Duress Annunciation

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A function that is commonly requested with a card access system is a "duress" button for location that the client deems exposed to potential disturbance. Examples of such areas are reception areas in general and human resources reception areas in particular. The user interface at the reception desk would be a latching button of the type known to vendors as a "holdup" button. This button is usually a normally-open contact that latches closed when pressed and needs to be reset manually before it will open. The contacts are wired to a general-purpose input of the card access system which then annunciates the duress problem. This annunciation may take the form of triggering outputs from card access system hardware that illuminates strobe lights and sounds audible annunciation. It will always log the event, and may be remotely annunciated by email or telephone auto-dialer.

An enhancement to the basic duress annunciation is to interface it to a closed-circuit video system. In simplest form, an output from the card access system is used to trigger a video switcher or digital video recorder which then puts video from the duress area on a monitor. The strobe light or audible annunciation may be used to alert operators to the need to view the video.

It is also possible to monitor sound. First, a microphone must be installed in the area of the holdup button and wired to an audio monitor. In this scenario, the output from the card access system, in addition to triggering the video display, will trigger an input in the audio monitoring equipment that will cause the correct microphone to be selected and routed to speakers so that the operator may monitor both the real-time video and audio. This will usually be done without recording the audio signal because audio recording may be prohibited or has other undesirable legal implications.

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