



CAMPUS SAFETY **in the Age of Technology**



Across all areas of public life, technology is changing the way people interact with their surroundings. Digital traffic cameras are being used to ease the flow of traffic in response to real-time conditions. Complex logistics networks and GPS technology show consumers the delivery status of online orders down to the minute.

Rideshare apps have made on-demand transportation a reality in the convenience of modern day living. Schools and students are working on collaborative presentations from laptops and mobile devices - accessing resources from all over the world.

And yet, for all the nation's campuses have achieved in adopting classroom technologies, when it comes to public safety, technological solutions have been vastly underutilized.





A TRADITIONAL MINDSET TO A MODERN-DAY SITUATION

Educators and experts agree that our schools are ill-equipped to address many campus safety challenges head-on. Be it elementary, high school, or college and university level, campus safety concerns are rapidly evolving and changing.

Schools that were designed to inspire students with large windows and plenty of connection to outdoors also make it more difficult to secure campuses from intruders, severe weather events, or other campus safety threats. Large communal spaces for students to gather indoors and outdoors also bring with them an increased chance for fighting or schoolyard incidents.

Schools don't have the funding to simply redesign and rebuild, so the traditional solution has been to invest what limited budget is possible towards security staffing and school safety agents.

The senseless deaths and traumatizing events at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High and Sandy Hook Elementary underscore the harsh reality that security personnel on or near campus cannot be everywhere at once, leaving other pieces of the campus response network vulnerable.



This is where technology has the power to solve the problem and fill the personnel gap. “Emergency communications systems aren’t just alternatives to cell phones,” explains Chrisann Lawson, Vice President with CASE Emergency Systems. “We live in a day and age where we believe our cell phones and mobile devices can do everything, but that’s a potentially dangerous false sense of security.”

Technology also helps school safety decision-makers implement more comprehensive programs thanks to inherent cost savings.

Many campuses are moving away from emergency call boxes that are hardwired for phone and electricity. Instead, they are utilizing cellular and satellite communications and solar power to minimize costs.

The savings on installation plus the reduced cost of operation and maintenance make today’s most modern campus emergency communications systems far more affordable than their predecessors of just a decade ago.

Beyond affordability, Lawson says there are Four Cornerstones of Campus Safety that all administrators and officials should seek to achieve:



COMMUNICATION



PREVENTION



MOBILIZATION



APPREHENSION

CAMPUS SAFETY CORNERSTONE #1 COMMUNICATION

As Lawson points out, the prevalence of cell phones in modern society can be overwhelming. Findings from a 2016 study indicate that homes with landlines have now dropped below 50% of the population for the first time, and this number will only continue to increase with landlines dropped below 50% of the population, and the gap has been growing ever since.

The days of walking into a building and asking to use the phone are well behind us - leaving little or no recourse for those with dead batteries or zero service.

Think of a standard concrete parking structure. Cell phones may work well near open walls at the edges, but between floors and on interior ramps, people are effectively cut off from calling for help.

Campus lecture halls, auditoriums, labs, and other areas can present the same kinds of problems. Similarly, remote areas on large campuses like nature trails and sports complexes may be outside a phone's service area. Enhancing campus safety in these scenarios comes in the form of securing access to communication.

Public blue light towers, ephones, and call boxes allow anyone to call for help when and where it is needed - regardless of power, cell signal, or remote location.





CAMPUS SAFETY CORNERSTONE #2 **PREVENTION**

When it comes to campus safety and instilling peace of mind among parents, students, faculty, staff, and area residents, preventing crimes and accidents is far preferential to them actually taking place.

Consider the all-too-prevalent school safety nightmare of an active shooter scenario. Communication allows people to call for help - but prevention would help move people out of harm's way.

Emergency communications systems like the ones from CASE achieve this through a Mass Notification function that is available on all Blue Light Towers.

Users can call for help, but more importantly, announcements can be broadcast - to the whole system - or to individual select units to assist in evacuating an area or providing emergency instructions.

Intruder isolated in North Wing of Building X — Avoid this area.

Fire reported in Dormitory Building A — Please exit the building and proceed to designated safety area.

Warning. Warning. Area Under Police Surveillance. Please keep your hands above your head and remain calm.

Messages like these can save lives and prevent countless injuries, but only if a suitable notification system exists to aid in prevention.



●→● **CAMPUS SAFETY CORNERSTONE #3 MOBILIZATION**

Even with communication and prevention in place - campus safety is far from guaranteed. First responders need to know where to go, which is something a cell phone cannot tell a panicked student in an emergency. GPS locators within cell phones are also of no use if the phone is out of battery or the location services have been turned off.

Emergency communications technology, on the other hand, shows an exact location where a unit or units were activated and, when also equipped with cameras, can monitor the situation without putting students, bystanders, or other witnesses in danger. The proper school safety agents are mobilized immediately and simultaneously - whether it be campus police, fire & rescue, safe ride, private security or 911.

“We’ve even integrated features like SMS text notifications to specified first responders,” says Lawson, “so there’s no need to have someone in a school safety office just waiting for a call.





CAMPUS SAFETY CORNERSTONE #4 **APPREHENSION**

Anytime a crime occurs - especially on campus - the immediate concern is to neutralize the threat and get students and staff to safety. However, containing and apprehending the intrusive force is vital to ensuring future school safety. Once all the witnesses are gone, what good can their cell phones do to help find and detain criminals? Nothing.

When properly equipped, emergency blue light towers and e-phones can be employed in this use. Notifications can instruct perpetrators that...

*This building has been isolated and locked down.
Police are on their way.*

Or, isolated activation of integrated safety strobe lighting may designate “all clear” areas as marked by search teams. Likewise, camera monitors may be able to track movements of persons of interest and provide useful information to school safety agents on the ground.





SCHOOL SAFETY COMES FULL CIRCLE

While the right technology and emergency communications system certainly have the power to improve campus safety, it's not a substitute for astute emergency planning and effective school safety protocols like no-weapons policies, restricted entry with ID-only, and other public safety programs.

What technology does allow for is better coverage, better access, and better cost controls in setting up and maintaining campus safety.

"It doesn't cover every possible scenario," says Lawson, "but blue light towers, iPhones, and call boxes provide much-needed support for all the scenarios to prepare for Just in CASE."





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