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Indiana Fire and Building Safety Commission
Division of Code Services
302 W Washington St, Room W246
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2739

Commissioners;

Please indulge me for a little background. When Ford Center was undergoing planning for the Automatic Fire Alarm System, a variance (10-02-18) was applied for, and granted, to use the ribbon board in the bowl area to notify any occupants in that area of a fire alarm. The reason for the original variance request was because notification devices (horns & strobes) would be ineffective at the height they would be mounted. The ribbon board was to display an evacuation message during a fire alarm, in lieu of the horns & strobes. This was in agreement with the Local Fire Official (LFO).

During one of our annual tests, the ribbon board failed to illuminate although the main fire panel showed multiple signals. The fire alarm contractor which installed the system was present and didn't understand what caused the malfunction. After about 30 minutes a VenueWorks employee alluded that "the guy that turns the computer on isn't here" and was discovered the ribbon board was tied to the graphics computer and wouldn't operate when the computer was off. It is unknown at this time whether it was initially installed this way, installed incorrectly or later changed, but this condition was not known to the installing contractor or LFOs. It has also been verified that during this general timeframe, at least two (2) alarms occurred during scheduled events. The Fire Dept. responded but no one in the bowl was aware that the alarm was going off and no evacuation occurred.

This test was performed in mid-November just prior to the annual 4 day Shrine Circus event. With little time to modify or effectively change the system, State Fire Marshal James Greeson ordered a mandatory 3 person fire watch, for all events, until the deficiency was corrected. This was meant to be a **temporary** measure only, although VenueWorks has been operating like this for nearly the last six (6) months. In early 2015, a plan for compliance was developed to install horns and strobes under the catwalk which could be seen from all points in the bowl. This plan was acceptable to the LFO. The original alarm contractor designed the additional notification system, VenueWorks secured the funds and approval to complete the project was granted, yet here we are several months later with no movement.



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VenueWorks has demonstrated on many occasions a reluctance to cooperate and/or provide information to the Evansville Fire Department and the State Fire Marshal's Office regarding deficiencies and Fire Code violations in Ford Center. Any solution needs to be written and well defined as verbal agreements are often misunderstood or easily forgotten.

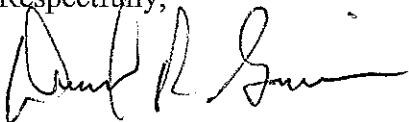
There are many possible solutions to rectify this issue, but of the ones commonly mentioned, the LFO recommends one of the following, and in the following order:

1. Install horns and strobes under the catwalk in multiple locations around the bowl to be seen from any point in the bowl area. We would request the ribbon board to be used in conjunction with the horn & strobes, since the ribbon board is NOT an automatic system. The LFO has no objection to substitute different colored FPLR for the red FPFRR to have a more visually appealing appearance, as this was an objection from VenueWorks. This was the designed, adopted and funded plan.
2. Install additional horns & strobes or re-locate the existing horns and strobes that are currently in the access corridors of the bowl. The existing horns & strobes can only be seen from the bowl area when the blackout curtains are retracted. During the vast majority, if not all events, these curtains are closed and the strobes cannot be seen from the bowl. Moving these to the "bowl side" of the curtain would allow them to be visible at all times.
3. Leave the graphics computer turned on 24/7 and make it unable to be turned off. To assure a true automatic component to the notification system, a supervisory circuit should be added to the main panel, so it's readily visible if there's no power to the graphics computer. This may not be a technically viable solution. (The LFO realizes the financial hardship this would cause and agrees to this as a last resort.)

All of these suggestions would be subject to design and approval of a Fire Alarm System design professional and compliance with the current Indiana Fire Code.

The Evansville Fire Department holds citizen safety in high regard and wishes to work with VenueWorks and the Evansville Vanderburgh County Building Authority, to move forward to a favorable solution.

Respectfully,



Daniel R. Grimm
Chief Fire Marshal
Evansville Fire Department