



## Searching for a Solution

### Protecting Students

College administrators have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for students while they are on campus. A key part of providing that protection is having a reliable system of smoke detectors installed in the dormitories.

California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo had a system in place, but the campus administrators weren't entirely happy with it.

#### Stopped by Concrete and Steel

Most of the dorms at Cal Poly were built many years ago. The three-story red brick exterior buildings are the picture of classic campus housing. But the very solid concrete-and-steel interior construction created problems when it came to their smoke detection system.

"The state fire marshal came in and asked for test reports on the smoke detectors," explains Colette Came, the owner of Came Security Alarms who has provided a number of security systems to Cal Poly. "At the time, we had 120V standalone detectors. We didn't have an easy way to test the system and document the results for the fire marshal. We needed verification that the detectors were working, so we explored supervised smoke detectors that would provide status feedback with documentation."

Came says that pulling wires through the dorms for smoke detectors "... would have been a nightmare," so she instead explored wireless options. Working with the university and the fire marshal, she created a solution that included the DMP XR200 Command Processor Panel™, with the detectors, repeaters, and wireless receiver provided by a different manufacturer.

There was some initial concern about whether the wireless technology would comply with the state fire codes. The main issue was whether the dormitories were commercial or residential structures. If classified as commercial structures, the relevant standard would be much stricter and the required technology much more expensive. In the end, the fire marshal was satisfied that the suggested wireless system would provide a satisfactory level of protection.

"We did three buildings with wireless smoke detectors," Came recalls. "It provided the university with the supervised detectors that they wanted, satisfied their budget constraints, and provided a good level of protection. Unfortunately, almost from the start we had trouble with reception. It was just a difficult installation because of the structures."

#### New Technology Solves the Problem

As Came searched for a solution, DMP introduced several new wireless components, including the 1161 Smoke Detector, but she was a bit wary.

"We were an early adopter of wireless," Came says, "but were nervous about getting back on the bandwagon after the problems with the first installation. So we surveyed the buildings with the DMP technology and it looked like we would get better results."

She pressed ahead with a three-building installation, identical to the footprint of the first, troublesome system. Each dorm included 110 rooms, all equipped with a detector.

"The original installation required three repeaters," Came says. "With the DMP 1100R, we used two ... one on each side of the building. These repeaters are tight! The signal is so stable and strong that we probably could have used only one repeater per building."

Came also replaced the then-obsolete XR200 panel with the XR500 Series Command Processor™ Panel. In addition to capturing strong, reliable signals from all of the smoke detectors, it also provided some instant, on-site savings.

"You need to know that all of the detectors are working, happy and heard by the panel," Came says. "With the DMP technology, while the techs are on site they can go to a keypad and poll all 110 detectors in the building. That made our job a heck of a lot easier and faster. You get instant information. With other manufacturers' equipment, it can take four hours to get that information from the system."

#### Kids Will Be Kids

One of the problems with campus installations is that college kids sometimes are less than models of good behavior. At worse, they physically damage smoke alarms. More frequently they pull the batteries out of the detectors so that they can smoke in their rooms or cook food. With an unsupervised system, the Cal Poly Facilities Department had no idea when smoke detectors were disabled.

With the supervised alarms, the Facilities Department knows instantly when any detector is disabled, and then can pinpoint its location. When the smoke detectors do require maintenance, it's much faster and easier with the DMP technology.



"In the past, after the Facilities Department replaced a detector, they had to go through a cumbersome process of re-enrolling it to identify it to the system," explains David Sharp, the DMP Southwest Regional Sales Manager. "With the 1161 detectors and XR500 panel, the Facilities

Department can enroll the new detector from their offices. They remotely connect to the panel and redefine the unique serial number of the new detector as it's being transported to the installation. The installer twists the old detector out, twists the new one in. It's very fast and requires minimal disruption to the students."

Came says that the university is already very happy with the system, but that the best is yet to come. "They don't know how happy they are going to be when they see how much easier the maintenance is. If a student takes

the smoke detector down and pulls the batteries out, it pops up on the university PC as missing. If the student hurts the detector or sprays Coke on it, they'll instantly know that there's an issue. If the battery level drops, they'll know it."

#### Detecting a Winning Solution

Relying on DMP technology, Came was able to provide the protection Cal Poly sought for its students. The university also gained the ability to easily poll the smoke detectors, receive instant notification of any problems, and the ability to generate printed reports of system status for the fire marshal.

They also now have a level of serviceability that wasn't possible before.

Came says that the university is very happy, and considering installing similar systems in additional dorms. She says that relying on DMP wireless technology for the Cal Poly dorms "... made a huge improvement, and was a very smart move."

**"Compared to the other detectors we installed, the DMP technology installed 10 times easier and provided a better signal. It's definitely a better product."**

**Colette Came, Came Security Alarms, Morro Beach CA**

#### Equipment List

- 1161 Smoke Detectors
- 1100R Repeater
- 1100X Receiver
- XR500 Series Command Processor™ Panel



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