

telecommuting before the January 17 quake have decided to forge ahead. As a result, companies are telling employees not to come to the office.

It has been said that 60% of the jobs in L.A. are telecommutable. That includes any job that can be performed from home or a telework center, and any job that does not require centrally located equipment, frequent in-person meetings, or special security. Telecommuting doesn't mean a large expenditure of corporate funds. According to telecommuting con-

sultant Jack Nilles, a majority of people who use computers in the office have as good if not better equipment at home and would be happy to use it for business purposes if they could stay closer to home. And telecommuting can be done with strictly voice communications—if the employee wasn't using a computer in the office, he won't need one to telecommute.

The telecommuting earthquake response is a joint effort of government and the private sector. Pacific Bell, one of two local telephone companies, immediately

set up a program to help people telecommute by waiving certain installation fees and helping to make equipment available. General Telephone followed suit. Together with the City and County of Los Angeles, the State of California, and the federal government, private industry and the telephone companies formed the Southern California Emergency Telecommuting Partnership to assist people in learning to telecommute.

Fortuitously, a privately financed telework center, the Valencia Corporate Telecommuting Center, had opened in late fall in the area that was later cut off after the loss of a major freeway due to earthquake damage. "Most of the people using the center were set up for much smaller disasters," says Steve Valenziano, a cosponsor of the operation. "Since the earthquake, they have been expanding their use of the facility and we've had inquiries from at least 30 more companies with employees stuck in the area."

"Telecommuting is something that should be in place before disaster strikes," says Carol Nolan, Pacific Bell spokesperson. "That way, when it is needed, whether in a major disaster like the earthquake or a company disaster such as a facility fire, employees know what to do and how to do it. For business, contingency planning is a continuing concern because each [employee] day lost is more than a day's productivity lost."

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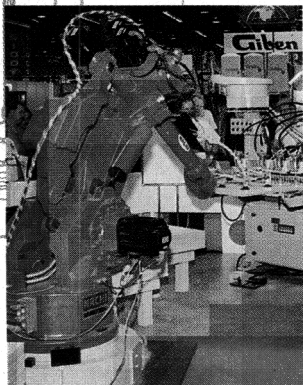
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Taking the Pulse of Analog Input/Output

BY ALAN J. LADUZINSKY

PHILADELPHIA, PA—Up to now, adding analog input/output to a programmable logic controller (PLC) has been an expensive proposition. Interactive Process Controls Corp. (South Easton, MA) figured out a new low-cost way to convert analog signals to work with controllers using digital I/O. The company officially introduced the product at the ISA show in Philadelphia earlier this month.

Called SensorPulse, the combination hardware and software product can save users money because it has been designed to handle any analog signals, in or out, a point at a time. Kevin Roach, president of Interactive Process Controls Corp., explains that "SensorPulse answers a user's need for cost-effective analog I/O. He can configure the system to handle just about any analog signal, current, voltage, thermocouple, and even RTD [resistance temperature detector]. It can work with just a single point, or multiple units can be combined. The modular construction eliminates any

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