

High-Rise Facility Reaps Immediate Benefit from Gamewell-FCI Fire & Voice Evacuation System

When your facility is comprised of a variety of different tenants, each with different security needs and each governed by unique life safety codes, your fire alarm system needs to be a quick thinker: both decisive and responsive. How fast-acting does it need to be? In the case of Little Rock, Arkansas' First Security Center, its fire alarm system faced a "trial by fire" just weeks after the building opened and passed the test with flying colors.

The new 14-story multi-purpose First Security Center is in the heart of the fast-growing Little Rock River Market District, a hub for entertainment and urban living. Located a couple blocks from the new Clinton Presidential Library, the Center is comprised of a bank on the first level, Marriott Courtyard hotel on floors 1-6, trading firm on floors 7-10, and personally owned condos on floors 11-14.

According to the building's property manager, Dave Carter, protecting the First Security Center required some important executive decisions. "Most of these decisions were initially laid in the lap of Moses Tucker Real Estate. The challenge of keeping this building safe and protected from fire was heightened by the fact that it has such diverse occupancy. There were different codes that applied to different areas," said Carter.

"We needed a system that could be incredibly functional, maintainable and flexible, yet was also economical enough to fit within our construction budget. Our subcontractor, Advanced Cabling Systems, collaborated with Hargrave Consulting Engineers and brought the Gamewell-FCI system to our attention. It was clearly the right way to go," added Carter.

Advanced Cabling Systems (ACS) began in 1997 as a systems integrator with roots in structured cabling. According to company president, Michael Kennedy, ACS has partnered with Gamewell-FCI as an engineered systems distributor for more than six years. "When we decided to diversify our company's offerings to include life safety systems, we chose Gamewell-FCI due to their market reputation, as well as their highly trained and professional sales and technical team," states Kennedy.

Gamewell-FCI is an industry-leading manufacturer of life safety systems for a worldwide majority of commercial applications.

Kennedy added, "We preferred to install a Gamewell-FCI NetSOLO™ 7100 panel in this Little Rock facility because of its value and ease of installation. This manufacturer's level of support and the value inherent in their product offerings has helped to make us a very successful systems integrator."

Fire protection codes for hotels required there be a detection/notification system in each room. "The hotel and office requirements are different from the residential areas," explained Carter. "If you have one alarm sounding in a hotel room, you don't really want to empty the entire building, unless the scope of the fire warrants it. We needed a system that could differentiate between areas, one that was able to decide on its own when to send certain kinds of signals, depending on what it was detecting."

831 Devices in Constant Communication

"Moses Tucker Real Estate opted for a state-of-the-art NetSOLO fire alarm and voice evacuation system," said Ron Hicks, Partner and Vice President of ACS.

Among the 831 devices installed by ACS at the First Security Center were: a NetSOLO 7100 Fire Panel, NetSOLO VGC voice gateway, a NetSOLO VGX distributed amplification system, plus analog addressable photo-electronic smoke sensors, analog addressable heat detectors, fixed temperature heat detectors and speaker/strobe notification devices.

"We also installed a fiber network between 14 of the NetSOLO panels distributed throughout the building to provide maximum redundancy and regeneration of the panels in case of a catastrophic fire. The system features the ability to pinpoint a fire to the exact detector," Hicks said.

Dave Carter explained how the team satisfied the building's varied demands. "The hotel had specific requirements that went above and beyond the stan-



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dard, not to mention the city of Little Rock's requirements, which are quite stringent. There is a minimum of one smoke/heat detector and one strobe/buzzer in each of the hotel's 120 rooms. We are also mandated to install detectors/signaling devices in the lobby area, bank, pool, washer/dryer rooms, mechanical rooms and offices. Additionally, in each office break room, certain detectors are required with notifiers situated throughout the space. Then within each condo, there have to be at least two smoke/heat detectors and one signaling device, though we actually put two signaling devices in," said Carter.

"It's a large system, with one main panel and four sub-panels," added Carter. "Each sub-panel has a different set of parameters, giving the system its flexibility. What's more, each sub-panel sends a signal to the main panel, which in turn decides what the system is going to do."

Trial by Fire

It didn't take long for the Gamewell-FCI system to prove its value. Shortly after the building opened for occupancy, a condo resident attempted to light a gas fireplace. Failing to properly ventilate the area before bleeding the volatile gas line, the tenant lit the fireplace, causing a disastrous explosion.

"Fortunately, it wasn't tremendously bad," recalled Carter. "In other words, there wasn't a huge wall-blowing explosion, but it popped pretty well."

The fire system responded instantly, detecting the heat (as there was not a great deal of fire or smoke) sending the whole system into full alarm mode.

"The system detected that this was more than just a smoke detector sensing a little dust or smoke particle," Carter said. "It knew that people needed to be made aware, setting off the full alarm and emptying the building. It really worked exactly like it was supposed to, preventing further damage and injury."

Due to the addressable features of the NetSOLO 7100 fire panel, building management was able to determine which device activated first, as well as the succession in which the other devices activated. A heat detector was the initial activator, followed by the fire pump running sprinkler water flow, a smoke detector and a carbon monoxide detector. The fire department responded within eight minutes of the alarm.

"If we had not been notified, that man could have laid there for quite a while in pain," says Carter. "Luckily, his injuries were not life threatening and he greatly appreciated the fast response. Also, since the sprinkler system was running on the 12th floor, the water damage to the offices below would have been worse without the alarm and accurate pinpointing of the trouble-spot."

More Big Projects in Little Rock

Having seen first-hand the potentially life and property saving benefits of the NetSOLO 7100 system, Moses Tucker Real Estate had no qualms about working with Gamewell-FCI systems on other large scale projects.

The real estate company recently completed an 18-story high-rise condo project, 300 Third Tower, that's the largest-scale project they've accomplished to-date. In fact, it's the largest residential project to go up in downtown Little Rock in the last 40 years.

Carter explains, "The new condominium project is 106 residential units stacked 13 levels high on top of first floor retail and three levels of parking. Plus, there's a roof party room and deck to top it all off. It's not as unique a project as First Security, but it is another mixed-use facility. Advanced Cabling Systems installed a new Gamewell-FCI E3 Series® system for this project."

Moses Tucker Real Estate also chose Advanced Cabling Systems for the Rainwater Flats, a 20 unit condominium project located adjacent to the River Market district. Rainwater Flats is served by a Gamewell-FCI NetSOLO 7100-2D panel. Additionally, an eight-story Hampton Inn and Suites has just broken ground within walking distance and will contain another Gamewell-FCI E3 Series fire alarm system.

"After all," concludes Carter, "we've seen it in action. Having a real fire is not the way that you want to have to verify that a system works. But we did, and it did. The point is, when we needed it, the Gamewell-FCI system worked. And that's very good to know."



NetSOLO™ 7100 Fire Alarm Panel