

Taking the complexity out of life safety management

How remote activity monitoring informs and simplifies

Managing life safety systems can be challenging for a facilities manager – particularly if you're managing more than one building in a campus, city-wide or regional environment. Every fire alarm control unit in your environment represents a discrete set of alarms, alerts and maintenance records and schedules. Each one may require a different response process when there's a problem. When problems occur, you may not be nearby or available and there may not be a knowledgeable person on site to evaluate the situation and provide the proper response. These challenges are compounded by the fact that you're likely also managing other security and building automation systems.

Remote activity monitoring has been developed to address these challenges by providing greater visibility and control. This white paper explains the problems that remote activity monitoring solves, how it solves them and the benefits you can expect to see from remote monitoring.

The limitations of unconnected fire alarm control units

For decades, fire alarm systems were only able to connect to central station monitoring and local fire departments via traditional telephone lines. This direct connection enabled a fast response when an alarm sounded but provided no non-emergency information.

As life safety systems grew in sophistication, they gained the ability to capture and record more information from individual initiation and notification devices on the network, as well as storing building-wide information, such as event logs and maintenance and inspection records. However, to obtain any of that information about the life safety system, you still had

to consult the control unit in person. This has made facilities management difficult in several ways:

Excessive time demands: Every time an issue occurs with a fire control unit or you seek timely information about a particular life safety system, you – or another authorized person who's knowledgeable – must physically go to the building in question to get answers. If you have multiple control units in multiple buildings across a broad area, that's a significant amount of time spent going from building to building.

No backup for on-site expertise shortages: You may not have a trained life safety system operator on site when a problem arises. Is it something serious or can it wait until a more convenient time? You may not know immediately. Trying to diagnose a problem over the phone with an untrained person on site can be frustrating.

Unnecessary site visits: When you're away from your facilities and a problem occurs, you could lack the information you need to accurately assess the situation. To be safe and certain, you have to make an on-site visit – only to discover it was a minor issue that did not require your immediate attention. Your life has been disrupted and your time wasted for no reason.

Greater difficulty managing maintenance and service: All life safety systems require regular maintenance and service. The more fire control units in your environment, the harder it is to track and manage each system's maintenance history. This makes it more challenging to schedule maintenance efficiently and avoid disruption.

Remote activity monitoring can eliminate these difficulties, giving you greater visibility and control and simplifying your life.

What is a remote activity monitoring solution?

A life safety remote activity monitoring solution is an Internet Protocol (IP)-based system that accesses information from each fire control unit and sends it to a secure cloud storage system. From there, the information can be sent to a central monitoring station and also made available to one or more users via the internet through a web browser or mobile device. This makes just about all the information within the connected control units – including alarms, troubles, maintenance alerts and system logs accessible essentially anytime and anywhere.

How remote activity monitoring works

A typical remote activity monitoring solution consists of several components working in concert:

- **A gateway** installed in each fire alarm control unit transmits data via a Local Area Network (LAN) or wireless cellular network to the cloud.
- **A secure, managed cloud database** collects and hosts the data. Multi-layer access control gives users access to their control units, whether they are a single unit in a single building or multiple units spread across multiple campuses.
- **A web-based dashboard** receives real-time events from the cloud via the internet, displays it for users, and provides the capability to search historical events and view reports and logs for each control unit.
- **A mobile app** offers users the same capabilities as the dashboard via their mobile devices.

Result: improved visibility and control

Remote activity monitoring solutions provide facilities managers with a range of benefits that add up to improved visibility and control:

- **Easily monitor and manage multiple locations:** With a remote activity monitoring solution, information from all of your life safety control units in every building, across campuses and multiple locations, is always within easy reach. You gain total visibility – and you can grant access to your service providers as well.

- **Improve service efficiency and quality:** As you can see what's happening in each control unit and view logs, you can plan maintenance to minimize disruption and maximize efficiency. Remote access also allows remote engineers to view data and help on-site technicians correct problems.
- **Enjoy better safety and emergency response:** Through the use of a mobile app and push notifications, a remote activity monitoring solution gets critical information to you wherever you are, enabling a faster, more appropriate response.
- **Get easy access to information and reports:** At any time, you can connect to each fire alarm control unit's data via the web user interface to see exactly what's happening and review system logs.
- **Save time and improve productivity:** With detailed information always at your fingertips – whenever, wherever – you no longer have to waste time traveling to each building when an event occurs or you want to review system logs.
- **Gain peace of mind:** With improved visibility and control, you no longer have to worry about all the “what-ifs”.

Who can benefit most from remote activity monitoring?

Remote activity monitoring is ideally suited to facilities managers overseeing campus or multi-campus environments. School districts with multiple buildings can monitor and manage their life safety systems at all locations from a single workstation. Hospitality management chains operating multiple hotels in a geographic area can coordinate maintenance and service among them. And commercial real estate management firms can respond quickly and effectively to alerts from any of the fire alarm systems in their portfolio.

Learn more

As a global leader in both smart building and fire protection solutions, Johnson Controls can provide a remote activity monitoring solution that can help you better safeguard people and property – and simplify your life. To learn more, visit www.johnsoncontrols.com/fire-detection

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