Looking to Update Your Fire Alarm System?

Fire alarms are the first line of defense against one of the largest and most catastrophic threats to your facility.

Commercial fire alarm systems are typically made up of 2 main groups of components:

- **The Head-End:** A primary control panel that serves as a hub for all the smoke detectors, heat detectors, hand pull devices and other alarm devices throughout a space. It's also where an alarm signal is sent from the facility to a 24/7 alarm monitoring center.
- **The Field Equipment:** The detection and notification devices, including: smoke & heat detectors, hand-pull stations, strobe lights and horn strobes.

An issue in one, or both of these areas can lead to a malfunction or system failure. Here are a few signs that your alarm system may need to be replaced, as well as a few new technologies that you can integrate to improve the safety and efficiency of your system.

Signs Your Fire Alarm Needs to be Replaced

As with any technology, fire alarm systems need to be replaced; either because components are starting to break or simply because the system is outdated. Here are a few signs that your system needs to be replaced:

1. Your smoke detectors are more than 10 years old and your heat detectors are more than 15 years old. After this much time has passed the effectiveness of these tools is greatly reduced. In many places there are ordinances and codes stating that they must be replaced every ten years. If you install new detectors, their technology may be too advanced for your existing control panel, meaning that the whole system needs replacing.
2. Your system has old wires/ground faults and they are causing the entire system to malfunction. When it comes to fire alarm systems and life safety, it's crucial to get ahead of these issues and ensure the system is working properly. A malfunctioning fire alarm system can shut down an entire facility or operation. It's not worth the risk.
3. You have a legacy fire alarm system that simply cannot pull the weight of new expansion and company growth. If a system cannot scale, there is an increased possibility that it will become strained, overworked and will malfunction.
4. Your system has just died. This is possibly the worst case scenario. A business cannot be open or operate without a functional fire alarm system. If the existing systems breaks, it can be very expensive to rush a new installation or upgrade and older systems. Be proactive. Don't wait until system failure to replace old fire alarm technology. It can take days, weeks or longer to design, engineer and install a replacement.

New Technology to Improve Safety and Efficiency

Whether you are thinking about installing an entirely new system or just looking to make some improvements to your current system, there are a number of technologies on the market today that can make your system safer, more efficient, and help you comply with a variety of fire codes. Let's take a look at a few examples:

Voice Evacuation/Notification
While voice evacuation technology has been around for a long time, only recently has it become a standard function of fire alarm systems and required by many fire codes. Why is voice evacuation being used in more applications? It is considered to be a better alternative to traditional loud, jarring fire alarms because a voice is less likely to cause people to panic and it can give specific evacuation instructions.

Voice evacuation alerts can inform people of where or what exactly the danger is, so they can avoid it. They can also be used to more accurately deploy law enforcement, fire services, or emergency services who have arrived on the scene.

More Efficient Notification Devices
Recently, alarm manufacturers have been making great strides to improve notification devices and make them more efficient. New devices draw less current, allowing for more devices to be on a single loop. The improved indoor horns, strobes, horn-strobes and 2-wire horn-strobes have a 20-35% reduction in current (or electricity) draw. Using less current helps small to medium businesses and large commercial building end users reduce costs.

Mobile Apps
While mobile control of a system is unavailable due to fire alarm code, looking into a system and monitoring it are not. The ability to connect a system to a network and use a mobile app allows for easy viewing of large facilities. This can be an exceptional tool for organizations with multiple buildings or large, sprawling campuses.

One of the apps that we at EPS provide our customers with access to, will keep a running record of the times that a specific fire alarm device sounds. If the device needs service, the app can be used to submit a service ticket directly to us and an EPS technician will be dispatched to fix the malfunctioning device.

About EPS Security

Engineered Protection Systems, Inc. was founded in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1955. What began as a modest, local operation with a handful of employees has blossomed into a multi-state company with more than 200 employees, three additional Michigan branch offices and thousands of satisfied customers.

Over the past decade, EPS has more than doubled in size. We currently rank as one of the top 30 largest security providers in the nation. We offer the stability, experience, skills and technology of a national provider; yet the people who manage EPS are the same local people who own it. We are your neighbors.

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