2. Do you need CCTV?

The first question to ask yourself is whether or not you need to install a CCTV camera(s). Is there a better or cheaper way to enhance the security of your property? Before you go ahead and purchase a CCTV system take some advice. If you have concerns about crime or anti-social behaviour talk to the local police Crime Reduction Officers (their contact details are at the end of this guide); they may be able to offer you a number of other solutions to your problems.

If the problems concern nuisance neighbours or anti-social behaviour -including 'hate crimes' and Racial Harassment talk to Cambridge City Council - City Homes or the Anti-Social Behaviour Section may be able to help. Their contact details are at the end of this guide.

### **3. Other Considerations**

If you install CCTV cameras consider where you are you going to put them? If you own the house then you do not need permission to put them up but if you are in rented accommodation you will need the written permission of your Landlord. You cannot put cameras up on other people's property without their consent; so again, you need their written permission. This will include public buildings, areas, trees, lampposts and other street furnishings. The use of any of these objects as a mounting point for cameras must be authorised by the responsible authority (see contacts below).

Ask if you need to include the cameras in your house insurance as an extra item or if it is already included. If a camera falls off its mounting and hits someone visiting your property you will need liability insurance.

You should site the cameras so that they only observe activity on your property. The cameras should not look out onto public space i.e. other people's gardens or into their houses. You must respect other people's rights to privacy. It would probably be a good idea to discuss your plans to install CCTV with your neighbours beforehand so that they are aware of what you intend doing and you can then discuss any concerns they may have before you incur any installation costs. Once the cameras have been installed, should your neighbours raise concerns about what you are watching, it is a good idea to invite them in to see the images to help ease their concerns.

### **4. What do you want your CCTV system to do?**

If you decide to install CCTV cameras you should consider what it is you want your system to do. You can then make sure that what you install will meet that purpose. It is wise to approach a few (minimum of three) reputable supplier/installers. Talk to them about what you want to do. A reputable company will be happy to visit you, advise you on suitable equipment and arrange a demonstration. Do not forget to discuss ongoing maintenance of the equipment with them. You also need to think about the following points before you purchase and install your system:-

Do you want to monitor a particular area i.e. your garden?

Do you want to detect movement?

Do you want the cameras to operate 24 hours a day. If you do you need to think about lighting.

Do you want to be able to recognise known people?

Do you want to be able to identify unknown persons i.e. criminals?

If you are not sure, please look at the photographs in the next section and decide what sort of picture you want. These pictures are of business premises but the principles are the same for domestic systems. They are illustrative only. A normal small fixed focus camera will give you a choice of image size dependent on the lens fitted and can be installed to give any one of the sizes of image shown.

If you wish to use your system to monitor an area like your garden you may need more than one camera or a camera with a 'fish eye' fixed lens.

**5. Quality of Images.**

Photographs 1 to 4 below show examples of poor quality pictures that are not usable in evidence.

Photograph 1 shows the outside of a licensed premises from a camera situated above and to the left of the main entry door. The problem with it is that the lens has not been cleaned since the camera was installed (some 4 years ago).

Camera lenses should be cleaned on a regular basis – at least every two months.



Photograph 1

Photograph 2 shows the inside of a licensed premises with a view across the room. The bar is to the left and windows in front of the camera. The licensee had installed the camera to identify those persons causing problems within the area of the bar some of whom were abusing his staff.

So, for example, if someone wanted to identify problems such as customers abusing staff they would need to put the camera behind the bar facing the customer so that a face can be clearly seen rather than in this example. They should try not to point the camera from a predominantly dark area towards a bright window as the camera's iris will close down to accept the brightest area and make the rest of the viewing area very dark.



Photograph 2

If photograph 3 is studied, the area across the screen marked by the line of crosses is distorted and would not give a usable image and again the picture is extremely dark which would make identification almost impossible.

x  
x  
x  
x

It is necessary to keep the camera maintained and adjusted correctly to give the brightest and clearest picture of your intended subject area. If location of the camera is added to the information displayed on screen make sure it is accurate.



Photograph 3

Photograph 4 shows a view of the inside of a premises capturing all persons entering the building. The camera is well sited to do this but the image is not usable as the camera is out of focus.

The quality of images needs checking on a regular basis to ensure that the pictures are in focus and clear. There is also a need to ensure that there is adequate well-sited lighting or that cameras with a low level light capability are used. Also the time and date should be clearly and accurately displayed on the images.



Photograph 4

Photographs 5 and 6 show examples of good quality evidential images, which would be usable in a police investigation or prosecution.

Photograph 5 shows the main entrance to a bank giving a clear view of all persons entering the counter area or using the automatic telling machine but positioned to maintain the privacy of the transactions on the ATM i.e. the use of the keyboard is hidden from the view of the camera.



Photograph 5

Photograph 6 shows the main transaction area of a bank giving a clear view of all customers standing at the counter, sitting in the waiting area or entering the room.



Photograph 6

## 6. Sizes of Images

Images captured on CCTV are used for four purposes. These are **Monitoring**, **Detection**, **Recognition** and **Identification**. The following four photographs give an example of the size of a person's image on a viewing monitor to achieve these purposes.

Photograph 7 shows a **Monitoring** size image. This type of picture is generally used to indicate that there is movement in a large area such as a car park. All it enables you to do is see that there is a person or vehicle moving within the area.



Photograph 7

Photograph 8 shows a **Detection** size image. An image of this size will enable you to see that a person is walking around within the area being viewed and will show some actions such as a fight or a brick being thrown. You will not see smaller details such as a car thief using a screwdriver as a door key for example. You will also not be able to tell with certainty even the sex of any subject.



Photograph 8

Photograph 9 shows an image used for **Recognition**. This size of image will give an idea of the sex of most Subjects. It will also give a little more detail of their actions for example that you can see the screwdriver used to attack a car door or someone throwing a brick.

Family members and friends of the subject may be able to recognise the person. Police Officers may be able to recognise a very well known criminal although it is doubtful that these images would be acceptable in a Court as proving a defendant's identity.



Photograph 9

Photograph 10 shows an image that could be used for **Identification** purposes. This is the size of image that gives good detail of actions by the person being viewed and provides a minimum size of image that will be acceptable by a Court as evidence of a person's identity.

If you are able to get in closer to photograph a person's face this would be even better but this will normally only be possible using a camera under professional operation. If you are using fixed cameras then any camera sited to look at a door or gate should have an image of this size and quality.



Photograph 10

## 7. Recording Equipment

There are several recording systems on the market at the moment but the two main types are analogue and digital.

Analogue systems record images from your camera(s) onto a video recorder. These video recorders can record in 3 hour, 12 hour, 24 hour or longer modes. Obviously the shorter the recording period the more often you will have to change the videotapes although the quality of picture will be better. Longer recordings (known as Lapsed Time Recording) use less tape but record in lapse time, which means that some frames from the image may be lost. The normal recording programme is 24-hour mode.

If you use an analogue system purchase a VHS system. This makes it easier for the police to collect the evidence and use it in court. Other types of analogue recording system such as SVHS require extra work to convert the images back to VHS format for use by the police.

If you wish to record using more than one camera i.e. up to 16, a matrix can be added which will enable recording with the extra cameras onto one videotape but it can be very expensive and highly unlikely to be necessary for the usual size domestic dwelling.

Digital recording works in the same way as analogue except that the images are recorded onto a computer hard disc.

If an incident occurs you may need to provide the police with the evidence. There are two main methods of doing this, the first is to have a system that will copy the image onto VHS videotape and the other is to have a system that will copy the image on to a Compact Disc. With the second option make sure there is an open protocol on the computer to enable the CD containing the evidence to be played on any police or court computer. If you do not have the ability to transfer the images onto a videotape or CD, the police could take away your computer hard drive, which would stop your ability to record images until you installed a new one.

The last thing to bear in mind is that your recording equipment should be placed in a secure area with restricted access. The reason for this is that if you suffer a break in one of the first things likely to be stolen is the computer or video recorder. This would mean you would lose any evidence you had gathered.

## **8. Control of your Images**

Although you will not be subject to normal CCTV legislation such as the Data Protection Act you are expected to use the equipment properly. If you mis-use the system or do not show consideration for your neighbours, you could be accused of anti-social behaviour or being a nuisance neighbour. So it is in your interest to site the cameras with consideration for others. You should follow the good practices shown below. This will also help the police and Crown Prosecution Service to make best use of your recordings as evidence.

You should have sufficient tapes or digital storage to record all incidents over a 7-day period.

All recordings should have the accurate time and date recorded on the images.

Each tape/disc casing should be indelibly marked with a unique identification number. The person producing the copy could mark the tape or CD with their initials, the media number and the date of production. So if David Robert Jones produced two copies of the media for the police on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011, they could mark the two tapes or discs as follows: DRJ/01/220611 and DRJ/02/220611.

All recordings should be kept for 7- days in a secure place.

Recordings of incidents will need to be downloaded onto VHS tapes or CD's so that the police officer or other enforcement agency investigating the case can seize them as evidence.

At the end of the 7 days tapes can be reused unless they are required as evidence.

Restrict the number of people allowed to view any images you record. The more people you show the images to the more you devalue the integrity of the evidence. So, if an incident occurs and you have recorded it stop the recording, remove the tape or copy the images onto a CD and place it in a secure area. Contact the enforcement agencies and when they arrive show them the images but do not show anyone else. Then let the enforcement agencies decide what they are going to do with the images.

A record should be kept of each tape/CD movement showing the number of the tape/CD, times, dates when it has been used and the names of the people who handled the tape/CD (an example is shown at appendix A). This record may be kept in an A4 notebook or as loose sheets. These records may be used as evidence in court.

Videotapes should only be used a maximum of 12 times and then they should be replaced. This is because of the strain tapes are under when recording in 12 or 24-hour mode. After 12 uses the tape is likely to break. All tapes and CD's should be wiped clean before disposal.

The images recorded should be maintained in a clear, usable condition and as best quality as possible. A simple way to do this is to make a reference recording when the system is first installed and keep this as a permanent comparison that can be referred to at any time. Use this to compare the quality of the recordings at least once per month. If there is deterioration in the quality of the image arrange for the equipment to be serviced.

Have a regular maintenance scheme that includes the cleaning of the tape heads and camera lenses and regular servicing of all the CCTV equipment.

## **9. Signage**

You should display signs at the entrances to your property and in the vicinity of the camera positions to inform people that you are operating a CCTV system. As well as warning people that CCTV is in use on your premises, the signs can also act as a deterrent (however, do not put the

signs up if you do not have CCTV cameras). The signs need to be large enough to be easily seen i.e. A4 size for pedestrian entrances and A3 size for vehicle entrances. Shown below is an example of a CCTV sign.



#### **10. 'Dummy' CCTV Cameras**

'Dummy' camera is a term used to describe CCTV cameras, which are erected to act as a deterrent only. They do not observe or record any images. Although these cameras are inexpensive to purchase, they are of little value in deterring or detecting crime. Criminals will quickly realise that they are dummy cameras and so their deterrent effect will be lost. It is recommended that if you are going to install a CCTV system be prepared to spend a bit more and get a fully functional system which will meet the advice set out in this document.

#### **11. More Advice – Useful Contacts**

Crime Reduction Officer  
Southern Division  
Cambridgeshire Constabulary  
Parkside Police Station  
Parkside  
Cambridge  
CB1 1JG

Telephone: 0845-456- 4564 and ask to be put through to one of the above at Parkside Police Station.

**For information about Council property, nuisance neighbours or request permission to put up a camera contact:**

City Homes (North)  
Cambridge City Council  
171 Arbury Road  
Cambridge  
CB4-2YD

Tel: 01223-458440

City Homes (South)  
Cambridge City Council  
89 Cherry Hinton Road  
Cambridge  
CB1-4BS

Tel: 0800-587-2031

**For issues regarding anti-social behaviour  
or hate crimes contact:**

The Anti-Social Behaviour Section  
Cambridge City Council  
Hobson House  
St Andrews St  
Cambridge  
CB1-2BY

Tel: 01223-457950

**For enquires regarding open spaces  
or trees contact:**

Parks and Open Spaces  
Cambridge City Council  
Hobson House  
St Andrews Street  
Cambridge  
CB1-2By

Tel: 01223-457546

**For advice on Lampposts contact:**

The Street Lighting Section  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Shire Hall, Castle Hill  
Cambridge, CB2-0AP

Tel: 01223-717111

**For other general advice on CCTV contact:**

The CCTV Manager  
Cambridge City Council  
The Guildhall  
Cambridge, CB2 3QJ

Telephone: 01223-457390

Or visit Cambridge City Councils website at [www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk) and type CCTV in the search box.



