

# How digital tech can hamper crime on construction sites

According to Morag Evans, CEO of Databuild, criminal activities are costing the construction industry around R1bn each year. Apart from the removal and/or destruction of construction material, appliances, tools and equipment, with only 6% of stolen equipment recovered, there's also the threat of the construction mafia.



Source: Leon Swart © [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

“Besides the expense incurred to replace any stolen or vandalised items, the loss can cause further delays to the project which, ultimately, are costlier than the value of the stolen or damaged goods,” says Evans.

## Digital solutions to improving on-site security

While most site managers understand the importance of having deterrents in place, the days of flimsy fencing secured by a chain and padlock are long gone, Evans continues. Instead, construction site managers should look to digital technology as a more effective means of improving on-site security.

### Webcams

Livestreaming work being done on a construction project has proven to be an effective deterrent against theft and other illegal activities. Webcams enable site managers to not only monitor activities from as many vantage points as they choose, but also around the clock, thanks to cloud-based technology. Webcams have also become more durable over the years and nowadays can produce high-definition recordings, with some even including remote zoom, pan and tilt controls to further maximise visibility.



Mbrag Evans, CEO of Databuild

## Drone surveillance

Drones are rapidly becoming integral to improving security on job sites. They provide construction teams with an overhead view of equipment, materials and people and thus can be used to spot intruders from a safe distance. Night-vision cameras and thermal sensors enable them to provide imagery that the human eye is unable to detect. Many drones can be operated with a mobile device, which enables site managers to closely survey the entire job site from the comfort of their home or office.



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## Robot guards

This may sound futuristic, but robot guards are already being deployed on construction sites around Europe and the United States, patrolling and monitoring site entrances and exits 24/7. Always on duty and always alert, these robots move quickly and efficiently to chase down any unwanted intruder and even capture their identity.

## GPS technology

Global positioning system technology uses monitoring sensors to track the movement and positioning of materials and equipment on the construction site. The system can be set up so that any sudden changes trigger an immediate alert which is sent to the relevant site manager, contractor or security personnel.

The consequences of ineffective security should never be underestimated, Evans concludes. “The negative impacts of a poorly secured construction site are about more than financial margins and the project outcome; poor security protocols place valuable lives at risk and these can never be replaced.”

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