

MATERIALS MANAGEMENT & DISTRIBUTION

CANADA'S TOTAL LOGISTICS MAGAZINE



Joe Wilson, Sonitrol.

LISTEN UP!

Playing on my reporter-issue, no frills tape recorder, the audio is almost unbearably loud. There's the cacophony of breaking glass, followed by urgent whispers, and more banging around. Then there's the distinct wail of a police siren.

This tape is a demo that Joe Wilson, Vice-President, Canadian operations for security firm Sonitrol, uses as a sales tool. The company's security systems, which are aimed squarely at warehouses and distribution centres, feature audio listening devices to monitor empty facilities. Sonitrol also provides video security, with cameras that watch over the building—in real time.

The small, plastic-encased listening devices, explain Wilson, "have a microphone inside, which is computer-calibrated to ignore the ambient noise of the building, which means boilers, compressors, and so forth. It learns the sounds of the building and when it's on, it just sits there dormant. When it hears a sound it thinks it shouldn't hear, then it dials in to us." "Us" is Sonitrol monitoring station, at its offices in Mississauga, Ontario. In a super-secure environment, pictured on our cover, operators monitor the alarm systems of 720 area customers. Client include such well-known companies as Toshiba, Home Depot, and both Labatt and Molson breweries. A London, England-based company, Sonitrol boasts over 100,000 clients worldwide, and says, to date, its systems have helped apprehend 127,000 lawbreakers across North America.

The advantage of the system, says Wilson, is it gives police verifiable proof that a robbery is actually being committed, because the audio tape can be fed live to police.

Video surveillance is a new and growing area for the company. Two systems are offered. This first is a low resolution picture, which simply identifies that people are at a site. This is being used in outdoor applications, says Wilson, such as the highway 407 construction site in suburban Toronto. The second is a more sophisticated, high-resolution video system. It is being used in several controlled, inside sites, such as interior cages that house particularly valuable or theft-prone items. This allows monitoring during operating hours, as well as when the building is empty.