

Case Study: Seminole County Civil Courthouse

SpectrAlert® Advance



Courthouses must provide a public presence that conveys stability, integrity, and suggests the vital duties of the court. At the same time, it should maintain an open and inviting atmosphere. Because of the specialized functions, requirements, and essential duties of courthouses, additional emphasis must be placed on security and fire and life safety.

In Sanford, Florida, the aging four-story, two-tower Seminole County Civil Courthouse located near major Orlando attractions, was in immediate need of a full fire and life safety upgrade. The building, constructed in 1974, was nearly scheduled for the wrecker's ball before officials decided instead to fully retrofit the building.

According to project manager Randy Pinkham, vice president of operations for SiteSecure Inc., a Sanford fire and security systems installer, all existing equipment was outdated or in need of replacement due to diminished performance. The whole system, which complied with circa 1972 code, was nowhere near today's requirements.

To achieve project goals of a swift turnaround time and a complete review of the building, Pinkham focused on a fire and life safety system that was easy to install, required a minimum of troubleshooting and would readily pass code inspection.

SiteSecure installed an advanced notification system of more than 300 System Sensor SpectrAlert Advance speakers and speaker strobes. "We chose them because the new speaker strobes and new appliances from System Sensor are easy to install, durable and as attractive as fire alarm devices can be," says Pinkham. "The system was essentially pre-configured and just needed to be hung on the wall. The quick-mount offered big benefits in that it is easy to install and requires less time to service."

System upgrades often entail some wiring problems and troubleshooting issues. That was not so in this project, according to Pinkham. "There were no nicked or kinked wires to deal with, so ground faults were zero," he states. "Usually, on a job like this, you get some wiring problems with wires curling up and being pinched under the device. But it really wasn't present on this job because of the new appliances. The speaker strobes have an isolated bracket to install it. There was no troubleshooting to speak of."

Based on his experience in working with a proprietary fire alarm system for 27 years, Pinkham also favored a non-proprietary system. He recommended a full-voice integrated operating system: the Silent Knight Farenhyt IFP-1000. The fully addressable Silent Knight control panel is semi-proprietary, but the peripherals — the smoke detectors, pull stations and so forth — are totally non-proprietary.

Nearly one year after Seminole County Civil Courthouse was targeted for full renovation or demolition, SiteSecure completed the project and brought the building up to current fire and life safety codes. The renovation includes entirely new HVAC, fire/life safety, and security systems, all designed to minimize impact on the landmark building.



The fast turnaround time can be attributed to SiteSecure's dedicated efforts and adjusted work hours — project work was done at night and on days when court was not in session so that the courthouse was kept fully functional at most times — as well as their team of licensed engineers who did their own design work, its CAD department, and the assistance and responsiveness of the System Sensor and Silent Knight representatives.

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