

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: $(\$200 \text{ device} \times 200) + (\$35 \text{ Care} \times 200 \times 5) = \$40,000 + \$35,000 = \$75,000$, 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.



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This guide profiles XProtect editions, ONVIF and MIP SDK openness and the five-year licensing math. Our seven-volume handbook covers the stack a VMS runs on: Volume 6 for detection, tracking and OCR, Volume 7 for real-time analytics and biometric compliance, Volume 1 for camera encoding and storage.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE

- Detection, tracking and OCR on camera streams
- Real-time analytics pipelines and cost per stream
- Biometric rules and the EU AI Act for video
- H.264 and HEVC settings for recording at scale

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Vol. 1 · Video Encoding — pixels and color to H.264, HEVC, AV1, quality metrics and AI

Vol. 2 · Video Streaming I — network transport, contribution and ingest, HLS, MPEG-DASH, CMAF

Vol. 3 · Video Streaming II — ABR, CDNs, players, WebRTC, DRM and the economics of delivery

Vol. 4 · Audio for Video I — PCM, codecs, loudness, accessibility, real-time voice processing

Vol. 5 · Audio for Video II — jitter buffers, lip sync, Atmos, quality metrics, neural codecs

Vol. 6 · AI for Video I — models and inference, computer vision, speech, search, generative video

Vol. 7 · AI for Video II — real-time pipelines, agents, serving, cost, compliance, verticals

Choosing between XProtect, another VMS and cloud VSaaS?

We will compare total cost and integration effort for your camera count and sites, and build the MIP SDK plug-ins you need. 250+ video products shipped since 2005.

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