



ACTON, Mass.—Packaging a variety of services together has benefited both Protex Central’s customers and the Des Moines, Iowa-based company, said company president Shawn Mullen.

Protex, which serves the commercial and institutional verticals in Iowa and Nebraska and some states beyond, began 45 years ago as a fire alarm inspection business, Mullen said. Today, about 60 percent of the company business is fire-related, and it has a recently renewed focus on inspection, testing and maintenance services that have led to growth, Mullen said.

For example, he told Security Systems News, “we will provide not only the fire systems inspection work ... fire extinguisher serving and tagging and ... we’ll [coordinate with the sprinkler contractor and bill for sprinkler services] so it’s a kind of one bill kind of thing.” Also, he said, the company offers third-party monitoring and can combine that on a platform.

It helps the customer to streamline coordination of services and enables Mullen’s business to offer broader services beyond fire alarm, Mullen said.

Protex is just one systems integrator “expanding their brand” by selling service agreements on a wide range of systems, according to Joe Siderowicz, owner of AfterMarket Consulting Group, which is based here.

Siderowicz has worked with Protex and other companies to help them expand and package service offerings.

“Many have moved beyond servicing just the equipment they distribute by offering a broader service offering that may include packaging fire alarm, security, sprinklers, fire extinguishers, (and more),” Siderowicz told SSN in an email interview. “They find that by integrating various services into one agreement they can add revenue and compete better in the marketplace.”

Jessup, Md.-based SPC Inc. is another company that Siderowicz has worked with.

Paul Curry, VP of the 25-year-old life safety systems company serving commercial and institutional clients in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia, said it is now offering such service packages as inspection of fire extinguisher, sprinkler and fire alarm. “We possibly might call for a discount if you did all three services with us,” Curry said.

He said that working with Siderowicz has helped the company restructure. “We used to be 70 percent installation and 30 percent recurring service and maintenance and now we’re 60 percent recurring service and maintenance and 40 percent installation,” Curry said.

The company also now offers nurse call and is adding five new sales representatives to its current sales staff of 11 to focus on that, Curry said.

He said nurse call could be packaged with other fire services offering as a selling point by the new sales staff at health care facilities. “We want to give them the ability once they’re there to pose questions concerning their existing fire alarm, fire extinguisher...there’s certain things you’ll look for as you walk through the building, you’ll see tags on the extinguisher, you’ll see the name of the fire alarm panel, and it kind of gives you different things to bring up in conversation,” Curry said.

Mullen said service, inspection and maintenance make up about 25 percent of Protex’s business, but that after working with Siderowicz, “we’ve been able to begin to make significant inroads into opportunities that are clearly going to expand that.” He plans to add additional sales staff to the company of about 53 employees.

He said offering packaged services is a vital part of that growth. “It feeds on itself,” he said. “We have the opportunity to provide system solutions in terms of new equipment, sales and new equipment installation, but this is another opportunity for us to come back and continue the relationship, providing the service, the inspection, the testing and the maintenance that all those systems need to really deliver the solution that they were intended to do.”