

City of Las Cruces and Comcast Cable

Executive Summary

The City of Las Cruces is constantly looking for ways to inform residents about the many programs, services and activities it provides. And establishing a local television presence is one highly effective way to reach residents.

Las Cruces is in a unique TV situation. Although it's the second largest city in the state, it must rely on news coverage from television stations in El Paso, TX, located 45-miles to the south. Those stations at best provide limited coverage of Las Cruces news.

To help establish a full-time television presence, the City of Las Cruces entered into a partnership with Comcast Cable, the local cable provider, to create CLC-TV, (City of Las Cruces TV). Through this partnership, Comcast Cable designated channel 20 for CLC-TV, a dedicated channel programmed 24/7 with City news and information. It must be noted that CLC-TV is not a public access channel. Comcast even assisted with start up costs by providing one-time matching funds of up to \$75,000. Comcast also ensured that CLC-TV would be included in the basic channel package.

Operating CLC-TV helps contribute to the local economy. It employs two full-time staff and various contract employees. The full-time employees consist of a production specialist to oversee the channel's operation and a media specialist who serves as primary writer and on-camera talent. The contract employees include a technical director for live productions, a production assistant, a video technician, a closed caption service provider and from time-to-time a language interpreter.

CLC-TV airs city council meetings live and then rebroadcasts them at different times of the day for those unable to attend. Presently, less than 50 people attend the city council meetings on a regular basis. The channel also airs public service announcements, traffic law reminders, ways to contact their council representative, a community calendar and specially tailored programs such as "Know Your City." CLC-TV also provides programs dealing with timely topics of interest to the community. There has been increased attendance at City-sponsored events such as "Music in the Park", museum exhibits and Fourth of July activities because the events were promoted on CLC-TV.

A recent example of CLC-TV's effectiveness is the timely manner in which the City of Las Cruces and the Las Cruces Police Department were able to provide information to the public regarding a community wide public safety issue. The City received two letters from a suspected extortionist demanding a large sum of money. The letters stated that if the money was not provided, Las Cruces residents would be shot at random. Throughout the course of this event, CLC-TV was utilized to broadcast live news conferences, a videotaped message from the police chief, reward and tip line information and other pertinent information.

Although there are operational costs associated with CLC-TV, the City's ability to inform residents through the television medium has been tremendous. Comcast currently has 28,000 subscribers with an average of 3.2 viewers per subscriber, creating a potential viewing audience of 89,600 at any given time in a city of less than 100,000.

The public/private partnership with Comcast Cable has helped create a more enlightened community and encouraged more active involvement in City government.