

MUNICIPAL SECURITY



A SWELL OF SECURITY

Michigan community protects beachgoers and harbor

By Michael Zuidema

Located along the southeastern shoreline of Lake Michigan, the city of South Haven annually sees its population swell as thousands flock to its beautiful harbor and beaches. Each summer, South Haven's 5,000 year-round residents are joined by an estimated 15,000 boaters, swimmers, tourists and retirees returning north—all eager to enjoy the city's seven lakefront beaches, four public marinas and mouth of the 4.2-mile Black River.

In the summer of 2009, however, that picturesque setting was shaken when 45-year-old Martin Jordan from St. Charles, Ill. drowned while saving his two children from strong rip currents in Lake Michigan.

An ensuing federal lawsuit alleged that the city of South Haven should have

had more safety measures in place to warn beachgoers of dangerous water conditions. As part of the settlement, South Haven officials agreed to enact a variety of new beach and pier safety efforts, including the installation of emergency help points at the city's North and South beaches.

ENTER CODE BLUE CORP.

The Holland, Michigan-based manufacturer of emergency communication solutions was tabbed by the city to install a pair of blue light pedestals, equipped with emergency speakerphones operated by a high-tech software system.

With the help of MidState Security of Wyoming, Mich., city officials selected the model CB 1-d, a 9-foot-tall pedestal help point from Code Blue for its rug-

ged durability, multifaceted features and high visibility. The unit has two openings: one equipped with Code Blue's IP5000, a self-monitoring, VoIP, emergency speakerphone, and the other used for directory listings, although it also could have been used for card readers, CCTV and other security devices. Managing the entire system is Code Blue's ToolVox unit programming and diagnostics (UPD) that provides an efficient, easy-to-use template for the administration of emergency units.

"The intent of the call boxes is to provide our beachgoers with safe and efficient contact to the city's first responders," said Brian Dissette, South Haven city manager. "It is our expectation that having the call boxes onsite will make the process of seeking help easier for out-of-town beachgoers, as they will not have to rely on landmarks to guide first responders to their location.

"Further, during special events in South Haven, we routinely will lose mobile phone service due to the volume of users accessing the mobile phone networks. Having the call boxes onsite, we anticipate the public will always be able to reach first responders."

The entire package ensures that visitors will never be far from immediate assistance, whether it's an emergency in the water or something a little more mundane, like car trouble or someone asking for directions.

"Efficient communication between the public and first responders is the biggest benefit," Dissette said. "The call boxes are also equipped with contact to the city's non-emergency phone system, which allows the public to contact the city's staff to address questions about the city, special events or beach parking rules."

The safety improvements have been met with approval by the community.

"Very positive...anything we can do to improve the safety of the beachgoers is generally well-received," Dissette said. "The city's elected officials were of unanimous consent when they approved the purchase, and they're looking forward to seeing these upgrades available for future beach seasons."

A RICH HISTORY

South Haven officials have long known about Code Blue. In addition to being located only about 30 miles south of



Code Blue's corporate headquarters, a portion of the company's machine work is occasionally done in South Haven.

"Code Blue has a strong presence throughout the state of Michigan and can be seen at public facilities across the state," Dissette said. "The company is a 'known quantity' and was readily familiar for South Haven officials. The company has supplied equipment to other lakeshore communities and has done a good job of servicing those applications. As a result, South Haven felt confident we were getting a high-quality product that is locally made."

Code Blue products have been used to improve safety and security at beaches in Santa Monica, Calif. and all around the Great Lakes region. In addition, they can be found at the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and the Port of Seattle.

"We were more than happy to assist South Haven with its safety upgrades," said David Cook, Code Blue COO. "We have a wide range of products that are ideal for cities with waterfront locations. Whether it's help points, mass notification software or public address speakers, Code Blue works hard to ensure that safety and security is a top priority for any project."

CONNECTING TO LIFE

MidState Security combined the Code Blue pedestals with Ultra 8-megapixel video cameras to communicate over wireless broadband connectivity, and further improve safety and security on the waterfront.

"This solution connects to life-safety personnel, allowing for the visual monitoring of any emergency," said Lewis Stallworth, strategic account manager for MidState Security. "Authorities are able to pass along real-time assessments to first responders, before they reach the scene, maximizing preparedness and saving precious time.

"As an added benefit, the solution allows for the observation of weather conditions and beach traffic. This will assist in more efficiently directing first responders to the location of an emergency situation."

The city also invested \$20 million in a new water filtration plant located across the street from South Beach, and \$3 million to renovate Phoenix Street, which leads through downtown to the waterfront, in addition to new parking lots, playground equipment and walking paths.

"We also opted to have cameras installed so that we can view the actual

wave conditions on a real-time basis. We've installed beach warning flags that are maintained throughout the day, every day, throughout the swimming seasons," Dissette said. "In addition to those upgrades, on the piers we have 'throw' rings, as well as ropes and other equipment to help with actual rescue efforts. We find that those are used throughout the summer routinely."

When combined with Code Blue's help points, the added safety measures guarantee that beachgoers have even faster and more efficient communication.

Dissette said that the city is planning to purchase additional units to place in other locations along the water to improve safety even more in the future.

"What we've found is taking some of the guesswork out of the response for police and fire makes a lot of sense," he said. "By having a push button, it eliminates the question of where we need to respond, so we're hopeful having Code Blue on the beach will make it simpler for first responders to get to the exact location where help is needed."

Michael Zuidema is the communications manager for Code Blue Corp.

