

Killeen Schools

Killeen Independent School District (KISD) near Dallas, Texas is responsible for educating more than 33,000 children and young adults. The safety of the students, faculty and staff at 29 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, 4 high schools and 4 special campus schools is the primary concern and responsibility of the Facility Services Department, headed by Bob Carlisle, the Executive Director for Facilities Services.

Part of this responsibility was recently assigned by Bob Carlisle to Robert Marsh, a Facilities Planner for the Killeen ISD. Marsh was charged with managing the installation of new fire alarms for 18 elementary schools.

"We were experiencing continuing and increasing false alarms with our existing fire alarm systems, which in an academic environment interrupts the entire instructional process, and is completely unacceptable," Marsh explained. "When we were not having false fire alarms we were having trouble alarms. It was clear we needed a upgrade to improve these conditions and make our fire alarm systems trust-worthy.

The 18 schools we started with averaged 80,000 sq. ft. each. A principle challenge was that we needed to accomplish the installation without disrupting classes, teachers, or students. But the project provided many other challenges as well."

Choosing freedom of choice.

Over a fairly long time period, Killeen's contractor, Construction Services and Facility Planning (CSFP), under the direction of Ward Hughling, Coordinator for Construction Services, looked at numerous major suppliers in the industry. They also interviewed other school districts to see what they were using and what their experiences had been like. In general, they were looking for a history of reli-



Silent Knight Provides Killeen School District with Lessons on Life Safety and Low Life Cycle Costs

ability and low operating costs. But there were some other very specific parameters that helped them to narrow the field.

The number one factor for the CSFP group, after reliability and low operating costs, was finding a non-proprietary vendor. This came at the request of the Director of Maintenance Operations, Max Cleaver. He wanted "non-proprietary equipment", as this would lead to lower long term maintenance costs over the life of the equipment. And if the district was not satisfied with the company providing inspections and repairs, they would have the ability to contract with other fire alarm companies. Experience had taught the CSFP staff that when you worked with proprietary vendors, you always had to go through company branch offices. This meant to obtain

the appropriate equipment or to get service work done you are locked into a single supplier. "This is a very bad situation to be in as an owner. Sometimes proprietary vendors don't allow you to own their software, which is needed to program the fire alarms. And with our old systems, there were times when the parts we needed were no longer being manufactured. This locked the district into sending parts to a select few authorized repair facilities. We needed this to change. We need the flexibility to choose whom we work with and the ability to become more self-sufficient", stated Marsh. "This was one of the main reasons the CSFP group zeroed in on Silent Knight and the Farenhyt IFP-1000 analog addressable fire alarm panel."

Silent Knight goes to the head of the class.

Part of the Honeywell Life Safety group, Silent Knight offers industry-wide compatible fire alarm solutions for all small and mid-size institutions and commercial sites.

"With Silent Knight," Marsh continued, "you can buy parts pretty much from any of Silent Knight's authorized distributors. This type of flexibility leads to lower costs over the life of the system because it allows the district to price shop at several different sources. It also provides us with multiple locations nation wide to find parts needed in emergency situations. Marsh sees the "life cycle cost of a system" equally as important as the system's initial cost. "When determining which system is best for your application you must factor in both upfront costs and the cost to maintain a system while keeping it operating over its entire life cycle. The IFP-1000 is expandable, which means we don't have to train our personal on multiple fire alarm panels or stock large numbers of spare parts for multiple types of fire alarms."

The Farenhyt IFP-1000 analog addressable fire alarm panel combines all the features of Silent Knight's well-known control panels and provides an all-in-one product that includes built-in support for 127 addressable devices that can be expanded to a total of 1016 devices.

"It's simply a very reliable product," Marsh concludes. "There are no hidden problems or issues. It provides complete addressability, which is powerful benefit. And its low life cycle cost is the key difference-maker."

Robert Marsh, Killeen ISD Facilities Planner

"Plus the addressable nature of the system really lets us pinpoint the problem, by either remotely dialing the panel or by using its onsite diagnostic capabilities. This allows us to pinpoint the problems to an exact location and not just a single zone in a very large building. It's a major step forward from non-addressable systems."

"Like many districts, we can't build schools fast enough, so we have to rely on portable buildings to keep up with population growth," Marsh related. "The IFP-1000 is able to monitor all the portable buildings on site, currently,

as many as 17 or 18 portable buildings at a single elementary school location. Each portable has its own self-contained Silent Knight SK2224 two-zone conventional fire alarm panel that is linked back to the IFP- 1000 central panel. This remote monitoring ensures that all the buildings, portable and stationary, can be evacuated in an emergency."

A fast study.

The IFP-1000 accomplishes this specificity without relying on complex wiring. Instead, it uses a distributed amplification scheme to enable power sources to be linked directly to appropriate areas of evacuation. This makes installation a lot easier, and presents a major advantage when you're facing the type of tight schedule that the Killeen District faced.

"Our Silent Knight distributor, J.J. Moore with JM Electronic Engineering in Round Rock, Texas was able to install systems in 18 schools in just 12 months," Marsh said, lauding their efforts. "The Silent Knight products are truly turn-key, allowing the installers to completely redo a school's fire alarm system every 20 days. And they did it working with four different fire marshals in four different cities, each with its own set of codes and requirements."

The teachers in the ISD also find a lot to like in the IFP-1000 system. Firstly, they appreciate that all the installations took place at night, quickly, without disrupting classes. Secondly, they appreciate the simplicity of the system.

Said Marsh, "If the teachers see a problem code on a given panel, they can quickly get to the bottom of whether it's a real problem or just a result of a student playing with the panel. All the addresses are clearly labeled so the teacher or other employees can know right away where to look."

"My phone is relatively quiet now."

The maintenance staff is particularly grateful that the ISD made this significant upgrade in reliability and safety.

"Prior to the upgrade," Marsh recalled, "We would have repair people in here every day addressing a different issue, often saying



they'd fixed it only to have the same trouble lights appear ten minutes later. Sherry Glenn, the KISD Maintenance Dispatcher, told me, 'My phones are relatively quiet now in regards to fire alarm systems.'

A proper education.

Silent Knight staff provided key Killeen ISD personnel like Marsh with hands-on training, both at the Killeen site and a training facility in Dallas, making Marsh's job a lot easier.

"I understand the systems now," he explained. "I understand how they work, how they integrate. I'm not a true fire professional -- my job and required knowledge can change from year to year depending on the project at hand. But thanks to this training, I know enough to make sure that we're getting what we should be getting from our fire safety system."

Apparently Marsh knows enough to be completely satisfied with the Silent Knight installation. In fact, he is already in the process of installing IFP-1000 systems in four additional schools.

"It's simply a very reliable product," Marsh concludes. "There are no hidden problems or issues. It provides complete addressability, which is powerful benefit. And its low life cycle cost is the key difference-maker." Low life cycle costs takes a lot of stress out of Marsh's day, and the IFP-1000's features and benefits make the Killeen ISD a much safer place to go to school.



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