



## The Anatomy of an Effective School Security Plan

The happiness and safety of our youth are of the most sacred value to teachers and parents across the nation. In this day and age of random violence, that safety feels more threatened than ever. But keep in mind that while mass shootings are the most frightening type of threat, they are neither the most common nor necessarily the most problematic. Fires, fights, earthquakes, assaults on teachers and health emergencies occur far more frequently and may even be less preventable, especially if schools aren't prepared and organized.

That's why it's important to have a firmly codified and well-equipped school security plan. The following steps will get you started in building a plan that addresses the main pain points of ill-prepared schools today, and lays out the anatomy of a better approach for tomorrow.

### Alert Parents and Guardians

When acts of nature, illness or other concerns arise, you must be able to get a hold of parents immediately. Luckily, we've moved past the good old-fashioned telephone tree. It takes too long to contact people individually, so SMS applications that allow you to send out mass alerts are a better idea. Make sure you have such a system, and that parent information is updated constantly. Also, be sure more than one staff member has access to this system, rather than leaving it in one person's hands in case that point person is away or incapacitated.

One way to stay on top of parent contact information is to require phone number confirmations and updates at the beginning of the year. Then send out monthly SMS notifications that are unrelated to danger. When an SMS doesn't go through, your staff knows to promptly seek that parent's new phone number.

### Select an Alert App or Device

One of the main problems with school security is that getting help lies in the hands of a few. Telephones might not be easily accessible in some parts of the building, and even when they are, it can take too long to get to them and dial. Often, emergency numbers are only posted in the office, or there are complicated rules for dialing out. It's not fast enough.

Instead, all teachers and administrators should be equipped with an app or device that can instantly alert authorities when the school is in danger. A wide variety of app choices exist, but the main feature they share is a big, obvious panic button right there on the screen. Staff can install it on tablets for in the classroom, and on have it at the ready on phones for when they're in the hall, the gym, the auditorium or otherwise away from their desks.

RF Technologies' Help Alert Emergency Response Solution features a simple, easily transportable device called an RTLS (real time location system). This GPS enabled pendant is worn by each teacher and equipped with a unique ID for every wearer. The pendant gives teachers instantaneous communication with the front office and security personnel via the school's current WIFI infrastructure. All it requires of teachers is a press of the button; one press sends a less serious signal, and holding down the button indicates a crisis.

## Respond to Random Events

It's very difficult to predict serious or even life-threatening issues such as a critical asthma attack, a knife fight or a collapsed wing of the building. Teachers and students must be able to get in touch with other parts of the school immediately for help.

But that's not enough. A good safety plan involves coaching teachers on what to do in certain situations until help arrives. Should they step between fighting students? What is their first move once earthquake aftershocks have faded? What is the appropriate action when a student suddenly has a seizure? Provide training on responses to the biggest risks, and make sure everyone's First Aid certification is always up to date.

## Establish an Invariable Door Routine

Doors are meant to keep intruders out, and they're quite effective at that job. Almost all of the school tragedies at the hands of outsiders have occurred not because someone managed to break down a door, but because they were allowed into the school. You can't stop every catastrophe, but you can make a start by having a firmly established door routine.

Posting a door monitor at main entrances can help. Just knowing security is watching may deter some. It's important that this monitor be paid; a volunteer may lack the training and focus to ensure safety. Establish hours for when doors are open and closed; do not leave them propped when unattended; and follow a strict protocol when letting people in during closed-door hours – for instance, a camera with intercom that feeds to the office.

## A Culture of Security

School safety is more than a matter of closed doors and fast apps though. It's also a matter of instilling a culture in which students, teachers and administrators all advocate for their own protection and that of others – and that starts with a conversation. Once you make your safety plan, share it with parents, teachers and kids, so that everyone can play a role in keeping our youth safe.

If your school does not already have a safety plan - complete with communication devices for teachers - in place, there's no time to lose. Call to speak to an expert Troxell representative to learn more about Help Alert and how it contributes to the safety of your school. It's easy to install with existing infrastructure, which will also help you and your school keep costs down. Peace of mind is just a phone call away with Troxell. Call 1-855-TROXELL today.