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## **FIRE ALARM SYSTEM BRINGS VISIBLE ADVANTAGES TO ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY FOR DEAF AND DEAF-BLIND SENIORS**

### ***Gamewell's Analog Addressable Control Panel Provides Residents With Visual & Vibrating Notification***

#### **The Challenge**

Communication is imperative when it comes to fire protection. The best systems sense a fire, pinpoint the location of the danger, and then communicate clearly and quickly to the residents or tenants of a building as to what they should do.

Communication is also one of the main reasons why Mae Johnson opened Gresham, Oregon's Chestnut Lane, an assisted living facility for deaf and deaf-blind seniors, the first facility of its kind in the Northwest and just the second in the nation.

Johnson explains the initial thinking behind this unique community: "My background is home/health nursing, and I was finding that many deaf people were very isolated in their homes, especially due to their inability to effectively communicate with neighbors or anyone else that came to their door. The isolation and the inability for these individuals to communicate their needs was a big part of why we started this project."

Chestnut Lane not only has deaf and deaf-blind residents, it also has a primarily deaf staff. Everyone that lives and works at Chestnut Lane is completely in touch with the unique needs of the deaf and deaf-blind, and the lines of communication flow much freer here for these individuals than they would in most other environments.

### **The Solution**

So when it came time to choose a fire alarm system, the challenge was to find a system that was not necessarily reliant on auditory communication. The Identiflex (IF) 610 Analog Addressable Control Panel, from The Gamewell Company, provided the flexibility that this assisted living population demanded. Part of Honeywell's Fire Solutions Group, Gamewell is one of the leading manufacturers of commercial fire control panels and emergency life safety systems.

Chestnut Lane worked closely with RLD Systems, a Gamewell distributor, to arrive at the most effective solution. According to RLD's LaVone Clausen, "The city's fire marshal was very concerned about safety issues regarding the facility. We incorporated the Gamewell IF610 Control Panel with visual notification devices such as strobe lights. Along these lines, the nurse call system would need to have a visual component in order to communicate with staff and residents."

Gamewell's IF610 Control Panel had the visual text capabilities necessary to meet the needs of Chestnut Lane's deaf residents and staff. The IF610 can monitor and control up to 504 intelligent analog addressable input/output points, and the panel's interactive operator display uses LED prompting to ease both user operation and programming.

Chestnut Lane's system features 110 candela strobes in all 70 of its bedrooms, and a 30 candela strobe in the common living room. Pagers and bed-shakers are also used as part of the notification system to alert residents. Vibrating pagers, worn at all times by the staff, are activated through the building's nurse-call system. The pagers are also available to each deaf-blind resident. If a smoke detector goes off, it lights an LED in the hallway while sending a supervisor signal to the fire alarm panel and a fire alarm indicator to the nurse call system. This system, in turn, sends a signal to the pagers. The bed-shakers are tripped directly from the Gamewell panel. A transmission from the panel sends a signal to a receiver in the bed, which sets off the shaker mechanism.

### **The Results**

Mae Johnson appreciates the pinpoint accuracy the Gamewell panel provides. When a problem is detected, a visual display allows Mae and the staff at Chestnut Lane to see what the problem is, and the exact location of the problem. While other systems rely on audible alarm sounds, the visual display is important to the staff as it allows them to know immediately and precisely what is occurring.

“For example,” Johnson explains, “About two weeks after the completion of the project, the fire alarm panel let us know that there was a problem in a bathroom area, and the Gamewell panel directed us to the exact location. The Gamewell system gave us the instant relief of understanding the nature of the problem so that we could take care of it right away.”

The Gamewell system has played an important role in helping Mae Johnson provide a stress-free environment in which deaf and deaf-blind independent-minded seniors can feel both safe and free to go as they please. “This system is working very well for our building and for those of us that live and work here,” she extols. “We’ve recommended a similar fire safety system for another deaf-housing building that’s going up in California – it’s really neat being able to share information based on our own experiences and success here.”

Recently Chestnut Lane received an award for being “Northwest Construction Building of the Year” – a satisfying honor for Johnson. But what give her the greatest satisfaction are the visible signs that the project is a huge success – the contented expressions and broad smiles on the faces of Chestnut Lane’s residents.