

Panda cams down, but park cams still going strong

Danielle Elliot - CBS News/ October 2, 2013, 2:23 PM

The National Zoo's panda cams have been silenced, entrances to the national parks are roped off, and many government website home-pages show a message explaining that the government is shut down.

But the National Park webcams are going strong.

Anyone hoping to check out the view from the Statue of Liberty's crown or the top of the Washington Monument can simply log on to EarthCam.com.

The company manages the hardware and live-streaming needs of cameras on at least a half dozen government-funded sites including the Gettysburg battlefield, Paterson Great Falls, Steamtown National History Site, and the Flight 93 National Monument.

"There's really no daily maintenance," EarthCam's strategic sales director, Lisa Kelly, told CBSNews.com, so the fact that park employees have been furloughed has no impact on the cameras. Once the high-definition, weatherproof cameras are installed, their internal computer system connects with EarthCam's server.

The parks' only responsibility is to plug an embed code into its website, so that the videos can stream. Even if the websites are down, the videos all stream on EarthCam's homepage.

EarthCam handles all of the IT, as well as social media promotion on Twitter and Facebook. The full package costs about \$6,000 for the year.

"We have a partnership in the Statue of Liberty that shows the view from the crown, the torch. We have a camera on the top of the Washington monument," Kelly said. "As long as the power is on, people are still able to go online and virtually visit those places."

As the shutdown loomed, EarthCam double-checked with the Statue of Liberty staff to ensure that the cameras should continue streaming. They were given the green light and told that the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation's website will remain live.

"That's been huge, too. It's the pandas and it's the parks that everyone's been talking about," Kelly added. "People come from all over the world and plan on going to Liberty Island."

"This is not the same, but at least you can get up close."

The screenshot shows the EarthCam website interface. At the top left is the EarthCam logo. To the right is a search bar and a 'GO LIVE' button. Below the logo is a large live video feed of a beach in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. To the right of this is a 'LIVE Webcam Network' section with a grid of smaller camera thumbnails for various locations like Times Square, NYC; IorCBam; Panama City, FL; Miami, FL; Omaha, NE; Little Italy, NYC; Austin, TX; FL Lauderdale, FL; Costa Rica; Istanbul, TUR; Tropical Storms Karen; Sedona, AZ; Las Vegas, NV; St. Barthelmy, FRW; Washington D.C.; and World Trade Center. Below the network is a section for 'EarthCam.net - Professional Webcam Technology and Services' featuring a '16 MegapixelCam Advanced' camera and a 'Proud Winner!' badge. This section includes sub-sections for 'Tourism' (Jeppia Space Needle, World Trade Center), 'Transportation' (Oakland Bay Bridge, Oakland Bay Bridge), and 'Construction' (Bancroft Center, Bush Presidential Library). At the bottom are categories for 'Editor's Choice', 'Popular', 'Top Ten', 'New!', and 'My EarthCam', each with a corresponding thumbnail image.