

New Hotel's Strict Fire Requirements Met by Modern System with Intuitive Touchscreen Operability

The Holiday Inn Express Hotel and Suites located in the university area of Columbia, Mo., is a 121-room all-suite hotel with 5,000 square feet of conference space, and an indoor pool and hot tub. The new, four-story high steel structure is located near the University of Missouri campus. It expands lodging options in the university town, which are in high demand during weekend football games, graduation, or other events. The hotel is the newest property of the Puri Group of Enterprises, which owns and operates six hotels in Missouri and takes pride in its reputation of proven quality and reliability in the hospitality industry.

“We have been in hospitality for 20 years and always invest in current technology, which can help keep our clients safe while they are under our roof,” said Dr. Raman Puri, CFO and Vice President of Development for Puri Group of Enterprises.

“We Take Life Safety Seriously”

The Columbia hotel's fire alarm system consists of an S3 Series fire alarm control panel by Gamewell-FCI. The S3 Series panel's intuitive touchscreen simplifies its use for the hotel's assorted staff, thereby boosting response times to improve overall building protection. The touchscreen design and step-by-step menus ensure straightforward operation by eliminating the rows of confusing buttons and cryptic text displays typical of most fire alarm control panels. The Puri Group sought a system with clear, concise operation to ensure a fast and appropriate response is taken during any emergency fire event.

“We take life safety very seriously on our properties and feel that any technologically advanced solution in this regard is well worth the expense for the good of our clients,” said Dr. Puri.

Holiday Inn has strict fire alarm system requirements, over and above what is required by local code. In addition to smoke detectors and local sounders in each hotel suite, the system includes manual pull stations at every first-floor exit and at all stairwell exits. Detectors and horn/strobes are in all common areas, corridors, meeting rooms and bathrooms too.



Any detector or pull station in the common areas will trigger a system-wide alarm, including sounding alarms in each room and evacuating the building. The fire alarm system is also tied into a sprinkler system, which includes sprinkler heads in each room. If heat triggers a sprinkler to activate, the entire building is evacuated.

However, an alarm triggered in an individual suite only requires evacuation of that suite. Only the sounder in the room is activated and the alarm is monitored at the front desk. Nuisance alarms are more common in hotel guest rooms, so the building is not evacuated unless there is a general alarm.

The larger guest rooms at the Holiday Inn Express Hotel and Suites cannot be covered by a single smoke detector, so two or more detectors are used. However, only one detector in each room includes a sounder base, which emits the local, in-room alarm. The S3 system's

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by Honeywell

unique ability to program all of a room's detectors to trigger the single sounder base saved equipment, wire and labor costs. Without this S3 functionality, each guest room detector would need to be hard-wired with its own sounder base.

"The cost savings help offset the expense of the S3 panel compared to less expensive options," says Ralf Nasic, President, Midwest Electronic Systems, which installed the Gamewell-FCI system.

Guiding Operators to Respond

Ease of use is a big advantage of the Gamewell-FCI S3 system. It is critical for the hotel staff to be able to understand why the system has gone into alarm and respond to it quickly during a fire. However, a fire alarm system "trouble" event, such as a low battery, dirty smoke detector or a broken device can also cause chaos for facility managers unfamiliar with the operation of a fire alarm system.

In the case of a "trouble," the S3 panel emits a loud buzz sound and the touchscreen clearly indicates how the operator should respond. The touchscreen displays a virtual "trouble acknowledge" button like a pop-up window on a computer screen. The clarity of the messaging guides an operator who otherwise, hearing a buzz, would have to face down multiple, puzzling buttons with no guidance of which to press.

While common fire alarm panels may feature 30 or more control buttons and a small LCD text display, the S3 Series panel instead offers a 4.3-inch color touchscreen display with only five programmable buttons at the bottom for quick and simple access to common functions. This intuitive functionality enables a person with little or no experience to easily respond to an alarm or other condition without having to wait for a building engineer to arrive – a critical capability in the event of an emergency. The touchscreen makes training facility managers easier, too.

The five buttons on the S3 system's display can be configured to help with repetitive tasks to simplify maintenance. A common use is to program one of the buttons to disable sounders and alarms in areas where welding or construction might be taking place to avoid nuisance alarms.

Taking Responsibility for System Operation

The straightforward operation of Gamewell-FCI's S3 touchscreen is especially beneficial for hotels that do not have a 24-hour facility manager on staff, says Nasic. Typically, a single employee might be on the premises at night. Nasic says the intuitive touchscreen saves his customers a lot of costly 2 a.m. service calls from desk clerks who don't know which button to push to silence an alarm.



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