

Milestone XProtect — Evaluation Field Guide

An honest one-page profile of the open, on-premises VMS: the editions, the ONVIF-plus-SDK openness, the licensing math, and where it fits.

The four editions at a glance

	Express+	Professional+	Expert	Corporate
Deployment	Your server, single site	Your servers, multi-site	Your servers, multi-site	Your servers, federated
Scale	Up to 48 cameras, 1 server	Multiple sites + servers	Unrestricted cameras	Unrestricted, all features
Federation	No	No	Yes - joins MFA	Yes - MFA + Interconnect
Open SDK?	Yes - MIP SDK	Yes - MIP SDK	Yes - MIP SDK	Yes - full MIP SDK
Best fit	One small site	Mid-market, several sites	Large, high-security	Enterprise, city, national

Essential+ (free, up to 8 cameras) was discontinued in XProtect 2025 R2 - the paid entry point is now Express+.

What 'open platform' really means - two layers

Layer 1 - cameras via ONVIF: XProtect conforms to Profile S/T (live streaming), G (recording), M (analytics metadata), with 16,500+ tested devices and a Universal Driver fallback. Layer 2 - apps via the MIP SDK: protocol, component (.NET), and plug-in integrations plus a Driver Framework - the partner ecosystem a closed cloud cannot match. ONVIF guarantees only a baseline; edge-AI events, advanced PTZ, and deep tuning fall back to a driver or the SDK. Ask: which profiles, and what falls back to the SDK?

Licensing and the cost shape (CapEx)

XProtect is a one-time capital expense, not a subscription: one base license per system (unlimited servers) + one device license per camera channel + a Milestone Care maintenance subscription for updates (mandatory year one for Corporate). Illustrative 200-camera, 5-year software math: (\$200 device x 200) + (\$35 Care x 200 x 5) = \$40,000 + \$35,000 = \$75,000, about \$75/camera/year - well below typical cloud per-camera-per-month at this scale. Figures illustrative; partners discount real quotes heavily above 100 cameras.

Where XProtect fits - and where it doesn't

Choose XProtect when...	Look elsewhere when...
Multi-vendor camera estate, integration-heavy, enterprise/city scale, federation needed, or a privacy-forward EU roadmap matters. You bring servers and an integrator.	A 20-camera single site with no IT, no integration needs, and you want self-updating cloud and AI on day one. A cloud VSaaS will be live faster and skip the servers.

The four questions to ask before you commit

Editions - which rung (Express+ / Professional+ / Expert / Corporate) matches your scale and federation need?
Openness - do the cameras AND the features you need work over ONVIF, or do they fall back to a driver / the MIP SDK?
Scale - MFA for fewer/larger sites, or Interconnect for many small distributed ones? Have you sized the recording servers and SQL?
Cost - did you put the device licenses AND the recurring Care subscription on the same five-year footing as any cloud quote?

Engineering and procurement guidance, not legal advice. AI/biometric analytics (face recognition, summarization) remain a legal gate - confirm GDPR / local law with qualified counsel before switching them on.