Safety Sounds

A Monthly Safety Bulletin From SPSG Schools Group

TECHNOLOGIES FOR SCHOOL SAFETY

More than one in three
Students who say they don't feel safe at school

60 Percent
High school boys say they could get a gun if they wanted to

30 Percent
Middle school boys say they could get a gun if they wanted to

69 Percent
High school boys say they could get drugs if they wanted to

27 Percent
Middle school boys say they could get drugs if they wanted to

About 8 Percent
9th through 12th grade students who were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property (Between 1993 and 1997)

96 Percent
Public schools reporting that visitors are required to sign in before entering the school building

1,755,000
Nonfatal crimes at school against teachers from 1994 through 1998

53 Percent
Public schools controlling access to their school building

4 Percent
Public schools performing random metal detector checks on students

About Two Times
Likelihood of a violent crime against a student occurring away from school than at school

From Josephson Institute of Ethics
Bureau of Justice Statistics
National Center for Education

spschoolsgroup.com
917 589 6093

Concern over school crime and violence has prompted many communities to urge their school districts to incorporate security technologies into their safety programs. The use of equipment and technology in school safety programs is not a panacea for solving all safety concerns. However, safety and security technology can be a valuable tool in a comprehensive program to create a learning environment that is perceived to be safe by all students and staff.

The Appeal of Technology Solutions

Many security products can provide school administrators or security officials with information that would not otherwise be available, free up manpower for more appropriate work, or be used to perform mundane tasks. Sometimes they can save a school money compared to the long-term cost of personnel or the cost impact of not preventing a particular incident.

The greatest appeal of technology solutions is deterrence. School security systems can convince perpetrators not to commit a crime due to perceived difficulty and risks of being caught. Security technology can also be valuable in the detection, investigation and prosecution of individuals responsible for school crimes and violence.

What Technology is Available?

- *ID badging and access control:* help ensure that only authorized people are on school grounds and at school functions
- *Tamper-resistant surveillance cameras:* monitor potential problem areas
- *Alarms and intrusion detections sensors:* prevent theft and vandalism
- *Portable breathalyzer units:* for testing of suspected alcohol use by students
- *Two-way radios:* allow school staff to communicate during emergencies and day-to-day
- *Metal detectors:* detection portals and metal-detector wands to search for weapons

Choosing Appropriate Technology

The proper design and application can mean the

difference between a security system, which sits idle and an effective safety promoting tool. A necessary first step is to carefully identify the problem before investing in a solution. The following questions should be answered before employing security equipment:

- What specific threats and concerns should the equipment address?
- How will the equipment help address these threats and how will it be used on a daily basis?
- How will equipment be maintained, repaired and upgraded as needed?

Each technology has a different set of applications, considerations and limitations. It is important to match solutions to the specific threats. For example, when unwelcome intruders, including armed individuals, are the targeted problem, schools can select among several technologies: keys and smart cards, metal detectors, alarm systems, and surveillance equipment.

Other Factors to Consider

Technology can be seductive, but it isn't always the right tool for the job. School officials should consider the possible consequences of security technology. When not incorporated properly as part of a complete safety program, security technology may change the social ecology of the school, provide a false sense of security, or become ineffective when not well maintained.

Valuable Resources:
"The Appropriate and Effective Use of Security Technologies in U.S. Schools"
Available from the National Institute of Justice
"Newer Technologies for School Security"
Available from eric.uoregon.edu