University Selects Siemens Sygnal™ Mass Notification

In1940, a 40 acre tract of lush, tropical vegetation located in Dade County was transformed into one of the leading centers of education in South Florida. The private university's main campus has expanded to accommodate nearly 9,000 students and 2,100 administrators, faculty members and support staff.

Client Background
The university had no mass emergency notification system to warn students and staff of impending danger. Complex and disparate systems dotted the campus. There was no unified interface for command and control. Individual fire alarms were the only means of emergency notification, and an antiquated phone call relay procedure took 10-15 minutes to implement.

Client Objectives
The university recently received a $60,000 Emergency Management Higher Education Grant. The school initially considered spending part of the grant on speakers for an outside notification system. However, after meeting with Siemens Account Manager Berkly Trumbo, the school's Dean of Students as well as Campus Safety, Facilities and IT Directors, decided a full security and emergency communication solution was in order.

Siemens Solution
The university specified Siemens Sygnal Mass Notification System that integrates with 54 buildings spread over 122-acres. Now being installed, the Sygnal system will reduce mass notification time to just seconds. Flexible and expandable, Sygnal also gives the university considerable time and cost savings from less downtime and reduced maintenance compared to other mass notification products.

Trumbo examined the campus's outdated communications systems and helped it leverage the grant for maximum return on investment. He presented the advantages of an expandable, enterprise level, indoor and outdoor emergency communications system that offered the highest levels of command and control. The solution focused on the Sygnal Server for consolidated mass notification command and control that is consolidated in a multi-modal system. Located at the campus's data center in the IT room, the server allows the university to communicate with a variety of network devices already deployed for other purposes on the network. Additionally, Siemens is helping to configure a master user interface that enables systems administrators to manage all aspects of the emergency communications system. This secure login approach allows for different levels of access, capability and viewership across pre-determined and customizable user rights.

Configurable user interface screens and options include interactive floor plans. Users can see specific devices on the Sygnal network and

communicate with one or many through prepared or ad hoc communications. Administrators can manage personal rosters. Scheduled messages/alerts may be sent across a variety of end point devices to take place at a specified time, either on a single occasion or ongoing cycle. Administrators can also manage a variety of rich media ranging from video to PowerPoint presentations to be sent to networked devices. They can also maintain the alerting message library where messages are created, edited and stored for varying types of end point devices specific to events, incidents and standard operating procedures.

An Integrated siren cluster for tone and voice alerting on a campus-wide basis, which is connected to the Sygnal server, is now being installed. Siemens is supplying the speaker array that is being mounted on the roof of the library, the tallest building on campus.

Plans call for a cable television interface for emergency messaging as well. Siemens has included a media interface from the Sygnal server capable of sending a media file to the university's cable television infrastructure. In case of an emergency either a prepared media file or an ad hoc message will be delivered across any television connected to the campus cable network. The number of LCD screens is increasing monthly; however, to date there are 11 LCD's deployed across the campus as well as a large number of personal televisions in student dormitories that will receive emergency communications.

Additionally, 10 LED message boards, that will display a variety of custom messages, are recommended. While the indoor LED message boards are intended for mass notification, they also offer multi-color display options and can display the time of day when in "stand-by" mode.

The university's Sygnal system is also capable of receiving messages from numerous sources using the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP). For added value, Siemens plans include integrating a weather alerting feed into the system, allowing the university to determine if official weather warnings warrant "alerting events" on the campus Emergency Communications System (ECS).

University officials have the option of adding as many layers of communication to the Sygnal system as needed over the coming decade. But, unlike other systems, Sygnal reduces mobilization time from minutes or hours to just seconds.