

Advancing *Area* of Rescue *for* life safety

Bonnie Noga, Area-of-Rescue expert at Jeron, reflects on the company's 60-year legacy and its UL 2525-certified communication systems for accessible emergency evacuation

While their life safety systems are installed throughout the world, Jeron Electronic Systems, Inc. remains a family-run business that designs, manufactures and assembles all of their life-safety communications systems in the suburbs of Chicago.

As the company started towards its sixth decade of life-safety innovation, they took to designing the first UL2525 listed area of refuge solution that allows people who cannot traverse stairs to evacuate a building during an emergency. To summon help and receive two-way guidance during a building evacuation, building occupants can now use the Pro-Alert™ 480 Area of Rescue Assistance by Jeron.

Bonnie Noga, Jeron's Area-of-Rescue expert, outlines what sets the Pro-Alert 480 apart from their competitors: "Jeron has always been about life safety and two-way communications," Noga explains, adding that the family-run business is integral to working with end-users to quickly design solutions to meet the evolving needs of the area of rescue market"

That direct connection to leadership allows the company to respond quickly

to challenges. Its products have been designed, manufactured and assembled in the United States for 60 years, a point few rivals can claim. The first life-safety product, Securicom® debuted in 1966. Since then Jeron has adapted to the needs of commercial, industrial and healthcare buildings because its structure supports fast decision-making. Whether the requirement is security communications for building occupants or life-safety alerting for hospitals, the company has remained responsive and scalable.

Several years ago, Underwriters Laboratories (UL) certification of area of rescue systems grew increasingly important, starting in the state of California which often leads the U.S. in new life safety requirements and enforces these requirements rigorously. This led to Underwriters Laboratories creating the UL 2525 "Standard for Two-Way Emergency Communications Systems for Rescue Assistance". Prior to UL2525, there were no design and performance standards for area of rescue systems.

"Just as all fire-alarm systems must be UL-listed to be installed in the U.S., this is also the goal to bring more municipalities, cities, and states on board with UL2525" notes Noga.

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Why UL 2525 matters

“An Area of Rescue is a designated safe space for people who cannot evacuate on their own; they can wait there for emergency personnel during a crisis,” Noga explains. “Jeron’s two-way communication system is required under the existing NFPA 72, NFPA 101, NFPA 5000, the International Building Code and the International Fire Codes. The International Building Code requires a two-way communication system at elevator landings on each accessible floor that is one or more stories above or below the level of exit discharge, with some exceptions.”

Jeron had worked with UL for years – its nurse call systems are UL 1069 certified – so when UL published the Outline of Investigation for Rescue Assistance (UL 2525), the company contacted its UL representative to start the process of UL2525 listing their Pro-Alert 480 system. UL2525 adds the details of how this system must be designed and how it is tested to assure 24/7 operation. Once the standard was final, Jeron immediately submitted its system for certification.

Describing how the Pro-Alert system functions in an emergency, she explains: “If a person physically can’t evacuate a building during an emergency, from a predefined safe location the user presses the area of rescue call-station button; an audible and visual signal at the remote station confirms the call and continues until an operator answers and initiates two-way communication. A two-way communication system is monitored around the clock.

“Because a building may lose power during an emergency event, maintaining full system operation and communication is critical. If the building loses power, Pro-Alert operates on an integrated battery backup that allows the Pro-Alert system to remain operation for a minimum of 24 hours in non-alarm mode and provides a minimum of four hours of talk time.”

Achieving UL 2525 listing set a high bar; Noga outlines what the standard

covers: “The UL 2525 listing sets the requirements for communication systems that help people – especially those with disabilities – contact emergency personnel from areas of refuge,” she explains.

UL 2525 focuses on life-safety concerns, ensuring that emergency communication systems work reliably when required. It is specific to Area-of-Rescue installations and standardizes safety for users who rely on two-way communication the most.

Many building types benefit from Pro-Alert; Noga lists where it fits and how it adapts: “High-rises, mixed-use developments, commercial sites, hospitality venues, universities, schools, parking garages, assisted-living facilities and more can all use the system.

Driving adoption through support

To support the Jeron sales and installation channel, Jeron supplies training, documentation, sales assistance and technical support. Jeron distributors and dealers receive education and certification programs from Jeron corporate.

“The ease of installation and the lowest overall cost – because of the no home-run wiring architecture – are very attractive to our distributors and dealers,” says Noga. She mostly works with sales staff who often are not the technicians installing the system. To support the proper installation of the Pro-Alert system, Jeron provides documentation and videos that align with the requirements of UL2525.

Noga delivers a clear message to the industry about UL 2525 and the Jeron system: “Jeron Pro-Alert 480 went through rigorous UL testing,” she says. “It’s fully supervised and tested for hazards – some you might not even anticipate.” The aim is to ensure the system functions when needed.

Many AHJs have preferred manufacturers, but Noga asserts that UL 2525 represents the future. As jurisdictions adopt the standard – California is moving from NFPA

2022 to 2025 - others will follow; the International Building Code first required area of rescue systems starting in 2021. Once the UL2525 code is adopted by a municipality, city, or state, then compliance is mandatory. Government agencies and universities in the past had begun requesting UL-listed area of rescue systems even before Jeron obtained its listing; these are the environments where certification matters most.

Future code changes and realities

Looking ahead, Noga sees several factors shaping the future of Area-of-Rescue technology. In her view, future developments will be driven by heightened safety demands, improved communication capabilities and the integration of emerging technologies, however, immediate priorities center on adopting UL 2525 to establish consistent standards and code compliance across U.S. municipalities and international markets.

"The next five to ten years will be about educating and driving adoption of UL 2525," she notes. "The code is still relatively new, and not all stakeholders have embraced it. Municipalities can amend their standards, and years may pass before a requirement becomes the default. Manufacturers therefore play a significant role in accelerating the process."

ADA requirements has always been a major driver because they mandate a safe refuge in practice, not just in principle. Emergencies extend

beyond fire; they can include medical incidents or building violence. "When someone presses the button, they need to know that help will hear them, respond and act. The system has to work, full stop," she emphasizes.

Why tested systems matter

That necessity underscores the importance of a specific standard for area of rescue systems. It is about the assurances that the system has been tested beyond the basics and by an independent 3rd party. UL certification challenges equipment to the limits to ensure performance under stress. For example, with UL2525, once a call is initiated, it must reach a 911 center or another monitored location; the call cannot remain unanswered. These systems are monitored continuously, and backup operation must exist if any link fails.

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A non-UL2525 listed system cannot offer the same guarantee, she contends, which is why states like California is universally requiring UL2525 listed systems. California leads in this area, but other jurisdictions are watching. As they



adopt newer codes, they will move in the same direction; IDC mandated UL 2525 in 2021, showing the trajectory is clear - it is only a question of pace.

Codes define the future direction

Ultimately, Noga observes, the industry is guided by codes: ADA, IDC, NFPA. When those codes evolve, then systems must evolve in tandem. "This isn't something where we can pivot to AI or wireless" she adds. "it must be a solution that always works, even if the power goes out and there is no internet. This is a hard-wired, two-way communication system built for life safety."

The product therefore must follow the rules. Securing UL 2525 was a significant achievement, and Jeron is proud to be the first manufacturer to earn it. The process took time, but the path is now clear. Where the company goes next depends on how the code evolves and how ready the industry is to move with it.

Jeron Electronic Systems, Inc. is in its 60th year of business with a continual mission to provide unparalleled life safety, emergency two-way communications to commercial facilities anywhere in the world. Jeron is marketed in over 35 countries worldwide and has installations ranging from the Middle East to Southeast Asia into Africa. Jeron is a global manufacturer with a vast knowledge of local markets. ■

