





# COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT VITAL TO Campus Safety

by John Hepokoski

For schools, 2021 was a year filled with masking, social distancing, and remote learning. According to the *Washington Post*, 2021 also set the bar as the year with the highest number of school shootings: forty-two. This high number is even more distressing when one considers that students attended schools in person much less than usual. Even more recent shootings indicate that school and university campuses are under increased risk of violent attacks.

**A**ctive shooter drills and situational training can help limit the damage when these horrific events occur, but training is only part of the solution. When it comes to keeping as many students and faculty as possible out of harm's way, securing entry points and developing effective communication systems can provide helpful protections.

Door entry and access control systems are the first line of defense. Faculty, employees, students, and approved visitors can be equipped with proximity ID cards or fobs so that access can be

revoked in seconds when a threat is deemed probable. Door entry equipment often comes with video surveillance and proximity card capabilities to allow for visual identification of individuals entering or exiting school buildings; this equipment also requires a valid proximity card or fob to open the door.

Advanced entry systems can also be programmed to limit access on certain days, during specific windows of time, or even number of uses. These restrictions allow for approved visitors to have access with a temporary keyless entry code or proximity card, stopping them from

gaining entrance to campus buildings at other times. Some entry systems can also display or announce security messages when necessary and can even double as emergency phones. Door entry systems are an effective frontline solution and can be the first affordable step to ensuring that the people in campus buildings are authorized to be there and unauthorized individuals are kept out.

Inside the building, emergency phones are the next line of defense. When an emergency arises, precious time can be wasted searching for a nearby desk phone—or scrolling through an endless list of contacts on a mobile phone that may have poor cell service. Contacting emergency personnel can be critical in saving lives, and easy-to-access emergency phones make sure that help is only a button push away. Hard-wired handsfree emergency phones in key locations throughout campus buildings allow for quick contact with authorities while simultaneously providing the exact location to eliminate confusion. Installing analog emergency phones is beneficial because the phones will still function even if electrical power is cut or cell service is down.

Some emergency phones also have the ability for emergency personnel to call back and silently monitor the situation, giving first responders real time information on the current scene they are heading to. Ideally, a handsfree emergency phone should be installed next to every existing fire pull station. Other emergency phone location recommendations include hallways, bathrooms, cafeterias, gymnasiums, parking ramps, building perimeters, common walking paths, and outdoor athletic areas.

Alyssa's Law has been passed in numerous states, requiring public and charter schools to implement silent

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** John Hepokoski has a BA in IT and manages purchasing/social media at Viking Electronics. John enjoys travelling and camping with his wife, Kridhita. He is an avid fan of the Green Bay Packers.

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