

Minimizing the Static

Fox Plaza building beefs up security with new intercom system

By Karina Sanchez

The Fox Plaza building made its movie debut in the 1988 flick "Die Hard." Under the guise of the Nakatomi Plaza building, it was overtaken by a group of terrorists looking to steal millions of dollars from a Japanese company. Ironically, the real Fox Plaza building spent years with an outdated intercom system, leaving poor communication in emergency situations such as this.

The building, located in Century City, Calif., takes up 900,000 square feet of office space. It has 34 floors and is 492 feet tall. It housed former President Ronald Reagan's offices, and many top Fox executives

work out of the building. And, until recently, intercoms throughout the building, in elevators and in parking lots were maintained by old wires, providing static-filled communication. A new intercom system was long overdue, and in June 2004, systems integrator Alliance Security teamed with the Fox Plaza building and TOA Electronics to revamp the intercom system and enhance overall communication.

OUT WITH THE OLD

Not only did the old intercom system provide poor communication, but it also in-

volved more of a process, delaying the response time of the security guard.

"When you pressed a button on the previous intercom system, a code would come up on the screen, and the security officer would not really know where that person was," said Ben Weber, chief engineer, Fox Plaza. "They'd have to pull out a binder and look up a number and cross-reference the two, and that would take time."

With such an old intercom in place, maintenance of the system became a problem, leaving some intercoms inoperable.

"We called several companies to come service those systems, and they wouldn't do

it. So we had several intercom systems that weren't working, and we could not repair them," Weber said.

What the building needed was a total upgrade. The Fox building engineers wanted the same, but on the condition that the integrator use the operable wires that were already in place. With TOA's VS-900, this condition was a welcomed challenge.

IN WITH THE NEW

The VS-900 Corporate Security intercom system from TOA Electronics was the intercom of choice to replace the outdated system.

"I use the VS-900 for most large build-

Emergency Communication



ings of this size. You have the ability to add up to 1,024 substations, and it is also easy to retrofit,” said Mike Anderson, president of Alliance Security. “You can also integrate other systems to it to help provide maximum surveillance.”

The VS-900 is an intercom system that supports up to 64 master stations and 1,024

substations. This application in particular used RS-180s as substations placed throughout the parking lot. These substations communicate directly to a guard. If pressed, an LED flashes and communication is instantaneously accomplished.

TOA's RS-190 remote intercom stations were used inside elevators. Anderson said el-

evator retrofitting had to be done all in one weekend, but it was a job well worth doing. The system definitely upgraded the quality of sound that once had a lot of static, making it difficult for people to hear one another through the intercom, he said.

“The RS-190 is designed for high electrical noise applications. Since this was in place, and that is what the RS-190 is designed for,” said Lucas Marciniak, sales engineer, security products, TOA. “The RS-190 has a preamplifier on the actual substation that increases the signal going back to the head-end equipment, so there’s less induced noise on the line.”

The system has been in place since August 2004, and the results have been positive.

THE FOX PLAZA BUILDING POST VS-900

Today, the Fox Plaza building is up to code and up to speed. According to Weber, things are going well. There have not been any issues with the system, and a recent incident

tested the true effectiveness of the intercom.

“We had an entrapment in the elevator. It was after-hours, and security was able to communicate with that person through the intercom system and keep that person calm,” Weber said.

In California, it’s required by code to have two-way communication in the elevators and in large parking lots. Having easy access to security is a prime concern.

“The VS-900 intercom system definitely decreases response time. If a guard sees something suspicious through the cameras, he can send a guard to investigate it,” Marciniak said. “He can also call that particular call station and communicate with that person and see what’s going on and vice versa.”

There are a lot of big names that work out of this building, and it’s critical to have a way for them to effectively communicate with security personnel.

“I think there’s a lot of corporate security as far as protecting these people. If someone sees something suspicious or has an emergency, they can immediately report it to the security staff of the building, and that definitely plays a big role in the overall infrastructure security,” Marciniak said.

With the new intercom in place, the Fox Plaza building is quickly catching up with the times. The future looks bright in the security scope for the building.

WHAT’S TO COME?

Incorporating the new intercom system has been the initial step in an overall increase of security for Fox Plaza, but that’s not to say that integration stops there.

“We’re in the process of putting together a packet to give to the engineers at Fox Plaza, explaining the various options they can undertake to maximize surveillance using the system that is currently in place,” Anderson said.

Plans are well underway to integrate cameras with the intercom system, as well.

“In those areas where there are intercoms and cameras located, we want to coordinate the cameras to focus on the activity that is happening when the intercom button is pressed,” Weber said.

Fox Plaza security additions will likely take place in fiscal 2005. In this industry, the options are endless. The Fox Plaza building is tapping into the newest technology, and it has the potential of becoming one of the most secure buildings in the nation.

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