



## Why Retailers are Connecting Personal Protection into their Security Programme

**W**ith theft, anti-social behaviour, and violence against retail staff at record levels, retailers are looking for new ways to protect employees and reduce shrinkage. Security providers are now expected to go well beyond the provision of officers and demonstrate an intelligence-led approach, with technology-enabled security plans that connect frontline staff and security officers in an integrated manner.

Historically security officers have been equipped with body-worn cameras. As well as acting as a deterrent, they are able to initiate the recording of an incident to help diffuse a situation and provide video evidence at a later date, if required.

Sadly, issues around violence and aggression have reached such levels that a significant number of retailers are going one step further and are equipping large numbers of frontline retail staff with personal protection devices. In addition to enabling colleagues to raise an alarm quickly and easily, these devices include the ability to video stream incidents to an in-store security operative or a remote monitoring station to provide a faster, more effective incident response.

Richard Moreton of leading retail security specialist, TSS, outlines the advantages of these new, sophisticated body-worn devices and how to maximise their effectiveness through full integration into an effective security operation.

### Personal Protection Devices

The latest innovative devices for frontline retail staff are far more than body-worn cameras. Instead, they combine the



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features and functionality traditionally associated with lone working devices with those of body-worn cameras. They can help to achieve an important impact on security but cannot be relied on in isolation. Crucially, they are designed to connect frontline staff, security officers, and remote security monitoring services in real time. In other words, they are a powerful tool to increase the effectiveness of an integrated security plan, when combined with proactive security personnel, whether on-site or remote.

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Frontline retail staff can be equipped with small and lightweight devices that are easy-to-use and have a number of features that go well beyond video recording. The most important function, in terms of frontline staff protection, is an emergency button that livestreams video, with location details, to connected security officers or supervisors in store, or to a remote security monitoring centre. This means that the security officers or supervisors, with their similar, but larger devices, have real-time information and visual of the incident taking place to aid immediate response and support. When video is livestreamed to the retailer's remote monitoring centre, it provides the monitoring team with the information they need to drive the best possible incident response, such as alerting another member of staff or requesting assistance from the emergency services.

## A Holistic Security Operation

However, to ensure the effectiveness of these personal protection devices, retailers must have a holistic security operation in place, with security officers who are proactive and ready to respond. We live in a world in which many alarms appear to be ignored, however, with the growth in violence against retail workers, retailers must ensure that they have the right personnel in place to ensure that emergency calls are acted on quickly, every time. The devices, when combined with connected and proactive security personnel, can take security response to the next level, providing the security team with the information they need to respond more quickly and more effectively.

The devices also have many additional features. For example, when it's not an emergency, but assistance is required, one touch of the screen can alert other team members that their help is needed, and the devices also have slip, trip, and fall detection that triggers an alert if an incident occurs.

In addition, the devices can incorporate other useful features, such as one-touch voice communication direct to other staff, simply by stating their name, or "team" for the whole team. This means security officers can issue audio alerts or issue information quickly to supplement video footage and empower a more effective response.

There is also the opportunity to use the devices to make further improvements to staff performance by configuring them to send additional non-security alerts from other in-store technology and even provide access to key policies and procedures to support them in their daily roles.

The new generation of devices record in high-definition video to capture detailed and clear footage, with audio recording to provide a complete record of events and interactions. GPS functionality tracks the location of the device and recorded events, and data is stored securely to prevent unauthorised access.

This next generation of device, when combined with proactive security officers, has potential to positively impact staff safety and mental health, as well as improving recruitment and staff retention.

This is because employees can see the direct response from the store security officers or from the remote monitoring centre, so they know they are better protected and supported. When part of an integrated security plan, the devices can help to deliver better communication, loss prevention, emergency management, and detailed incident reporting and compliance.



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Integrated into a simple online dashboard, they help achieve more effective incident reporting and eliminate the need for lengthy paperwork, so that incidents are documented promptly and accurately with cloud-based storage of video recordings. There is also the opportunity for stored videos to be used as educational resources, to assist staff training and continuous improvement initiatives.

While perhaps the most important benefit is the greater level of protection provided to staff, by delivering real-time incident information to the security team, fully integrated use of these new systems can deliver many further benefits to retailers. With intelligence key to helping to prevent future incidents, the efficient documentation and recording of incidents aids crime hub investigations, making it easier to identify offenders and trends and gather evidence.

The new generation of personal protection equipment for retail staff has the capability to help transform security outcomes in store. However, in order to achieve this, these devices must be fully integrated into the security operation, connecting the person working on the till or other area of the store to the in-store connected security officer or to the store's remote security monitoring centre. This integration, together with the deployment of skilled, technology literate personnel, is driving the next generation of connected retail security.

For further information, visit [www.totalsecurity.co.uk](http://www.totalsecurity.co.uk) ■

