

## Houston Transportation, Emergency Management Facility Utilizes LifeSize For Immediate Public Safety Decisions

During critical emergency situations, decision makers at Houston TranStar rely on LifeSize for face-to-face collaboration

### Organization

#### Houston TranStar, Houston, Texas, USA

Founded in 1993, Houston TranStar is the first agency in the United States to combine the critical functions of transportation and emergency management under one roof. Comprised of The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Harris County, the City of Houston and the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, the government agency aims to keep residents of the Greater Houston region informed of up-to-the-minute traffic challenges, as well as safe driving and evacuation options during natural or man-made disasters.

Committed to an innovative approach, Houston TranStar employs a number of modern technologies to monitor traffic, weather and emergency conditions for its over 4 million constituents including closed-circuit cameras at congested intersections and major highways, Doppler radar, road sensors and messaging signs. Because TxDOT owns thousands of miles of pavement in the Houston district, it is essential for employees to stay well-connected at all times and keep a close eye on traffic, emergency and security threats.



Houston TranStar supports residents through transportation and emergency management.



#### CHALLENGE

With more than 800 directional miles to cover, Houston TranStar leaders and employees needed a way to reduce travel expenses and enable face-to-face communication over a secure, interoperable communications system.



#### SOLUTION

LifeSize solutions were perfect for the agency's specific needs. Houston TranStar implemented LifeSize® Express 220, LifeSize® Room 220 and LifeSize® Desktop for internal and external HD video communication, as well as LifeSize® Transit™ for airtight security.



#### RESULTS

HD video technology allows employees to have genuine, lifelike contact during times of critical decision making. The management team is already looking for new ways to implement the technology in other areas of the agency.



## Challenge

Providing transportation and emergency services for the fourth largest city in the country is no easy task. Employees housed at TranStar must remain in constant communication at all times, especially at moments when it is critical to make prompt decisions to ensure public safety. Though the agency is technologically advanced in many of their processes, they were still relying on traditional telephone conversations and e-mail messages to convey pertinent, secure information. When face-to-face meetings were necessary, employees found themselves traveling hours to and from the seven counties for which the organization was responsible. Sometimes, it would take half a day to travel to a neighboring city with so much acreage in between.

The decision makers at Houston TranStar immediately began looking for solutions that would provide the real-time communication they desired, as well as the lifelike genuine human interaction that in-person meetings provided. The search began for a technology that could meet such specific needs.

### Houston TranStar's Key Requirements:

**Security:** Video calls must be encrypted and secure in order to conduct confidential meetings.

**Superior Quality:** The same lifelike experience as in-person collaboration.

**Bandwidth Performance:** Dependable, intuitive bandwidth performance at 1 Mbps.



**"HD video provides another dimension of interaction that no other form of communication can."**

- FRANCISCO SANCHEZ JR., PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER, HCOHSEM



## Solution

It wasn't long before the Houston TranStar network team was introduced to HD video conferencing. To them, this innovative technology was the perfect solution for the agency and enabled the kind of powerful collaboration they were seeking. In order to ensure that they made the most informed decision possible, they began testing various vendors' products.

"When we first experienced a demonstration with LifeSize, I was immediately impressed with the bandwidth capabilities," said Bobby Richards, network administrator for Houston TranStar. "Being able to have a sharp HD video call at 1 Mbps was remarkable."

In order to communicate between the four different agencies that comprised the facility, as well as outside organizations, Houston TranStar purchased a number of LifeSize HD endpoints including LifeSize Express 220, LifeSize Room 220 and LifeSize Desktop. Additionally, to ensure secure video calling, they purchased LifeSize Transit, a complete firewall and Network Address Translation (NAT) traversal solution that enables video calls within and across organizations.

"Because we play a regional role in emergency management with local Homeland Security agencies that use other third-party endpoints, it was essential that our HD video calls be interoperable, but at the same time, inaccessible to unauthorized parties. With LifeSize Transit, we can conduct a conference by utilizing a single port, rather than exposing the entire network," said Richards.





## Results

After the LifeSize implementation throughout Houston TranStar's headquarters and local county offices, reception has been overwhelmingly positive. Now, HD video conferencing serves as a vital tool for the day-to-day operations of the organization, as well as specialized uses.

"Not only do we use LifeSize for administrative meetings, we rely on it for immediate decisions when public safety is at risk," said Francisco Sanchez Jr., public information officer for Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HCOHSEM). "HD video provides another dimension of interaction that no other form of communication can."

Whether there is a weather emergency, such as icy roads or the threat of a hurricane, a serious highway accident or another danger to Houston-area residents, the agency knows that LifeSize can immediately connect relevant departments to determine a plan of action.

In the future, Houston TranStar would like to continue using LifeSize for additional uses included community involvement, outreach events and training.

With the help of LifeSize HD universal video collaboration, Houston TranStar can continue to maximize safety and mobility to help Houstonians move in the right direction.



Houston TranStar uses LifeSize HD video systems to communicate between its four agencies, as well as with external departments.



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