

Competitive Review



Overview –

WatchGuard is a fairly new company headquartered in Plano Texas. The DV-1 vehicle camera system was developed based on the use of direct DVD recording technology with the largest known installation based on a contract with the State of Texas. The DV-1 vehicle camera system was introduced in 2005.

The company was built on the strength of a Texas contract obtained while two state lawmakers were shareholders in the firm - a possible violation of state ethics laws as recently reported by the Seattle Post Intelligencer. Additional information is available at http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/national/1110ap_lawmaker_conflict.html.

The DV-1 digital in-car video system, records directly onto rewritable DVDs (with hard-drive redundancy) and comes in either the standard overhead version appropriate for most vehicles, or a two-piece modular version for vehicles that cannot accommodate overhead mounting. The DV-1 system records up to eight hours of video on a single, reusable DVD using MPEG-2 technology rated at 30 frames per second.

The benefits of direct DVD recording as compared to VHS tapes or removable hard drives are immediately apparent. What is not so apparent are some of the shortcomings of DVD recording in a vehicular environment. Notably, neither hard drives or DVD recorder/players were designed or intended for mobile use, primarily since they are based on mechanical, rather than solid state construction.

DVD's were designed for a stationary environment using MPEG-2 technology. Without getting technical, it can be simply said that there is the possibility of missing critical data through a number of critical flaws in a fixed frame video recording system. Additional info at http://2001newsarchive.broadcastengineering.com/ar/broadcasting_mpeg_secrets/. The best vehicular technology has proven to be the more efficient moving JPEG type.

There are operational considerations as well. Notably, information recorded on a DVD can be altered, a major problem when the use of the recorded data is to be use for courtroom evidence. In simple terms, a good defense attorney can have the evidence thrown out – not a good thing! Compact Flash cards offer a far more secure means of recording tamper proof recordings coupled with the benefits of a solid state vehicle recorder with no moving parts. That is why the majority of vehicle camera manufacturers use CF cards rather than DVD's.

Cost is another consideration. As a general rule, CF Card systems will typically provide cost savings of up to 20% over DVD systems. Additionally, the cameras are smaller and lighter. Lighter cameras and elimination of overhead operating consoles provide a higher level of compliance with NHTSA standards (in particular Standards 101, 111, and 118). Anything that can be done to reduce potential litigation arising from injuries resulting from in-cabin accessories is always a wise decision. More information is available at <http://falconinfo.blogspot.com/2008/09/selection-criteria-for-vehicle-camera.html>.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, there is the issue of functionality. Does the system perform the intended function? Do you have good low light recording capability? Does the rear camera provide only a view of the upper body? A review of comparative specifications and a demonstration under actual operating conditions is recommended. We invite a comparative evaluation between the offerings of Falcon Direct and any competitive product. We look forward to being of service.