

# SECURITY ALARM SYSTEM NEEDS: SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Is your district considering, even on a preliminary basis, installing burglary/intrusion alarms systems in your schools? Following are the types of questions that districts can ask about building security to identify security system needs in specific schools:

## 1. LOCATION CRIME HISTORY

- How much and what kind of crime is there in the area in which the school is located? (*This information is available from your local law enforcement agency.*)
- How many and what kinds of security incidents have occurred in and around the school?
- Is there evidence of trespassing or skateboarding or graffiti on the property?

## 2. PHYSICAL SECURITY OF THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS

- What types of buildings/property are directly around the school (commercial, residential, etc.)?
- Do school neighbors “keep an eye” on the school? Is the school secluded or exposed to any special security hazards (high crime/drug area, loitering/hangout areas, attractive nuisance)?
- How physically secure are the school buildings? (Remember to examine each building in the school separately.) Where are the doors, windows, skylights, and other entry points? How secure are they? Are there any unprotected building openings or places that would be easy to break into that could allow building entry?
- Are there other areas besides the main school buildings that need to be considered in this security evaluation? Other areas include vehicle storage areas, materials and equipment outside storage areas, athletic sheds, pump or well houses, stadiums, etc.

## 3. CURRENT SECURITY DEVICES/SYSTEMS

- Are there any security alarm systems and/or devices currently in place? What kinds? Where are they?
- Besides alarm systems, are any additional security measures in place at the school? (Other security measures include: video monitoring, key control, fencing, lighting, equipment identification and inventorying, locking devices on portable equipment, safe or vault for cash, security checks by law enforcement, control of public facility use and hall barriers such as folding gates and roll-up grilles.)

## 4. THEFT POTENTIAL

- Where are high-valued equipment and supplies located? (Areas which are considered high value or in need of additional security can include: computer labs and servers, administrative offices, food service storage, student stores, industrial arts areas, band rooms, libraries and mobile classrooms.)
- How easy is it to transport high-valued items? Are computers and other expensive equipment locked or otherwise secured in place?

## 5. OUTSIDE OPINIONS

- What are the opinions of interested parties on security needs for the school? (Interested parties can include: community members, board members, facility staff, security staff, students, local law enforcement, insurance staff, and licensed security contractors.)

## 6. SCHOOL SECURITY/POLICE RESPONSE TIMES

- Are there school security personnel? How many? During what hours? What is the role of school security in the school?
- What is the average response time of *school district security officers* to an alarm or trouble call? Is this on a 24-hour basis?
- What is the average response time of *local law enforcement agency* to an alarm or trouble call? Is this on a 24-hour basis?

## 7. THE TYPE OF PROTECTION NEEDED (based on review)

- What type of protection seems to be indicated at this school? General types of protection include:
  - Perimeter (partial) protection - detects an attempt to enter through a building opening
  - Spot protection - detects the presence of unauthorized persons within a limited area
  - Area protection - detects the presence of unauthorized persons within the premises
  - Complete protection - detects an attempt to enter through a building opening (perimeter protection) or detects the presence of unauthorized persons within the premises (area protection).

## 8. AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- Is a U.L. listed or F.M. approved central station monitoring service available in the area?
- What budget is available for security systems? Are grants available?
- What kinds of equipment are available? What companies sell, install, maintain and service this equipment? Are the companies licensed by the state to do this?
- What are initial costs and maintenance costs for the security systems?

## POTENTIAL TRAPS OF SECURITY ALARMS SYSTEMS

- The capabilities and limitations of security alarm systems should be understood and planned for before installation. For instance, perimeter protection will not detect intruders who enter through an unprotected door.
- Do not look to technology to take care of procedural problems. If doors and windows are not being locked by staff at night, an alarm system is an expensive way to ensure that the building is secured.
- A security alarm system should be part of a more complete district security program.