

Case Study: Oregon State University

ExitPoint™



When the GEM building, a residential hall on Oregon State University's (OSU) Corvallis, Ore., campus, was scheduled for remodeling, OSU officials were given the opportunity to put their University Housing and Dining Services (UHDS) Fire Prevention and Protection Program to the test.

Gus Villaret, associate director for housing and dining at OSU, explains, "Fire safety is something we take very seriously." That's why Villaret thought it would be a good idea to install the System Sensor ExitPoint™ directional sound technology in the GEM building — making it the first university in the country to use ExitPoint in a residence hall.

Most of OSU's residence halls are simply designed. The GEM building, however, is more complicated. The GEM is a seven-story, 120,900-square-foot concrete building that was recently converted from a residential hall cell building to studio-style suites, plus one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. The food service area was also converted into loft units. Altogether, 231 units were created. Each floor now consists of three wings and a central lobby with elevators. The wings are winding, so going around one corner does not necessarily bring you to a stairwell or exit.



"From the architect's perspective, normally we try to meet the letter of the code when thinking about fire and life safety, as well as safety egress," explains Kurt Haapala, an associate with Mahlum Architects and designer of the GEM building. "But when we walked through this building, we were all left with a certain level of uneasiness about the egress route. It was simply a very confusing building."

Working in conjunction with the smoke detectors and other audible/visible notification devices, the ExitPoint system consists of a series of sounders placed throughout the GEM building. The sounders are on the same circuit as the building's notification appliances and are automatically activated as soon as a sensor detects the presence of fire or smoke. Unlike standard fire-alarm sounders, which simply alert people that there is a fire in the building, directional sound technology directs occupants which way to go — the perfect solution for the GEM.

After witnessing a demonstration of ExitPoint, UHDS fire prevention and protection specialist Steve Owens urged his colleagues to test ExitPoint in the GEM building. "We were able to utilize an area in the GEM building, bring the light level down to where it was virtually dark, add smoke and run through an evacuation scenario. It was extremely convincing," he says. "It became apparent to me that somebody in a very short period of time, even someone unfamiliar with the building, could find their way out of that building, unassisted, utilizing the system. I don't know of any other system built into a structure that could make that claim."

"For a person who hasn't been in this building, just trying to find your way around has been an issue," says Dan Potter, vice president of Housing Northwest, a non-profit property management corporation in Portland that works with OSU. "Directional sound makes sense for the safety of residents in the building. It can help deal with some issues of exiting this building by making it easier and clearer for people to find their way to an exit if there is an emergency."

Collaboration of all OSU partners made the integration of ExitPoint into the overall life safety system possible. In keeping with OSU's core values, "ExitPoint is just the latest example of UHDS going the extra mile to make sure they provide the safest accommodations possible," says Jim Patton, fire inspector for the Corvallis Fire Department

Effective emergency evacuations

The ExitPoint sounder provides the ideal solution for new and retrofitted fire alarm systems. As an audible exit sign, ExitPoint guides people to building exits — reliably, intuitively and safely. It can reduce evacuation times up to 75 percent, prevent injuries and help save lives.

For more information, visit www.systemsensor.com/ep.



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