

# SAFETY 101

## New England school implements a layered security strategy

By Andy Hilverda

**S**tonington Public Schools, located in Pawcatuck, Conn., has aggressively addressed potential security risks before they become problems. In fact, the security infrastructure already in place is not only manageable and efficient, but also cost-effective and a model for other schools.

“We want to be proactive, not reactive, with security. We don’t want to be a school district that waits until something happens before we push out our security,” said Ken Donovan, facility manager for the public school system. “We have implemented procedures and systems to minimize our exposure to incidents and keep our students and teachers safe.”

### A PROACTIVE APPROACH

Stonington High School has a safety, security and emergency management director on campus and a crisis response plan in place. Each faculty member has this plan in a flip chart. The school holds crisis response drills periodically. Code Red initiates a complete lockdown, Code Blue initiates evacuation for bomb threats and Code Yellow is used to signal heightened security and vigilance. Code 10 is for fire drills.

Exterior doors to the high school are locked at 7:30 a.m., when school begins, and stay locked until 2:30 p.m., when school ends. All the doors in the building, including classrooms, prevent entry from the outside but allow egress for safety reasons. The classroom doors also have function locks that can be locked from the inside to protect students when there is a security threat. The school uses e-mail and cell phone communication with the

central office for incident notification.

High school visitors can access the building only by using the Aiphone intercom entry system. This system and a camera are stationed at the main entrance so visitors can be identified before being allowed to enter. Using the PassagePoint visitor management system, a visitor must produce a valid driver’s license or state-issued photo ID. This ID is promptly scanned into the system’s national database, which runs a background check for sexual offenders and criminal history. If the background check is clean, the system prints a temporary visitor’s ID badge.

### IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

To deter incidents, the high school installed 13 digital cameras throughout the school that record activity, enabling staff to review events. In addition, the school has five security officers who patrol the school and its grounds.

A particular area of concern for the safety and security of the students and staff was the school’s mechanical lock system. With the mechanical lock and key system, school officials had no effective way to control and audit access to the buildings. The school needed accountability so, when incidents occurred, they would know who was there and when. Donovan began looking at available access control technology, including the CyberLock system. A few months later, when the school’s principal, Stephen Murphy, had some security issues, Donovan had the answer.

Stonington Public Schools chose CyberLock because it offered quick access control and was financially feasi-



ble to install. No wiring was needed for the doors, and the system’s electronic cylinders fit into the existing mechanical lock hardware. The district purchased the electronic cylinders in small batches to work within its budget and toward the goal of installing them in all of its buildings. The system was installed in the high school first. At last count, the exterior and interior doors of two middle schools, the elementary school and the administration building also had been upgraded.

The high school at Stonington installed the electronic cylinders on its fire-rated doors to avoid the increased costs of a wired-in system. According to fire code, the school could not drill through a fire-rated door, modify the jam or move the door to another location without affecting the integrity of the door and violating the code.


“CyberLock brought affordable access control to our fire-rated doors because all we had to do was change out the mechanical cylinders in the existing lock hardware and replace them with electronic cylinders,” Donovan said. “We have installed electronic cylinders on critical exterior doors that are accessed primarily by staff, police and the fire department. With CyberLock, not only have we gained electronic access control at the door, but the audit trail has been beneficial in tracking traffic to our buildings.”

The library media center’s computer carts are secured by electronic padlocks, and the door to the athletic department’s

trainer supply room is equipped with the same system. Through a Perkins Grant, the school has a fully-functioning credit union in the building, staffed by students as part of a business education program. The protection of the credit union’s money was a concern, so the district installed an electronic lock system.

### EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

“All students and staff wear proximity card ID badges. We have a mixture of proximity card readers and locks installed throughout our schools. Because cost per door was an issue, we turned to this particular access control product to secure many other sensitive areas. We are now able to expand our access and key control. This provides everything we need, including an audit trail,” Donovan said. “Now we have electronic access control for less than \$300 per door. We are very pleased with how well the two systems work together.”

Parents want to know their school-age children are safe. Staff and parents welcome the steps the school district has taken to implement the electronic access control and security measures. Embracing new technology has helped the school district to ensure the safety and security of the students. This gives teachers peace of mind, as well. 

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