



EXPECTING THE UNEXPECTED

“School safety doesn’t just mean protecting our kids from a mass shooter. It’s protecting them from the person in a suspicious car watching the playground, it’s protecting them from a domestic dispute that ends up at school, it’s protecting them from a car speeding through the parking lot during pick-up. Preparation must happen for those events which are statistically more likely to occur.”

- Leah Coghlan,
Incarnation Assistant Principal

ABOVE THE STATISTICS

Incarnation School is a private Catholic school located in Centerville, Ohio, serving grades Preschool – 8th. The school has approximately 920 students and 85 staff members. With a desire to upgrade security schoolwide, Incarnation contracted Dayton-based P&R Communications, Service to help with unparalleled upgrades from cameras to access control to a new 2-way radio system containing state-of-the-art emergency call technology.

Painting the picture of the current environment of the nationwide relationship between schools and safety are the statistics. According to a recent Education Survey conducted by Motorola, 99% of school administrators said student and staff security is their #1 priority. However, in the same study, 64% of those same administrators indicated that their staff communications are “somewhat prepared” for an emergency. Incarnation found themselves amongst that 64% and were determined to make immediate changes. As Jon Kreuzsch, a parent at Incarnation School explained, “With all of the concerns surrounding school safety at the forefront of all of our minds each day we send our kids to school, it’s refreshing to see Incarnation School leadership work proactively with P&R Communications to come to an educated and economical solution. As a parent, you don’t ever expect sending your kids to school to be a last goodbye.”

IMMINENT CONCERNS

Several issues led to Incarnation’s decision to upgrade safety and security measures. Again, a mass shooting incident is only one of many different safety concerns that schools face today. And those concerns don’t end at 3:00pm every day.

One of the main areas of concern were the 2-way radios. Though still working relatively well, they were aging and out of support. In addition, there was only one emergency button in the entire school – in the front office on a stationary base station. There was no way for a teacher to push that button unless they were standing in the front office. And as we know, most incidents don’t actively take place in the front office; they take place in the classroom, in the hallway, the cafeteria or on the playground. There was a strong desire by school administration to put this capability in the hands of all teachers – effectively, giving them complete control when faced with an untenable situation.



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**VIOLENT
THREATS**

violent threats made in schools every day since the Parkland shooting in February 2018 – up from an average of 10 per day at the end of 2017.

105

**VIOLENT
INCIDENTS**

violent incidents have taken place for the 2017-2018 school year so far in the US – half involving a gun found or fired in school – an average of 1 per day.

438

SHOOTINGS

people have been shot in schools since the Sandy Hook tragedy in December 2012.

Another concern was their lack of accountability for entrances and exits after school hours. Primarily, this was in the evenings and on weekends when student practices, games and other activities were taking place. In these circumstances, coaches or parent volunteers were given keys to the building. There were instances where doors were left unlocked or keys were unreturned or lost. This was a priority to remedy as they wanted to be able to account for every person in and out of the school – especially when they had less control in after-hours situations.

Finally, there was the issue of surveillance. Incarnation was proactive in deploying a few cameras years ago. However, they wanted active surveillance around the entire perimeter of the campus, as well as on the playground, in the parking lots and all hallways and gathering rooms inside of the school. With additional cameras, upgraded software and enlarged viewing capability, Incarnation administrators can now view real-time video as well as past footage should it need to be assessed.

THE BEST DEFENSE

P&R Communications is synonymous with state-of-the-art communications solutions. In looking at the challenges facing Incarnation, several ideas came to mind. With P&R's engineers & technicians working together, a formidable safety trifecta was designed and implemented.

First and foremost – updated digital radio communication like nothing ever seen before in the industry. Using P&R's proprietary VADORnet carrier radio system has given Incarnation the digital technology they needed, as well as increased coverage and quality. Literally, built for school safety, Incarnation's new portable radios are connected directly to the emergency radio in the office, which is in turn connected to the Ohio Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) In-School radio system. What does this mean? With the press of the portable's emergency button, the local

authorities are alerted to a calamity at the school, allowing them to respond within seconds. These radios are deployed in multiple critical areas of the school – including most classrooms, the cafeteria, front office and the playground. With this technology in the hands of the teachers and staff, they are empowered to react instantly when seconds matter most. This then also triggers them to follow their designated lockdown procedures wherever they are. A call alert will also go out over the school's PA system – this ensures that the teachers that don't have immediate radio access get instantly notified of any safety threat. This also notifies those teachers with radio access to tune the radio to the emergency channel for updates on the specific situation taking place. Once one of the biggest concerns at Incarnation, coverage is no longer a relevant issue. The radios are now capable of working over Incarnation's WiFi system, providing seamless coverage where before there was none – an advancement alone that could easily be credited with saving lives someday. Also using Motorola's WAVE solution, Incarnation administrators have the unique ability to monitor radio traffic from their smartphone through a downloaded app – anytime, anywhere.





Tackling the lack of overall security from an access control standpoint, P&R worked closely with Dayton-based Copp Systems who specializes in these types of solutions to remedy the situation. Gone are the days of school administration not knowing the identity of every person coming in and out of the school on the exact day at the exact time. With each person having a unique code for access, there is accountability to ensure that the school is secure when they enter and when they exit. In addition, it takes physical keys – often times lost, misplaced or passed around – out of the picture entirely.

Though Incarnation already had some surveillance cameras deployed and in use, there was a strong desire to deploy more in order to cover the entire perimeter of the school – both inside and outside. Deploying these resources allowed for every hallway, auxiliary area, playground and parking lot to be not only monitored, but footage actively recorded and stored. In addition, all cameras can be monitored real-time from a large screen in the front office. This allows administrators to proactively engage in any incident that may be seen in real-time.

IMMEASURABLE SUCCESS

How does Incarnation quantify the success of these updated security measures? Is it simply the absence of a school shooting? Is it the lack of children hit in the parking lot by speeding cars; the lack of a child being lured from the playground? Results like these are nearly impossible at times to quantify. What we do know, however, is that peace of mind – of the students, the teachers, the administrators and the parents – is measure enough. And this translates to such quantifiable results as student test scores, enrollment numbers and the overall learning environment. These parents wholeheartedly applaud the investment in proactive safety measures. Said Emily Durbin, whose two children attend the school, “Everyone is “talking” about increased security measures in schools – Incarnation and P&R Communications actually did something about it. I’m thankful to be part of a community that has taken steps to protect both our children and our teachers every day.”

“School safety affects enrollment, it affects how comfortable kids are at school and how they learn, and it affects what actions we take every single day”

- Ellen Miller, Director of Development, Incarnation School