SECURITY SOLUTIONS

Combined Security Solutions Provide Comprehensive Security

BY BRAD KAMCHEFF

Protecting students and staff in campus settings has become a national priority in the United States, with nearly half a billion dollars in grant money provided to school districts to upgrade their security since the adoption of the STOP School Violence Act of 2018.

The investment in school security, involving both the K-12 and the higher education market, has been considerable to say the least, as security professionals work to fortify on-campus security. This has included installing surveillance systems that can monitor outdoor common areas and parking lots, securing building entrances with mantraps coupled with intercoms for reliable two-way communication, replacing college dormitory keys with keycards, and implementing campus-wide access control systems that can be used to manage building access for faculty and students.

As school security continues to improve, so does the diversification of solutions implemented, integrated, and leveraged with existing systems. Access control systems, emergency towers, and intercoms can all be seamlessly integrated with surveillance to provide a comprehensive, layered school security program.

Enhanced Communication at Entry Points

Many campuses have moved away from an open front door environment where visitors and delivery personnel could freely walk into the lobby. Administrators can now incorporate locked entrances where people can only enter the building after initially being vetted by the front desk staff.

Implementing two-way intercom systems at the entrance provides an important first layer of protection and can enable front desk personnel to not only talk to someone who would like to enter, but also clearly see the person when the system includes an integrated IP video camera.

The ability to see, hear, and talk to the person is invaluable to staff and school security. Faculty can 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.

It is important to ensure that teaching staff have access to security tools and can easily communicate with the appropriate people. In the event of an emergency, school staff can trigger a lockdown event while alerting school personnel and law enforcement. When an intercom system is installed in classrooms and lecture halls, it enables a professor to reliably call for help without having to worry about a poor cellular phone signal.

A panic button on an intercom station in the room can be pre-programmed to contact on-campus security if a student or teacher experiences a medical issue or if a person in class poses a threat to themselves or others.

Many intercoms also come equipped with paging capabilities. This means that

an intercom station can be used to send direct communication into classrooms, hallways, or lecture halls if a threatening situation unfolds, such as a major weather event or an active-shooter occurrence.

Pre-programmed and recorded messages can give students and staff directions on what to do next, such as shelter in place, relocate to a secured location, or evacuate the premises immediately, improving school operations. These messages can also be set to be repeated every few minutes, ensuring the message is heard and that everyone within an educational building on campus receives the same consistent information.

Better Management of Staff, Students, Visitors

It is important to know who is visiting your school. It is equally important to implement an access-control program for staff and students too.

Access control enables staff or security to easily track who is coming and going and provide secure access at authorized entrance points. In the event

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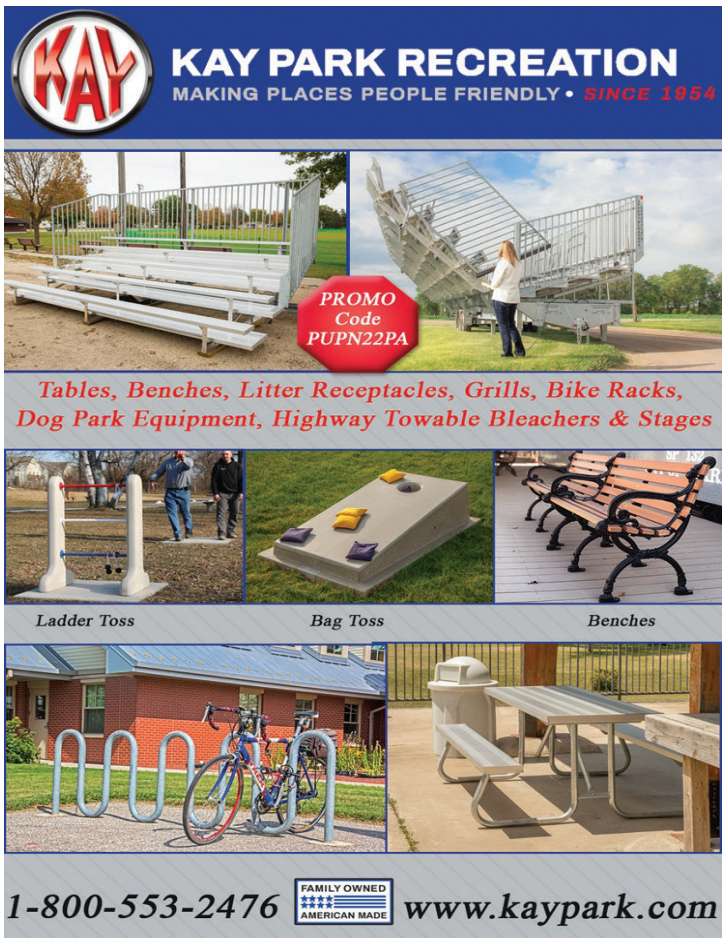

of a school employee being terminated, a school district can quickly deactivate the access control credential to remove access privileges without interrupting access for other staff members.

Visitors, meanwhile, can be provided with a badge that allows them to access certain areas or wings within a building. An access-control credential can also be pre-programmed for a set duration, so that when a visitor does not swipe out by a certain time, an administrator can be alerted.

Overall, intercoms and access-control systems can provide valuable data on all individuals, whether they are an employee, delivery person, or visitor.

An integrated video intercom system can automatically record the interaction between a visitor outside pressing a button to request access and the person responsible for granting access. The access-control component, which requires a person to present a badge to a reader to enter an area, can also record access-point data, showing exactly where they went in the building.

Dormitory Use

Perhaps the biggest change with security technology being used on college campuses is taking place within college dormitories, where traditional locks and keysets are being replaced with electronic locks and an all-in-one keycard that can be used to enter a student's dorm room. The same keycard can also allow access to eat in the campus dining hall or check out a book in the library.

While dormitory access has become more secure over the past decade, one thing that hasn't changed is the need for students or visitors to have a secure and reliable method to communicate with the front desk staff at a residence hall.

Due to additional school security measures, many residence hall doors remain locked 24/7. This can make it difficult for a visitor to interact with anyone in the building unless the front desk is fully staffed or that individual has the proper access-control credential to enter through the front door.

An IP intercom station can be placed on the exterior of a dormitory or within a vestibule area, ensuring that visitors have a way to contact the resident assistant on duty or someone in the security office should they need to request access into the building.

For students, the added benefit of an intercom system outside their dormitory is the ability to easily reach campus support staff should they arrive at their residence hall and find their keycard is missing or not functional.

A two-way video and audio intercom system also provides an additional layer of school security for staff, by providing visual verification of the visitor. Dormitory staff can use a two-way video intercom system to confirm a person's identity, whether the person is a food delivery driver or an individual whose access to a particular building has been restricted.

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In recent years, the escalating threat of gun violence has become an alarming concern for educational institutions across the United States. With mass shootings on the rise, it is imperative for private higher educational institutions to proactively address the safety of their staff and students. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, a comprehensive and immediate solution is essential. One such solution gaining traction is the implementation of Emergency Response Shields (ERS), a proactive measure designed to protect against active shooter incidents on campus.

Ensuring Immediate Protection:

Just as fire safety protocols have been ingrained into the infrastructure of public buildings, a similar approach is crucial for addressing active shooter scenarios in private educational institutions. The ERS serves as the "Fire Extinguisher for Gunfire," offering immediate protection against assault rifles, shotguns, handguns, as well as blades and blunt force weapons. By empowering faculty and staff with this advanced tool, private higher educational institutions can bridge the gap between an incident occurring and the arrival of first responders.

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Aligning with Best Practices:

The ERS aligns seamlessly with established safety protocols recommended by authoritative bodies such as the Department of Homeland Security's Active Shooter Preparedness Program (Run, Hide, Fight) and the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) principles (Avoid, Deny, Defend). This integration ensures that the use of defensive measures is in accordance with nationally recognized standards, maximizing the effectiveness of emergency response strategies.

Derived from Military-Grade Technology:

The technology behind Emergency Response Shields is derived from armor technologies initially developed for Department of Defense Programs and extensively fielded on United States military vehicles. These advancements have been integrated into federal law enforcement body armor, assuring a high level of protection for educational institutions against potential threats.

Creating a Secure Learning Environment:

Beyond the immediate safety benefits, the implementation of ERS has shown to contribute significantly to mental health and well-being within educational communities. As students and staff feel empowered and protected, a renewed sense of security and confidence permeates the campus environment. The visible presence of protective measures can also act as a deterrent, dissuading potential attackers from targeting well-prepared and armored educational institutions.

In the face of increasing threats, private higher educational institutions must prioritize the safety and security of their campuses. Emergency Response Shields offer a proactive and effective solution, aligning with established safety protocols and utilizing cutting-edge military-grade technology. By investing in these defensive measures, institutions can foster a secure learning environment, providing both students and staff with the confidence that their safety is a top priority.

This can help to quickly determine if the person is who they say they are or check identification credentials using the video camera.

Securing Parking Lots and Outdoor Spaces

Security in parking lots often presents one of the biggest challenges for campus and school security.

For colleges and universities, this is especially true because parking facilities, whether surface parking lots or parking garages, are often vast in size and can be located quite a distance away from educational buildings on campus.

Emergency parking towers, equipped with intercom systems, can be strategically placed throughout parking lots and parking garages, providing an additional layer of school security, especially in emergency situations. If a student does not feel safe walking to their vehicle after a class late at night, an emergency parking tower can be quickly used to directly speak with on-campus security staff or to request an escort.

Including a video intercom allows campus

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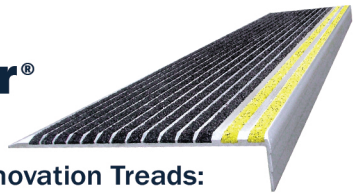

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and school security staff to see the student requesting assistance. This can provide critical identification when staff arrive on-site.

As these towers are tall and equipped with a light beacon on top, they are easy to locate even at night. Additionally, these well-lit towers can act as a crime deterrent by presenting a secured and monitored environment to would-be criminals. Since emergency towers are hardwired, each tower provides a secure and highly reliable method of communication even in areas where cell phone coverage may be spotty.

Many parking garages are also maze-like structures, which can make it difficult for a person to clearly communicate their specific location. Intercoms with built-in mapping mean that the specific location of a wall box is shared with security personnel when an emergency-communication button is pushed. This helps to ensure that responders are dispatched to the correct location.

When a video intercom system is located inside a parking garage, it allows a campus or school security officer to clearly hear and speak with the individual who is calling about an emergency. An optional overhead camera can provide a bird's-eye view of the area around the person in distress as compared to the identifying view of the intercom.

Intercoms, emergency towers/wall boxes, and access control systems help enhance campus and school security, manage building access, and provide a valuable means of communication in the event of an emergency.

The reality is that educational institutions are prone to unexpected events. The addition of these solutions will strengthen the efficacy of any comprehensive school security system and can help protect students, faculty, and visitors during emergencies.

University security has made significant advancements over the past few decades thanks to continuous investments in technology. Ensuring the safety of individuals on a college campus remains an ongoing concern that necessitates regular reviews of the technologies deployed and the maintenance of best practices in building safety and access policies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Brad Kamcheff has been with Aiphone for over 30 years. He uses innovative methods to promote and inform industry peers about Aiphone's vast intercom portfolio, award-winning quality processes, and dedicated customer-service teams. Long-time experience has helped shape his view of the security industry and stay ahead of its trends.

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