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## **NOTIFIER Audible Exit Technology Sets Tone for Life Safety**

### **At The Seeing Eye® School**

A fire alarm system's sole purpose is to notify building occupants of an emergency and alert them to evacuate the building. But in an emergency, a timely evacuation can be challenging. Life safety systems that utilize visual signaling for evacuation assistance are adequate for some situations, but fall short in others. Visual aids can be obstructed and difficult to see through smoke in the event of a fire. Visual cues are passive and require people to track them down, which is especially problematic for those who are unfamiliar with the building and its emergency egress routes. What's more, persons with visual impairment are unable to follow exit markings or signage, rendering visual aids totally ineffective. Factor in the smoke that accompanies a fire emergency, and even unimpaired occupants can become disoriented. Finding an alternative to these visual-based systems was the challenge facing Bud Liptak, director of facilities at The Seeing Eye®, North America's premier guide dog school. And he found it in ONYX® ExitPoint™, a revolutionary audible exit technology from NOTIFIER, a world leading manufacturer of commercial fire alarm systems and technology.

Since 1929, The Seeing Eye in Morristown, NJ has matched nearly 14,000 specially bred and trained Seeing Eye dogs with blind men and women from across the United States and Canada. In pursuit of its philanthropic mission to help blind people achieve greater independence, The Seeing Eye teaches dogs to guide blind people. Not only does the school instruct blind people in the proper use and care of the dogs, it also breeds and raises the dogs, teaches instructors the science and technique of training the dogs, and educates the public on how guide dogs enable blind people to live independently. This school is entirely unique; only dogs trained at The Seeing Eye can accurately be called “Seeing Eye dogs.”

The school is, undoubtedly, unique, and requires a fire alarm system with the flexibility to address its special needs as well as the needs of its occupants. That’s why, The Seeing Eye turned to NOTIFIER and its local Engineered Systems Distributor, United Fire Protection [UFP] for a new fire alarm system. And although The Seeing Eye has been a customer of NOTIFIER and UFP for almost twelve years – when the original fire alarm system was installed – it was just recently that the school and Liptak learned of the ONYX ExitPoint evacuation guidance system that perfectly addressed the needs of the blind students.

It was Frank Savino, president and CEO of United Fire Protection, who actually brought this new technology to Bud Liptak’s attention.

Savino recalled, “About a year ago at the NOTIFIER Annual Distributor Conference, I saw a demonstration of the company’s ONYX ExitPoint notification device, and it just clicked with me; The Seeing Eye was an obvious candidate for this technology.”

What Savino saw, and what Liptak soon implemented, was an entirely new audible exit technology that supplements visual exit markings like emergency lighting, signage, and photo luminescent guidance strips with interactive auditory guidance. Capable of reducing evacuation times up to 75%, NOTIFIER’s ONYX ExitPoint system uses varying tones and intensities to provide directional cues that don’t conflict with traditional devices such as horns and bells. ExitPoint emits four different field selectable sound pulse patterns to help direct occupants to egress pathways and building exits. It clearly defines an immediate escape route, especially for those without the gift of sight.

Installed at building exits or along egress routes, ONYX ExitPoint is a compact speaker that produces broadband noise, acting as an audible exit sign. ONYX ExitPoint is triggered by a building’s fire alarm control panel, and guides building occupants towards the exits. Using changes in pitch, for example, a descending tone sound that goes from a high pitch to a low pitch, ExitPoint can direct the students on upper floors to the exits on the ground floor.

“Rich Fischer (the regional sales manager from NOTIFIER) gave us a presentation, and everyone here at the school was on board right from the start,” Liptak said. “We knew we wanted to upgrade our system, and ExitPoint certainly fit the bill. The system has been

installed throughout our entire administration building, and has received nothing but favorable reviews from students, teachers and administration alike.

To meet the budgetary needs of the non-profit institution, NOTIFIER donated the new equipment to the school, and UFP designed and installed the system at no charge. Both the design and installation phases were extremely easy. UFP was able to seamlessly integrate the product into the existing system, completing the installation in one week over the school's summer break.

“Part of the beauty of the ExitPoint system,” Savino said, “is that it can be easily retrofitted to existing notification circuits. This makes for fast installation. Also, the system draws an extremely low amount of power due to its lack of strobes and other visual components. In most cases, it can be connected directly to existing notification circuits without any additional wiring. However, consideration for power and load needs should always be evaluated.”

Both Savino and Liptak appreciated the help they received from NOTIFIER personnel throughout the installation and ramp-up period. “NOTIFIER's Rich Fischer was very helpful,” Savino said. “He took time to meet directly with us and The Seeing Eye people, explained how the ExitPoint technology works, and provided clear demonstrations to everyone. And from what we hear, the system has been working without a hitch.”

Liptak agreed, saying, “We are very excited to be pioneers in our field once again with this important life safety upgrade at our facility. In addition to the benefits of an auditory-based system, we have also found the ExitPoint to be extremely reliable. We have had no false alarms in the months since installing the system.”

ONYX ExitPoint is currently in place on The Seeing Eye’s main campus. “Our students find the ExitPoint system to be extremely intuitive,” Liptak continued. “Usually when a class first enters the building, we hold an Orientation with a quick fire drill to help students get their bearings in the building. We hold these practice drills about once a month when a new class of students arrives.” There are also plans for expansion beyond the main campus. “We have a ‘downtown lounge’ in downtown Morristown where students can relax while their classmates are in training,” said Liptak. “We’re upgrading the lounge in the coming months and are encouraging the landlord into installing the ExitPoint system.”

The benefits of this extraordinary system are clearly easy to hear. In fact, when it comes to this exit technology, hearing is believing.

*NOTIFIER is part of the Honeywell (NYSE: HON) Life Safety Group, an industry leader in providing commercial fire alarms, advanced detection and notification products, and home patent remote tracking.*

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