

Working Together for Life Safety Roger Williams University and Bristol, Rhode Island Fire Department



The relationship between colleges and universities and their supporting municipal fire departments is a critical point of focus in providing high quality life safety response on campus. The volunteer fire department in the town of Bristol, RI improved its life safety response to local college, Roger Williams University using a unique combination of technology and procedure.

The University

Located on 140 acres of Mount Hope Bay, RI, the Roger Williams University campus is set amid the natural beauty of the New England coastline. An independent liberal arts university, the school combines the unique strengths of small liberal arts colleges and those of larger comprehensive universities and where liberal and professional education are enhanced by their integration and the recognition of their unity. For nine months of the year, the school serves as home to over 4000 students, expanding the population of the town of Bristol, RI from 21,000 to 25,000.

The University's Department of Public Safety is responsible for providing security and safety for the entire University community. The Department provides 24/7 on site dispatch for campus fire and life safety response. "We strive to provide high quality security, safety and crime prevention services that meet the needs and standards of this progressive academic institution" said Dan Gough, director of Environmental Health and Safety at Roger Williams University.

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Dan Gough
Director of EHS
Roger Williams
University

The Municipality

The Bristol Volunteer Fire Department performs fire and rescue (EMS) services for the 10 square mile Town of Bristol in coastal Rhode Island. Soon to celebrate its 175-year anniversary, it is one of the longest running active volunteer fire departments in the United States. Dispatching over three thousand calls per year is no small feat for this tightly knit "family" of firefighters that often includes students from Roger Williams University. "Most of our calls occur during the opening and closing months of the standard university year" said Bristol Fire Department Chief Robert Martin.

The Challenge

As with most New England municipalities, the Bristol Fire Department monitors its public buildings and protected premises from a centralized dispatch station at the Fire Department. Until about three years ago, the town's dispatching system was connected to its subscriber buildings by direct wires. "Town growth created too many wires for the station, and those wires created many false alarms" mentioned Chief Martin. The transition from direct wire to radios is currently ongoing with a planned total of over 200 subscribers.

Concurrently, Roger Williams University directly monitored their fire alarms at an on-campus, centralized dispatch station using expensive and often unreliable telephone lines. Further, the campus buildings contained a mix of different models of FCI and Mircom panels that made it difficult for single dispatcher to efficiently monitor them. "We wanted a uniform, standardized system for increased accuracy and better reporting," indicated Gough.

Both the University and the Fire Department were looking for ways to improve reliability and reduce the ongoing expense of their fire alarm monitoring systems.

The Solution

The Bristol Fire Department wanted a method of signaling that would eliminate its dependence on inconsistent direct wires and Roger Williams University wanted a wireless system that would save expense on new construction projects that are part of the school's exponential growth. The University also needed to monitor residence halls on the south side of campus, which are separated from the main campus by a bridge. The expense of establishing direct wires through the bridge would have been prohibitive for the school.

The University required that their system:

- Receive signals from different models and different brands of fire alarm control panels (FACPs)
- Provide a high degree of addressable, comprehensive information for fast, accurate dispatch
- Send only fire and life safety signals to the Bristol Fire Department
- Save money on monthly telephone expense and on wiring for new construction
- Allow for phased-in transition and enable future expansion

The Fire Department required that their system:

- Enable the town to transition over several years from direct wire to wireless
- Reduce false alarms and vandalism
- Provide addressable information to the department dispatcher
- Require less space than traditional direct wire systems



Both the University and the Fire Department chose Keltron's active network radio system to provide wireless addressable signals to their dispatch stations. The University added the Keltron LS 7000 life safety event management system to provide comprehensive incident information for their dispatchers. The Fire Department leases its system from Home and Commercial Security, which also services the system. The University purchased its system from Mammoth Fire Alarms, Inc. which also services its system.

When the University receives an alarm at its dispatch center, the Keltron active network radio system simultaneously sends the signal to the Bristol Fire Department to alert them to the problem.

Working Together

To enhance campus safety, the University's Department of Public Safety maintains a well-established relationship with the Bristol Fire Department. When the University receives an alarm at its dispatch center, the Keltron active network radio system simultaneously sends the signal to the Bristol Fire Department to alert the dispatchers to the problem. That signal to roll the trucks is followed by a call from the University dispatcher to the Bristol FD, with more information on the exact nature of the alarm.

This system substantially reduces the amount of time that it takes for the Fire Department to respond to University alarms, and ensures that all the information available is transmitted directly to the responding personnel.

The Benefits

In addition to enabling effective cooperation between the University and the Fire Department, their Keltron systems provide a range of benefits to both organizations. Some system features and functionality provide similar advantages such as improved accuracy and reduced expense while some, such as universal compatibility and history reporting provide specific benefits to each organization, including:

- Standardize the dispatch system through universal compatibility with different brands of FACPs
- Increase accuracy by sending only fire and life safety alarms to the fire department
- Improve overall efficiency with extensive history reporting
- Reduce expense by eliminating costly telephone lines and additional wiring
- Provide an efficient path for future expansion

Keltron develops and manufactures universally-compatible, UL listed life safety event management systems for the municipal and proprietary markets. Solutions include Ethernet signaling systems, active network radio systems, distributed multiplex systems, digital communicator/receiver systems, and direct wire systems. This document is not intended for installation or maintenance purposes. For more information visit www.keltroncorp.com or contact us at 781-894-8710.

