

# ACCESSIBLE SECURITY SOLUTIONS

BY BRAD KAMCHEFF

Safety and accessibility have been chief priorities in the higher education market for quite some time. Not only are campuses entrusted to ensure that students, staff, and faculty always remain safe, but colleges must also guarantee that any security and safety tools available on campus are accessible to every individual, including those with disabilities.



**W**hile campuses rely on a multitude of security systems to monitor facilities and keep people safe—such as surveillance cameras, access control systems, and visitor management tools—these systems are not necessarily used by guests and students; an internal corporate security team instead manages them. However, entry control and communication systems, such as intercom systems and emergency towers, are two types of security resources available to everyone on campus, including students, staff, faculty members, and visitors. Together, these systems can help enhance security, manage building access, and provide valuable means of communication in the event of emergencies. Emergency towers help with these concerns particularly well, since they are typically not connected to buildings; they are instead located in parking lots, in outdoor spaces, and along campus sidewalks.

Much like a building needs to be accessible to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), intercoms and emergency towers also need to be accessible to everyone on campus. Meeting ADA requirements to ensure equal access for individuals who may have disabilities should be common practice. Not only do these devices need to be easy to use, but they must be positioned properly and easily visible. Intercoms and emergency towers now incorporate IP technology, video capabilities, and additional functionalities to make them ADA compliant. These inclusive intercoms and emergency towers can provide an additional layer of security and communication across campuses.

### **Intercoms**

An important first step to mitigating threats lies in the ability to thwart the threat in the first place. Such prevention begins with ensuring that policies, procedures, and equipment

are all up to standard. Most on-campus shootings and other violent acts occur once the individual has entered through the front door of a building. Emphasizing controlled access points at key entries adds an extra barrier of safety between threats and members

**Just like access into a building needs to be accessible to all individuals, regardless of abilities, so do emergency communication towers. Emergency towers come in multiple shapes and sizes, but the key among them is ensuring that an emergency button is easy to reach for someone walking or sitting in a wheelchair.**

of the campus community. While written policies help staff understand how visitors are approved for entry, staff members should also be informed about more simple items, such as why doors cannot be left propped open, when to lock down, and how to evacuate during emergencies.

Installing two-way video intercom systems at each entrance is an important first layer of protection. Video intercoms can enable front desk personnel or security staff to not only talk to someone who wants to enter, but also clearly see the person when the system includes an integrated IP video camera. This feature can help screeners to quickly determine if the person is who they say they are, check credentials using the video camera, and see if the person is agitated or carrying a weapon. In the event of an emergency, school staff can maintain locked entrances and alert school personnel and law enforcement.

As facility managers struggle with staffing shortages, intercom systems have become a work force multiplier, enabling a single individual to safely manage multiple doors remotely or from a central location. With a two-way video and audio intercom

system, security guards can visually assess the situation and talk to a person before allowing them access to any area. Screeners can assess whether people who wish to enter are agitated or carrying a weapon. The ability to easily engage with visitors—by both

seeing and talking to people trying to come inside the building—enhances the ability for security personnel to proactively identify issues.

### **Visitor Management**

Organizations can centralize visitor management using IP intercom systems, providing a seamless experience for staff and visitors. Better yet, this extensive and enhanced monitoring can be done from any location. In these cases, where less staff is required, centralizing a visitor management system with an IP video intercom allows monitoring to be routed to any location. This flexibility can decrease excess in-person interactions between staff and visitors, as fewer employees are required onsite to manage requests.

Additionally, educational decision-makers will find immense value in using video intercom systems to monitor and manage building occupancy across all campus buildings—classrooms, gyms, dining facilities, and other common areas. This oversight enables users to maintain occupancy policies, social distancing guidelines, and any other required health and safety requirements.

*continued on next page*



PHOTO COURTESY AIPHONE

### Emergency Communication Towers

Popular in areas such as campuses, parking lots, malls, or courtyards, emergency towers can be accessed around the clock and are easy to locate with their lit beacons. This visibility means towers can be seen over long distances, day and night. When the emergency button is pushed, the tower light flashes to alert others, allowing emergency services to locate the party in need more easily.

Emergency towers provide valuable and reliable two-way communication capabilities for individuals traveling across a college campus. In certain geographic areas or in large concrete structures, cell phone coverage can be spotty, whereas a hardwired emergency intercom tower ensures consistent, reliable communication with authorities when needed.

### ADA Compliance

Just like access into a building needs to be accessible to all individuals, regardless of abilities, so do emergency communication towers. Emergency towers come in multiple

shapes and sizes, but the key among them is ensuring that an emergency button is easy to reach for someone walking or sitting in a wheelchair. Intercom systems now include two-way video and integrate with telecoil (t-coil) technologies to assist in hearing aid conversions for individuals with hearing loss or impairments. The integration of this technology ensures enhanced communication for those who are hard of hearing and wear compatible hearing aids.

For those with compatible devices, an IP video intercom equipped with t-coil technology sends out an electro-magnetic signal. A person's hearing aid will pick up this signal, allowing the hearing aid and the intercom system to directly connect, producing a clearer sound and removing audio interference. This integration allows those with hearing impairments to communicate with intercom systems more easily.

As campus settings—including educational institutions—are prone to unexpected events, door entry control and communication

solutions, like intercoms and emergency towers, can help protect students and faculty during emergencies. These systems can be placed anywhere support is needed and offer the ability to remotely access systems and manage them from anywhere on the network, thereby offering valuable support and safety for students, faculty, and visitors alike. As campuses install these upgraded security systems, they also need to make sure that the placement and technology is accessible to all members of the campus community.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Brad Kamcheff has been with Aiphone over thirty years. He uses innovative methods

to promote and inform industry peers about Aiphone's vast intercom portfolio, award-winning quality processes, and unparalleled customer service teams. Long-time experience has helped shape his view of the security industry and become knowledgeable of its trends. [www.aiphone.com](http://www.aiphone.com)

# Explore Together

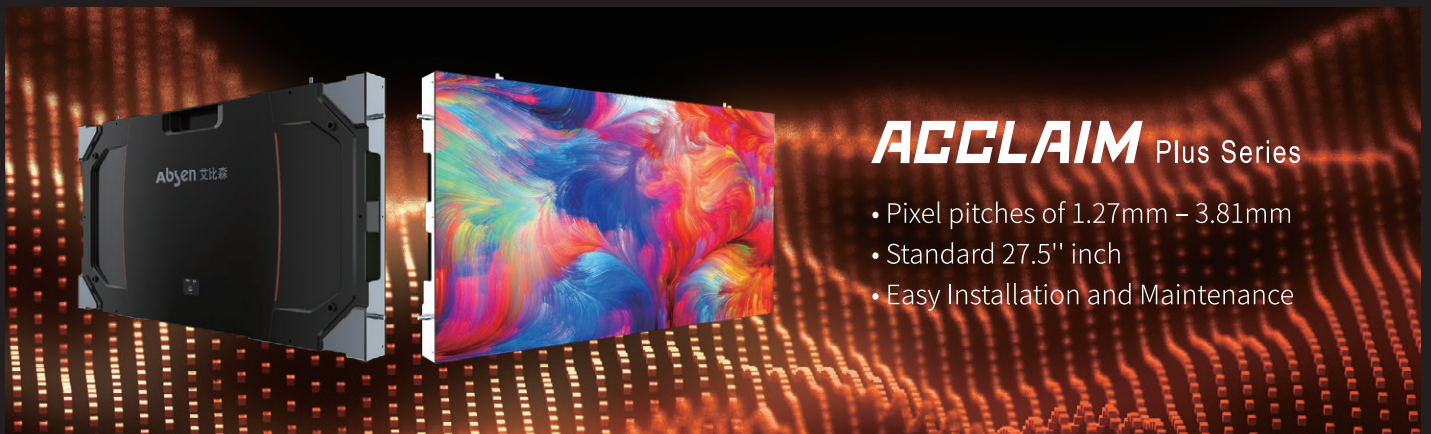
Higher Education allows inquisitive students to broaden their horizons.

Absen LED offers professors, university administrators, and other education officials the ability to showcase meaningful lectures and inspiring presentations that impact the students learning opportunities.

Absen LED is perfect for auditoriums, lecture halls, and classrooms, and other educational and athletic setting.

Check out latest case study video at Arlington ISD:

<https://www.usabsen.com/about/video/>



Contact [info@usabsen.com](mailto:info@usabsen.com) or reach out to Absen representatives for more information.