



## **Improved Door Control Means the Hospital Is Purring, While Saving Maintenance Cost**

The Santa Barbara community is blessed with a well respected and full service medical institution in Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital. Founded in 1888, this 408-bed acute care teaching hospital is the largest of its kind between Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area. The facility has annual admissions of more than 19,000 patients, 40,000 emergency department visits and 2,800 births. Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital is renowned for its comprehensive maternal-child services and Cottage Children's Hospital, cardiac, neurosurgical, and oncology programs, a level II trauma center, Cottage Residential Center, and outpatient services.

In keeping with the hospital's never-ending desire to improve patient care and move forward with modern, creative facility improvements, they were confronted with a very practical problem. One element of the facility's infrastructure was not keeping up with the needs of the medical professionals to accommodate quick, efficient transfer of patients.

## Cottage had a problem with its automatic door controls

Therefore, Mark Mullenary, the Director of Facilities had a problem. The unreliability of the switches which control automatic doors was extremely frustrating to hospital employees. The maintenance costs associated with constant repair of the switches compounded the frustration. Cottage Hospital needed a wall switch that was robust, able to activate with a push on its entire surface and did not require hostile pounding to activate the door

Needless to say it is essential in the facility to quickly and efficiently transfer patients for different services. The hospital was equipped with a number of automatic doors which were designed to open with the activation of a wall mounted door switch. Unfortunately there was a serious issue with the reliability and operation of the switches. The medical professionals moving patients would need to carefully push the switch plate in the right place to get the automatic doors to open. In emergency cases the medical staff was rushing to get a patient on a gurney from point A to point B. They would press the switch while moving quickly down the hall with the patient, only to get to the door and have it fail to open. The way the staff dealt with the situation involved hitting the switch with full force. This method proved more reliable in activating the switch and opening the door, but often put holes in the walls and eventually broke the wall switches.

Mark Mullenary and Cottage Hospital found a solution for a robust and consistent switch in the Hand-E-Tap®. The Hand-E-Tap, manufactured by Essex Electronics, is a piezo-electric technology switch.



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Mark Mullenary



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The Hand-E-Tap employs piezo-electric sensor elements behind a rugged stainless steel activation face. There are no moving parts in the sensing face of this solid state component. As a hand presses the front face, the piezo elements produce an electric charge which is sensed by the onboard electronics within the device. The electronics provides an output to the door controller to open the door. The electronic switch technology is robust, consistent in sensitivity to push activation and very durable.

Mark commented, “When we installed the Hand-E-Tap my phone started ringing off the hook.” Most people like to comment on things they don’t like. Mark reported “People at the facility were so pleased with the improved door control switch; I received numerous calls from our staff to voice their delight.” Since Mark has installed the Hand-E-Taps throughout the facility, he stated “The hospital is now purring the way it should.”

The automatic doors are now opening when they should. There is no need to slam the switch or put holes in the wall. The doors are opening after a light press of the Hand-E-Tap. The flow of patients within the facility is moving without problem. Cottage has installed the Hand-E-Tap in its current facility and is planning to utilize the electronic switch in its new facility being built. The Hand-E-Tap has proven to be a very reliable device with the right sensitivity to operation, eliminating hospital employee frustration with poor automatic door control, while improving patient care and reducing maintenance costs.