



## **Communications: our most powerful tool when it comes to the safety and security of our tenants/staff**

January 13, 2012 - Spotlights

For the safety and security of building occupants, building management and staff, real estate owners and managers must assure that their loyal tenants are safe and secure at all times. One essential means of providing this assurance is to have the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently throughout the facility.

Needless to say, intercom systems and telephone systems which enable Lobby desks to communicate with tenants of both commercial and residential properties have been in existence for many years, sometimes 20, 30 or even 40 years.

Like everything else, systems get tired, they often breakdown and need repair. Maintenance of these systems works as long as needed parts are available. Generally, manufacturers and distributors of two-way communications systems do not stock parts for any models over ten years old.

When these older intercom or telephone systems become unusable, a property must replace the systems with new equipment. More often than not, a communications supplier will propose the latest technology communications system and when they do, many will indicate that they will have to rewire the facility.

Throwing out the existing wiring and rewiring the entire facility could mean adding hundreds of thousands of dollars to the project.

It is recommended that the tens of thousands of feet of existing wiring that had been originally installed with the older communications systems try to be utilized with the new improved high technology systems.

Further, the same wiring can often be utilized when upgrading intrusion alarm systems.

You may now consider upgrading to a two-way telephone access system, a digital intercom system, a touchscreen intercom system, or a video intercom system and you will be pleasantly surprised with the ease with which these systems can be installed by utilizing the miles of existing wiring while saving you a major capital expenditure budget. It should be noted that used or unused telephone cables in the building can be also be used for intercom upgrades.

Just as reliable two-way communications is essential for life safety, it is also a powerful tool that can be used for general building maintenance announcements such as, "elevator banks 1 and 3 out of service from 10 a.m. to noon", "8th to 10th floor A and B stairway maintenance under way", "boilers down at midnight" or any other important building management messages.

When considering an upgrade to existing building telephone or intercom systems, it is important to note that in addition to improving communications between building management and tenants, between tenants and lobby desk personnel, between lobby personnel and elevator occupants or from management office to lobby desk or maintenance shops, the improved two-way

communications will greatly enhance your building's emergency action plan (EAP) or disaster plan with the objective of survival of your property's occupants.

Just as emergency preparedness plans typically address having back-up generators, emergency building lighting, back-up cellular phone service and even reserve oil tanks to support the continuity of business, upgraded two-way communications assures that your evacuation or shelter-in-place messages are received "loud and clear."

You may contact Safeguards International, Inc. for a complete two-way communications survey which will assess your existing communications equipment as well as assessing the existing building wiring with the aim of savings you hundreds of thousands of dollars in unnecessary expenditures for "new" wiring.

Allan Schwartz, CPP, CHS-III is president and CEO of Safeguards International, Inc., Yonkers, N.Y.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540