

# Corporate Security

Biweekly Intelligence Tracking Cutting-Edge Practices, Trends And New Technologies For Security Executives

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## APPLYING TECHNOLOGY

### Protect Communication Pipeline To Floor Wardens In Fire Evacuation

*Wireless alternative offered to sending crucial messages by radio, regular phone.*

If you're responsible for security at a high-rise office building, how concerned are you that communications from your assigned fire wardens will get lost in the melee during an evacuation? One U.K. vendor, **Blick Communications Ltd.**, believes that risk is substantial and has developed a communications pipeline it says is more dependable.

Blick's system is called ADEPT and hinges on communications devices that fire wardens would be assigned to wear on their belts at all times during working hours. Those devices would interact with a cellular infrastructure built into the building. During an emergency, someone in the security control center would send out an audible advisory signal along with a text message to the device worn by each floor warden.

Each fire warden would push a button on his or her mobile device to acknowledge receiving the message, then gather employees on that floor to evacuate. As soon as that floor has been evacuated, the warden would push a separate button on the device to alert the control center, explained **Gerry Wood**, director of international sales at Blick, a unit of **Stanley Security Solutions Inc./Indianapolis**.

Meanwhile in the control center, software on a PC would display a diagram of which floors had been evacuated and which hadn't. As fire wardens push buttons confirming the emergency message had been received and a floor evacuated, that floor's color would change on the diagram. Should those wardens run into technical or other problems and need voice communication, they can use two-way radios or stairwell emergency phones.

Blick is marketing an advantage over relying on a security officer in the control center to keep accurate track of frantic radio communications from fire wardens and to respond quickly and properly. Plus, the cellular-based system gives the control center an objective way to pinpoint a warden's location, since both the mobile device and floors' cellular units give a unique identifying transmission.

Blick's system is pretty new, although it has one major bank client in London using the technology at a headquarters building with 300,000 square feet on 44 floors. That company paid about \$400,000 (U.S.) for a system involving 186 fire wardens carrying ADEPT devices.

When CS asked **Robert Pearson**, manager of electronic security at **Raytheon Systems Inc./Lexington, Mass.**, to evalu-

ate this kind of technology, Pearson said he likes the idea of automated floor updates. At his facility, for example, the determination of whether a floor was completely evacuated takes place outside the building, as employees gather and a floor captain takes roll and then radios security. This system "would make it cleaner and speed up the process," Pearson said.

But, he does spot possible weaknesses. For instance, "how do you make sure [floor wardens] wear their unit and that they didn't forget it and leave it at home?" Pearson asked. "What if they punch the wrong button?" He also would want to make sure the units have a lengthy battery life and transmit a "battery low" warning. And, the text transmitted during emergencies would have to be very clear and easily understood, he added. If the device alerts wardens to a problem at the northeast door, everyone must agree on which door that is, he said.

Pearson sees this system as most applicable in high-rise buildings because of its reliance on cellular signal points; more cellular units would be needed in an elongated building. ■

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