

Emergency Communications System Warns Campus of Tornado

As a tornado packing 200-mile-per-hour winds bore down on Joplin, Missouri on May 22, the value and importance of Missouri Southern State University's investment in a Simplex fire alarm and emergency communications system suddenly became very clear.

Fortunately for the university, it turned out that the MSSU campus was not impacted by the EF-5 category tornado that devastated much of the City Joplin. But in the eyes of university officials, the emergency communications system did its job to perfection: warning people across campus to get to shelter in preparation for the approaching twister.

"We are very, very pleased," says Craig Richardson, Coordinator-Fire Safety/Environmental Health at MSSU. "We received kudos for our system from the City of Joplin and the Missouri

State Emergency Management Agency. I can't say enough about how the system works."

Those positive words are for an emergency communications system that is powered by and integrated with the university's Simplex 4100U fire alarm network and its Simplex TrueSite life-safety information management workstation. The emergency communications system, which provides mass notification capabilities inside university buildings and in exterior areas via powerful speaker arrays, had only recently become fully operational.

"The odds of having certain kinds of emergencies here are not great, but I can guarantee you that we are going to have severe weather," Craig says. "Knowing we have this type of capability helps put my mind at ease, and helps put my administrators' minds at ease as well."



When the tornado hit, the university, the sounded a warning siren followed by a customized, pre-recorded tornado warning message. Students, faculty, staff and visitors were able to get to shelter in preparation for a potential tornado hit. Many took refuge at the newly completed, 85,000-square-foot Health Sciences Building while others sheltered at the Leggett & Platt Athletic Center or the Young Gymnasium.

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