

Empowering Schools to Protect Themselves

Schools K-12

According to Every Town Research, between 2013 and 2016, there were more than 200 school shootings in the United States. Since 1999, when the school shooting at Columbine exploded into everyday American lives, security experts and school officials have been searching for an answer to solve the daily challenge of keeping their students safe. What is the solution that will decrease threats and dangers? Despite more advanced technology being incorporated into schools such as cameras, metal detectors and security personnel, violence and shootings continue to rise. How do schools decrease security threats and dangers? What is the most efficient and seamless way to communicate with students, staff, and parents to ensure all stakeholders are protected?

While gun violence and shootings grab the headlines, K-12 schools face additional factors that challenge their security personnel. Law enforcement and school officials are expected by parents to keep the community's school campuses and student population safe at all times. Along with being entrusted to provide the school and student security, officials are also faced with daily challenges such as bullying, fighting drugs and unauthorized visitors, and even preparing for inclement weather conditions.

Environmental factors also contribute to security challenges at local, independent school districts (ISDs). Large ISDs may expand across multiple police jurisdictions. When there is a crisis, the police precinct that has overall responsibility may not be the precinct that is initially notified of the impending threat. This leads to confusion and even delayed response times. Finding a solution that allows the police to bundle the schools together in a communication network allows information to flow quickly and accurately when seconds count.

Schools located next to businesses, hospitals and airports and other transportation hubs can be impacted by emergency situations in the nearby community which may be outside the jurisdiction of the responsible police precinct. Therefore, fast and accurate communication is crucial and instills confidence and a positive perception by parents and the overall community.

When addressing the physical security of a campus, it is critical that access control, locking devices, video surveillance, lighting, and intrusion detection systems are effective. The concept of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is essential to a campus, along with trained, proactive law enforcement and security personnel. The appropriate technology and emergency preparedness protocols must be in place to ensure all parts of the security program are working together. Often, a security policy is written by middle management, but top administrators and even staff are not familiar with the details of the policy. All parties need to know, promote, endorse and comply with the security policy.

Security personnel are a vital component of any security program, and there is generally no substitute for their physical, on-site presence. With today's advances in technology, colleges and their security providers can now employ smart phones and other security analytic tools to proactively alert personnel to a security breach in real-time, saving security officers precious minutes or even hours. This trumps the more reactive approach of reviewing hours of video recordings and witness statements to research an incident.

Guardian Zone has created a security mobile app and software that enhances public safety on K12 campuses. It allows smartphone users (e.g. teachers, students, parents and visitors) to connect immediately with security during emergency situations. Our interactive mass notification software solution combines localized security software with personal security functionality. It allows security personnel of medium and large facilities to send security alerts to smartphones and communicate with every individual with the Guardian Zone downloaded app within their venues during times of danger or potential threat. Students can also use the app to report anonymously to school security other types of infractions such as fights, bullying, substance abuse, guns or unauthorized visitors without being identified by peers. With the interactive Guardian Zone app, users become an important extension of the safety staff. Everyday smartphones are turned into security devices, and app users become the eyes and ears of security. The Guardian Zone system is designed to enhance and complement existing security systems and allows smartphone users to quickly take action using technology in hand to interface with venue security. The solution allows ISDs to mitigate and control information and accurate reporting for the protection of their students, staff, and administration.