

CASE STUDY



Spray Lakes - Cochrane, Alberta

In today's rapidly evolving wood processing industry, the implementation of real-time video monitoring via strategically positioned cameras is essential for ensuring machinery efficiency and safety. Spray Lakes Sawmills (SLS), a premier producer of softwood lumber products in Cochrane, Alberta, has fully integrated this technology into their operations. They have a strong track record of investing in modern, dependable equipment to enhance their production capabilities.

Operating three production lines, SLS has consistently modernized their facilities to remain industry leaders. In 2019, they introduced a new 10" Optimil vertical double arbor edger (VDAE) and an Autolog trimmer optimizer to their mid-range log processing line, significantly boosting efficiency. A few years earlier, they installed a Comact GradExpert system in their planer mill, leveraging advanced computer-based technology for precise lumber grading. These investments highlight SLS's ongoing commitment to innovation and operational excellence.

THEIR CAMERA OF CHOICE IS THE OPTICOM CC02

Spray Lakes Sawmills (SLS) offers a diverse range of products, including dimension lumber, treated lumber and timbers, wood chips, peeled and treated fence posts, cattle bedding, bark mulches, and soil blends. They recognize the critical importance of staying updated with technological advancements to secure their future success. Ensuring the use of high-quality industrial cameras is a top priority for them, and their preferred choice is the Opticom Tech's CC02 industrial camera system.

Jason Newman, the electrical supervisor at SLS, emphasizes the significance of cameras in the modern wood processing industry. At SLS, the production line operator in the control center oversees up to 16 monitors, each displaying real-time video feeds from strategically placed cameras positioned at various angles and locations throughout the facility.



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"There can be as many as eight video feeds on one large screen," says Newman. "The Opticom cameras feed into multiplexers that display images onto the video screens for the operator. These cameras are critical to our operation—they are our eyes on the equipment. If things go wrong, and if we don't see what's going wrong, things get even worse. Without them, we'd get some pretty nasty pile ups."

"THESE CAMERAS OUR CRITICAL FOR OUR OPERATION"

SLS has strategically positioned approximately 60 CC02 cameras throughout their operations, spanning the primary sawmill, planer mill, and wood treatment plant. Among these, the sawmill stands out as the most challenging environment. Here, logs undergo debarking and processing, while lumber pieces jostle for placement on the production line. This dynamic environment poses significant challenges to camera hardware and video feed stability, underscoring the inherent unfriendliness of sawmills to conventional surveillance systems.

The rugged conditions of a finely-tuned processing line, marked by dust and vibration, pose one of the most daunting challenges across industries. While standard security-style cameras may suffice in some environments, deploying them in unforgiving settings—such as near a debarker, breakdown line, or within a dry kiln—proves to be a real struggle. These cameras are simply not designed to endure the relentless punishment and harsh conditions encountered in such locations. As a result, frequent camera replacements or missed opportunities to detect problems and prevent injuries are common due to unreliable camera feeds.

Opticom Tech, boasting decades of experience in developing products for challenging environments and serving Canada's forest industry since 1973, comprehends these challenges intimately. They have furnished close circuit television (CCTV) products to numerous forest companies and diverse industries, showcasing their prowess in delivering tailored solutions for demanding environments.



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VIRTUALLY INDESTRUCTIBLE

Interestingly, Opticom Tech's expertise extends beyond terrestrial applications; they were integral to NASA's space shuttle program, pioneering varifocal lenses capable of seamless operation in space. Situated in British Columbia, the company intimately understands the unique challenges posed by wood processing plants. Recognizing an untapped niche in the 1990s, they seized the opportunity to leverage their experience by developing a specialized camera product line tailored for harsh environments. Months of dedicated development culminated in the CC02 series camera, specifically engineered for high-vibration applications. Since its inception, Opticom Tech has deployed thousands of these camera systems for forestry clients across Canada, cementing their reputation as industry leaders in rugged surveillance solutions.

Opticom Tech attributes the superiority of their camera system over others to its design. Firstly, their cameras boast a compact form factor, small enough to fit into the palm of a person's hand. Secondly, the company touts the camera's rugged titanium housing as "virtually indestructible," impervious to dust and water, and capable of withstanding temperatures ranging from -60 degrees to +80 degrees Celsius, without the need for a heater or blower. Newman highlights durability as a key aspect appreciated by Spray Lakes, noting that some of the CC02 cameras they've installed have been in continuous service for over a decade.



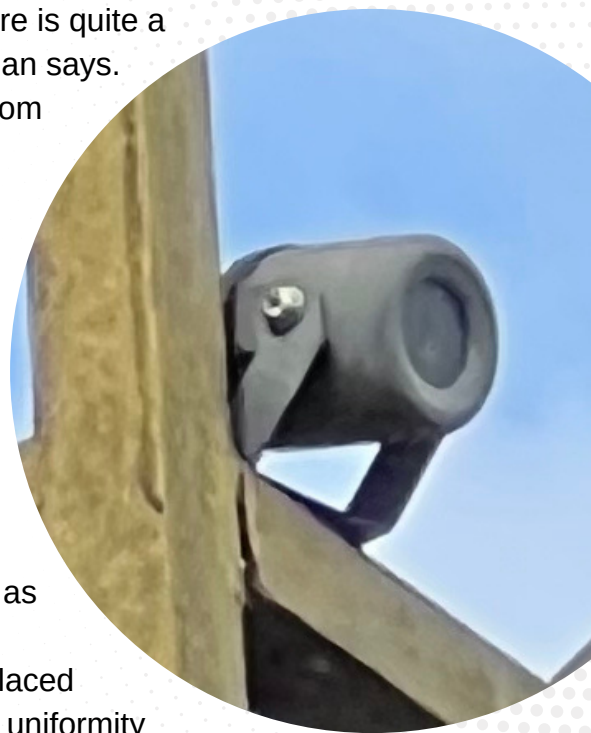
"We've used other brands, but they don't seem to last very long. With the vibrations in the sawmill, they tend to fail fairly soon," he says. Additionally, the cameras are straightforward to install, featuring a universal, vibration-resistant bracket. One sawmill manager even mentioned that they managed to install an Opticom Tech CC02 camera over a lunch break. He emphasized the camera's exceptional clarity. Newman concurs with this evaluation, stating, "They've got a great bracketing system that is very versatile and holds its position in high vibration," he says. "We don't have to go in and constantly adjust them."

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Once they are set, they're set. They're pretty bullet-proof." Opticom Tech has since released a new generation of CC02 cameras which it says is based on high definition analog or Transport Video Interface (TVI) technology, adding that these cameras are easy to integrate into existing coaxial cable systems. In terms of resolution, they deliver the equivalent of two megapixel resolution. "Typically, when we change these out, the operators are ecstatic, because there is quite a big change in what was there before and what is there now," Newman says. "They have a nice, sharper image on the video." According to Opticom Tech, one benefit of this technology is that it allows customers to migrate to high definition video without having to rewire or re-learn video transmission.

Opticom Tech has also adapting its products to other advancements in communication technology. For example, it has developed products such as its CC04 series camera for IP network infrastructure. It is fully compatible with all totally Open Network Video Interface Forum (ONVIF) compliant video management systems. This standard and technology allows IP-based security products to be able to interface with each other. Newman says that as their cameras from other suppliers have failed and older Opticom Tech cameras reach the end of their service life, they are being replaced with the company's latest version, which also delivers the benefit of uniformity throughout the facility.



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