

SWIFT Wireless Devices Help Perform Elevator Recall at Beach Condos

Background

Inlet Point—located near Myrtle Beach, South Carolina—is a vacation destination for many. This gated condominium community, situated at the southern end of Litchfield Beach, offers two-, three- and four-bedroom condos. The area is bordered on the east by the wide sandy beach and Atlantic Ocean—and on the west is Pawleys Island saltwater creek.

The Point consists of 87 condo units distributed over 22 buildings, complemented by a guard house at the main entrance, a clubhouse and a maintenance office. Depending upon their size, each building contains anywhere between two and six units.

Challenge

The condo facilities are managed by Wacamaw Property Management, who faced a potentially costly fire protection issue during the upgrade of one building's legacy elevator system. In every building taller than two stories, regulations stipulate that management provide elevator recalls as part of the building's fire alarm system installation, according to Paul Griffin, project manager for United Fire Alarm Service.

Elevator recall must occur at the instant a fire event is detected, delivering existing passengers to the evacuation point and blocking access to elevator functions until the all clear signal is given by officials. Per ASME A17.1 Section 2.27.3, Griffin said, firefighter emergency operations are required in all automatic elevators with a rise of more than 80 inches. If the facility already has, or is required to have a fire alarm system, then fire alarm control of elevators is required to perform these essential operations.

"Elevator recall systems allow fire alarm systems to send an elevator car to a floor based on the triggering of a smoke detector within the



building's fire alarm system," Griffin said. "The recall system can also include a heat detector at the top of the elevator shaft; pull stations at each elevator lobby and other triggering devices."

Integration of the new elevator with an existing system – if one is present, could prove expensive. However, Griffin proposed a cost-effective idea involving some of the most innovative fire industry products that offered a multitude of benefits beyond meeting minimum code mandates.

Solution

The condo complex management team turned to a Gamewell-FCI S3 Series panel with Smart Wireless Integrated Fire Technology (SWIFT) devices to perform the necessary elevator recall functions. Inlet Point management chose the wireless devices mainly because they lowered the cost of the entire installation and did not detract from the facilities appearance, according to Griffin.

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“It was about three times cheaper than installing a hard-wired system in there, and it was a much faster installation,” said Griffin. “People are pretty protective of how their buildings look in upscale areas, so having no external conduit is a big plus for the homeowner’s association—a huge aesthetic advantage with the wireless system.”

He added that wireless is much more reliable if the system is installed outside in a location prone to lightning strikes or other weather-related events. Wired systems are more readily damaged in these locations.

Moreover, the community was pleased by the ease of use of the Gamewell-FCI S3 Series™ system, according to Griffin. In the event of an alarm, it is critical for the management team to understand why the system has gone into alarm and respond to it quickly. While traditional fire alarm control panels may feature 30 or more control buttons and a small LCD text display, the S3 Series panel offers a 4.3-inch color touch screen display with only five programmable buttons at the bottom for quick and simple access to common functions.

In the case of a trouble event, the S3 Series control panel emits a loud buzz sound and the touch screen indicates how the operator should respond. The touch screen displays a virtual “trouble acknowledge” button like a pop-up window on a computer screen.

Clear menus and onscreen messages guide an operator who otherwise would have to face down multiple, puzzling buttons with no guidance on which to press. This intuitive functionality helps a person with little or no experience easily respond to an alarm or other condition without having to wait for a building engineer to arrive—a critical capability during an emergency.

Result

Installation of the Gamewell-FCI S3 Series with SWIFT devices was straightforward and relatively quick—the two systems easily integrated.

“Installation was not very labor intensive at all,” Griffin said. “There was a bit of a learning curve at the beginning because it was the first one we’ve done with SWIFT, but it was very easy when we got going. It’s been trouble-free since we put in the system, and we look forward to putting in more of these systems in the future.”

According to Inlet Point’s Association Manager Dan Olszewski, the installation process was exceedingly clean and simplistic. Moreover, the condominium was able to save about \$1,000 dollars on wiring and

labor since the system is wireless. But what really stands out about the system is how well it works, according to Olszewski.

“What I am enjoying is the fact that we haven’t encountered any issues with the system’s reliability or its function since it was installed,” Olszewski said.

According to Griffin, the Waccamaw Property Management team plans to put more Gamewell-FCI S3 Series with SWIFT systems in its buildings for elevator recall in the near future – a testament to the value of this new technology.

