

Prevention is better than cure

Video surveillance provides an excellent deterrent against intruders on solar farms. Just as the technology never switches off, neither does the research and production of the systems themselves, particularly when it's in such high demand.

Providing remote video monitoring for solar farms is a 24/7 operation so it's perhaps only fitting that the production of the monitoring systems themselves should be just as seamless.

The development of these systems requires a distinct level of expertise and innovation, so keeping the entire process from initial ideas phase through to final manufacture and even rental under one roof makes sense. This is a market that is already in demand and likely to become even more so in the future,

so it's a busy business, where any downtime is most often spent researching, developing and refining ideas to make such systems even better.

As the popularity of green energy has increased significantly in recent years, so solar farm security is becoming increasingly more important as time goes on. Often located in remote areas, where there are no passers-by that can spot unwanted guests or act as a deterrent, solar farm security camera towers with a good and clear

coverage over a widespread area are now quite commonly used. Monitoring these cameras is, of course, just as important as having them there at all and this is where the round-the-clock remote surveillance really comes into its own.

The growing demand for such surveillance systems for solar and wind farms has certainly been witnessed by Kooi, which in the last decade has assembled and configured over 2,300 remote video monitoring systems at its Netherlands headquarters. Here, everything is contained under one roof, with a research and development department, an own EN50518-certified alarm centre and production department all operating side by side. Anyone visiting the Drachten base will be met with row upon row of camera systems in front of the building, packaged up and ready to be sent off into the world, to play their part in making sure the risk of theft from and vandalism of solar parks is minimised.

All in the planning

Before they get here though, an awful lot of planning will have already taken place. All the systems are assembled and configured in the Production department without which the UFO (Unit For Observation) of Kooi would be nothing more than a frame with empty control boxes. The planning always needs to be on spot, day by day and week after week. Where necessary, adjustments are made by upscaling or downscaling the production capacity and these decisions are all ultimately in the hands of Production Planner Sido Kiestra. He not only takes care of the purchasing of the materials, he also makes



sure the work that has to be done is prepared, before passing the baton on to workshop manager Wieger Paulus and his team to assemble all the different systems ready for configuration.

While the company is now active in lots of sectors, it remains true to its roots. 'Kooi originally started out with the rental of camera units to secure windmill construction sites and securing solar parks is still an important industry for the company,' explains Sido.

'That's why we developed the UFO Medium. This type of UFO is specifically produced to secure solar parks. It has a detection angle up to 360 degrees, a detection length of 40 to 100 meters and needs a power supply.' The solar farm security cameras are connected to an Alarm Center that is manned by security specialists 24/7 and the observation units are designed to detect



movement, immediately sending a notification to the emergency room to keep solar farms safe and sound day and night, whatever the location.

Year-round productivity

The Production department produces new systems almost all year round, but in any productivity dips, staff are still kept busy, helping with maintenance and service. 'Customers who rent a UFO can trust on our reliable service and support. That is why 24 hours a day, seven days a week our people are active in making sure the systems work properly.'

And what about recent world events? How has the pandemic affected production levels? According to Sido, despite Covid-19 Kooi's fleet of camera systems grew. 'At the Production Department we did notice the consequences of the pandemic and the supply of parts from China is often faltering,' he admits. 'But at the same time we benefit from extra systems that we now rent out.'

Adapt to grow

So what does the future hold for this market and how important is it to keep that fluid relationship between research, development and production? It's yet to be seen whether demand remains as strong as it currently is, or whether it will peak and trough. That's why it pays to always be prepared.

'The fact that the Production department can quickly anticipate changing market demands is valuable,' comments Wieger. 'It saves stock, which saves space. However, when the demand for a specific product suddenly increases, production can quickly switch to a new mode and focus on that product.'

'Anticipation is absolutely the major strength of our department.'

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