



A System to Address Life Safety Issues

The search for a wireless telephone system that delivered extended coverage, features and affordability in senior living environment ended with EnGenius DuraFon products.

Brookdale Senior Living

Brookdale Living is the largest owner and operator of senior living communities in the United States with over 550 facilities in 33 states. Brookdale's nearly 45,000 employees provide a wide variety of care services for more than 51,000 residents ranging from independent and assisted living to skilled nursing services.



Among the various facilities that Brookdale operates across the country are the Sterling House communities which provide care and personalized assisted living options for seniors. Each Sterling House is an intimate, single-story building that houses private apartments in a home-like community setting. The House incorporates areas for socializing, dining and entertaining and provides easy access to individuals with limited mobility.

The Need: Wireless Phones Increase Efficiency, Enable Rapid Response to Resident Needs

Serving the needs of the elderly in an assisted living environment requires immediate, reliable communication between community residents and the staff. According to Michael White, Telecommunications Specialist at Brookdale Living, communication is critical because response to medical emergencies must happen within seconds, not minutes.

"The Sterling Houses are equipped with pull cords that enable the residents to ring the phone system to get in immediate contact with our staff," explained White. "The use of wireless phones in our facilities is critical because they free our staff from having to sit at a desk to answer the phone. Staff efficiency is increased significantly and their response times are decreased by their ability to be mobile."

White explained that the need for reliability and coverage from the Avaya Trans Talk wireless phones were not adequate to support the communication requirements of the Sterling House operations. "In addition to being 11- to 14-year-old technology, the phones were just not reliable and the coverage area wasn't very good." He stated that other Brookdale communities were using whatever proprietary phones they had, sometimes even using landlines to forward calls to staff cellphones. "We decided we needed to make a change."

The Solution: EnGenius DuraFon Delivers Combination of Performance, Range, Affordability

White's search for a new wireless phone system started with a call to his reseller. The competitive analysis of potential phone systems included solutions from Spectralink, whose cost proved to be too high, and Motorola, which didn't provide the coverage area required.

After reviewing the specifications for the EnGenius DuraFon products, White deployed the system for a trial test in one of their Tennessee properties in late 2007. Based upon the successful completion of their testing, Brookdale has been deploying EnGenius DuraFon solutions into its properties since 2008.



"If our communities need a good solid cordless phone, we deploy the EnGenius DuraFon 1X and if they need multiple phones we install the EnGenius DuraFon PRO," White said. "We have the EnGenius phones connected to our Avaya phone systems so while the caretakers are out walking the floor or somewhere else on the property, they actually take the calls from our residents. With the EnGenius phones, caretakers can now establish an immediate two-way communication with the resident when an issue arises.

The Results: Stronger Coverage and Walkie-Talkie Feature Increase Safety for Residents



The performance and features of the EnGenius DuraFon products have made the solutions the standard wireless phone solution in the Brookdale Living properties nationwide.

According to White, the DuraFon wireless phones have solved their issue of inadequate coverage. "The one thing we don't hear complaints about is coverage. The phone works great and no matter where our staff members are on the community grounds, they're able to take and make phone calls."

"The ability to use the DuraFon as a walkie-talkie is a nice added feature for our staff because whenever an emergency arises, they simply press one button and there are three other people on the other end that can instantaneously provide assistance," White stated.

In addition to being feature-rich and easy-to-use, White explained that the EnGenius DuraFons have become critical to the operations in the Brookdale properties. "Cordless phones used to be a convenience when we had the Trans Talk phones, but because the staff now relies so much on the EnGenius phones as a life safety issue, they have become a necessity in the communities."