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VAIL RESORT ADDRESSES ALARMING PROBLEM WITH NEW GAMEWELL FIRE ALARM SYSTEM

Gamewell Analog Addressable Control Panels Decrease False Alarm Rate by 98%

The Challenge

When you are establishing your facility as one of the premier luxury resorts and spas in the industry, a continuous barrage of false fire alarms is a problem you can't afford. The Vail Cascade Resort & Spa in Vail, Colorado is a Four-Diamond resort named by *Conde Nast Traveler* as one of the top 4 ski resorts in North America. This little piece of slope-side paradise presents both vacationers and business guests alike with the ultimate in services and amenities. The problem was that the facility was experiencing frequent false fire alarms.

Recognizing the need for a major upgrade in the resort's fire alarm system, the Vail Cascade Resort & Spa Resort General Manager, Jay Rocha, contacted one of the region's distributors of high-end fire safety equipment, Acme Alarm Company. Located in Rifle, CO, Acme Alarm takes pride in its ability to solve unique problems with one-stop shopping, custom solutions and follow-through service after the sale. They also offer the latest top-of-the-line products.

“We established ourselves in the retrofit end of the market,” said Acme Alarms’ President Clint Bartels, “and then from there have branched into new installations. We’ve made our reputation by taking on problem systems and solving problems others couldn’t. Vail Cascade Resort & Spa’s needs were a natural fit for us.”

There were many reasons why Vail Cascade Resort & Spa was having false alarm problems. Building layout and system configuration were two major contributing factors. Large events posed unique problems, such as how to run a fog machine with smoke detectors on a 28-foot ballroom ceiling. Other factors were education, maintenance and training. Communication and coordination between engineering staff and the alarm company, and preplanning for events were critical in false alarm prevention.

Bartels continued, “In the eyes of the customer, the reasons why false alarms occur are secondary to the simple need for a solution. The Vail Cascade Resort & Spa needed a fire alarm system that was as advanced as the rest of the resort’s equipment.”

The Solution

Vail Cascade Resort & Spa found their solution in the space-efficient Identiflex (IF) 654 and 658 Digitally Assigned Analogue Addressable Control Panels from Gamewell. Part of Honeywell’s Fire Group, Gamewell is one of the leading manufacturers of commercial fire control panels and emergency life safety systems.

Despite the fact that the resort offers 15,000 square feet of spacious meeting and conference facilities with panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and creeks, the resort had limited space for fire safety controls. The IF654 has a lot of functionality in a very small footprint, and with its 4 bay expansion cabinet, it was a perfect fit for Vail Cascade Resort & Spa’s convention center, ballroom complex and five-story Terrace wing.

Acme then installed Gamewell's IF658 with its 4 bay expansion cabinet assembly to monitor and control fire safety devices in the resort's new 78,000 Sq. Ft. Aria Spa and Club. In addition to offering world class spa treatments, the facility provides retail shopping, a swimming pool, and basketball, tennis, racquetball and squash courts to its guests.

Both the IF654 and IF658 are full-featured fire alarm control panels that can be configured to monitor and control both analog intelligent addressable devices and conventional hardwire zones. They can be adapted easily to either a complex retrofit installation or a new installation providing up to 2016 analog addressable points.

"With the Gamewell panels, we were able to design a specific system that matched the unique needs of the facility, something other manufacturers couldn't do," explained Bartels. "We were able to customize the installation to meet the building's conventional zoning which was already in place, while providing an effective roll-over to a fully addressable system. All in one cabinet."

The IF series panels also feature Gamewell's SmartStart™ self-programming logic, which automatically identifies and configures all system modules, circuits and devices to default alarm mode. Once initiated, an entire system can be brought on line in less than a minute, resulting in a tremendous savings in time and money. And with Gamewell's SmartLink™ network, the IF654 and IF658 can be easily expanded to include multiple fire alarm panels. This is a level of flexibility that a distributor like Acme Alarm Company greatly appreciates.

"When servicing ski resorts at 8000 feet in elevation and 90 miles away from the office, the service company needs to be prepared. The UDACT, which transmits system status via a telephone network, provides us with additional information on the operational aspects of the system quite often allowing a technician to make a preliminary diagnosis before ever arriving on site," Bartels added.

The Results

“Operations run smoother, conferences and large groups are accommodated with relative ease and are afforded more flexibility, i.e. fogging machines for special events and culinary shows,” said Vail Cascade Resort & Spa’s Jay Rocha. “We have seen a 98% reduction in false alarms. We have not had to reduce room rates or compensate disgruntled guests due to false alarms. In fact, we’ve only had one alarm. And that was when one of our creative chefs decided to barbecue outside the convention center, which blew smoke into the building and set off the smoke detectors. The system operated as it was supposed to.”

In fact, since Vail Cascade Resort & Spa upgraded to the Gamewell Identiflex Control Panels, both the employees and guests at this world class resort are able to sleep a lot better at night – employees without any stressful dreams of dissatisfied guests, and guests without any alarming interruptions.

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