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BUSINESS

SQUARE FEET

THE 30-MINUTE INTERVIEW

WILLIAM F. PEEL III

Mr. Peel, 59, is the chief executive of Datawatch Systems, a company based in Bethesda, Md., that provides remote security monitoring for commercial buildings in the United States and Canada.

Interview conducted and condensed by
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EARL WILSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Q. *Is there a William F. Peel IV?*

A. There is: my son. No fifth yet.

Q. *So how is business?*

A. It's very good. We're finding that when Sandy came through New York City, a lot of security officers that needed to take care of problems in the building couldn't just stay behind the desk. They needed to get up and move around to let an electrician in or the phone company. There was just so much activity going on. They needed us to augment them to get them out from around the desk.

Q. *Are you seeing an increase in business since that storm?*

A. More interest — not necessarily business yet.

Building owners or property managers are looking for ways to make the building better, but also looking to give the flexibility to the security officers so they can do more, so they're not shackled to that main desk. We give the security officers time to do other functions because we can manage pieces of a system remotely.

During Sandy, we locked buildings down and kept them locked down. In some cases they were

flooded with water and the building wasn't able to be used — 148 Lafayette stayed locked for a week. We also have a notification program where tenants can dial in to our Web site and get information about the building.

Q. *How about after 9/11?*

A. Yes. And 9/11 taught us a lot as a company.

Two things we learned is that when the towers went down, the information of who was on site and in the buildings was on site, and they had no idea who was there. In our system we could've run a report and given them a report of all people who checked in, so that information is kept off site. We're a backup to the existing staff that's there.

Q. *So how many buildings does your company monitor?*

A. We do close to 3,000 buildings in the United States.

Many of the tenants inside a building will also buy a Datawatch system.

Q. *How much of that is in the New York area?*

A. In New York and New Jersey there are about 25 buildings, like

Metropolitan Tower and 148 Lafayette.

We're newer in the New York market, so we're trying to break into the marketplace.

We do work with many of the developers that you have here in New York — Brookfield, Jones Lang LaSalle, Lincoln Property — we do a lot of their buildings in the Washington market.

Q. *Do you work mostly in office buildings?*

A. Yes. But we also work with the Bozzuto Group, which is a national company that does apartments and condos. We're doing a lot for them.

Q. *There are quite a few owners of very-high-end apartments in New York, many of whom use their places as pieds-à-terre. Do you see any business potential there?*

A. You raise a great point. Yeah, I think there is a market there.

Q. *Who are your biggest clients right now?*

A. Our biggest clients would be Lincoln Property, Brookfield, Jones Lang LaSalle, Cassidy Turley, a company called Lerner Corporation.

Q. *Are there any new trends in security monitoring?*

A. Datawatch is working on an app for your cellphone to get into the building after hours, instead of your Datawatch card. In some cases we'll have both systems.

Q. *Where would you like to see Datawatch in the next 10 years or so?*

A. Doubling in size.

Q. *Do you have Datawatch in your own home?*

A. I do. I've had people try to break into my cars, and the cameras picked them up and we've been able to use the footage.