Frequently Asked Questions

ExitPoint™ Directional Sounders with Voice Messaging



What are the limitations of traditional Exit signs?

In most buildings, exit routes are identified by visual means using exit signs. However, in an emergency, many people fail to spot nearby exits and can walk straight past them for a variety of reasons. For example, signs can be obscured by smoke. Exits can also be difficult to find in visually cluttered areas (i.e., airports, shopping malls). And even if exit signs are clearly visible, occupants often evacuate a building by the route through which they entered. Many times, this is not the quickest or safest way out.

What is an ExitPoint directional sounder?

Triggered by existing fire detection systems, ExitPoint directional sounders positioned at carefully chosen locations guide building occupants along escape routes and to perimeter building exits. ExitPoint has been shown to decrease evacuation times by up to 75 percent, even in conditions with little to no visibility.

What makes this sound directional?

ExitPoint uses broadband noise, the only type of sound human brains can accurately pinpoint. Narrowband sounds, such as emergency sirens, are more difficult to pinpoint. This is why many people can't locate the direction of an approaching ambulance until they see it.

Is there any risk of leading building occupants toward an exit that isn't safe?

Emergency exit signs mark the pre-designated exits within a building. They make no attempt to indicate whether a route is safe or not. The evacuee has to make his own decision on which route to take. When used as a simple audible exit system, ExitPoint directional sounders are used as an aid to highlight where evacuation routes and exits are located, just like emergency exit signs.

If two or more ExitPoint sounders are heard at the same time, how do building occupants choose which to follow?

If routes leading towards the ExitPoint speakers are equally visible, research shows occupants will choose the route where they perceive the speaker to be the loudest. However, if there are signs that one route is less viable due to smoke, heat, or sounds of distress, they will choose a route that they believe offers the best chance for survival.

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How does ExitPoint's voice messaging capability work?

ExitPoint is capable of playing a recorded alert message in between directional sound bursts that instructs occupants of the action to take as they approach an ExitPoint device, including "stairs up," "stairs down," "area of refuge" and "exit here." This makes it possible for occupants – even those who have never before heard an ExitPoint device, to react quickly and confidently. ExitPoint has a total of 15 single and combination language choices, including English, English/Spanish, and English/French.

Will the public know what the ExitPoint directional sound means even if listener ability or ambient noise makes it impossible to hear voice messages clearly?

Yes. Research shows that a briefing on the meaning of the sounds is not critical to ExitPoint's effectiveness. In some trials, those who had no briefing actually arrived at appropriate exits more quickly than those who had a briefing.

What if a building occupant is deaf?

ExitPoint does not replace traditional exit signs, so these methods of guiding occupants to exits will still be available to those with complete hearing loss. However, the majority of people registered as "deaf disabled" in the U.S. are defined as such because they cannot hear sounds in the frequency band containing speech. As a result, many people who are classified as deaf disabled will be able to hear and pinpoint ExitPoint's broadband sound.

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