



INCREASING SCHOOL SAFETY THROUGH ENHANCED COMMUNICATION WITH FIRST RESPONDERS

School District 27J is the sixteenth largest school district in Colorado, encompassing over 200 square miles in northwest Adams County, northeast Broomfield County and southwest Weld County. The district serves approximately 17,500 students across 12 elementary schools, four middle schools, four high schools and five charter schools.

Keeping students safe is a top priority for the district; school officials regularly evaluate school safety plans to enhance processes and determine where efficiencies can be gained.

When an emergency situation occurs, every second counts, and poor communication between schools and first responders can impact not only response times, but also how prepared police officers or firefighters are once they arrive on site. Landlines, school intercom systems, and cell phones can aid in the response to a crisis, but they can also be unreliable, complex, or entirely inaccessible when needed most.

School District 27J wanted to have communications devices and an infrastructure in place to create consistent, effective, and coordinated communications — operating in lock-step with new district-wide safety procedures — across each and every school.

CUSTOMER PROFILE

School District 27J

Brighton, Colorado

16th largest district in Colorado in terms of enrollment

- 25 schools
- 17,500 students
- Encompasses 212 square miles

INDUSTRY

K-12 Education

SOLUTIONS

- MOTOTRBO™ IP Site Connect system
- SchoolSAFE® Network
- 7 MOTOTRBO™ XPR 8400 repeaters
- 60 MOTOTRBO™ XPR 7550 portable radios
- 15 MOTOTRBO™ XPR 3500 portable radios
- 4 APX™ 4000 P25 portable radios

BENEFITS

- Seamless communications interoperability between school radio systems and public safety radio systems, giving first responders control over when and how to connect with schools
- Instant activation makes audio communications readily available for quick emergency response
- Empowers school staff to exchange real-time, critical information while first responders are in transit and throughout an incident
- Regular, on-site training to ensure school personnel are knowledgeable about first responders' radio and safety protocols



MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS

CHALLENGES

“Can You Hear Me?”

Employees within District 27J were using a variety of devices to communicate, including cell phones, landlines, and two-way radios from multiple vendors. Many of the schools have poor cell coverage, making cell phones useless at times. During a time of crisis, the district wanted to be able to count on reliable coverage and instant connectivity with emergency personnel.

“We are a rapidly growing district and our schools are dispersed across vast distances,” said Tom Delgado, Construction Project Manager, with School District 27J. “When emergencies arise, we wanted a better way to instantly connect with first responders and with each other, to keep all schools informed and engaged.”

“This is 9-1-1. What’s Your Emergency?”

If a crisis occurs, a school employee calls 9-1-1. When a 9-1-1 call comes in, the 9-1-1 dispatcher needs the best information possible to dispatch the needed first responders.

Reaching out to first responders as quickly as possible is paramount, but if the employee on the phone isn’t witnessing and managing the safety situation, they may not have the most pertinent, current information. Or worse, they may get key facts wrong. Safety and situational parameters can change on a dime, making it challenging to relay accurate incident details, such as instructing first responders which door to enter at the school as the situation unfolds.

“It was truly a game of ‘telephone’ at times, with dispatch summarizing the information provided by the caller,” said Bobby Noel, Battalion Chief with South Adams County Fire Protection District based in Commerce City, Colorado.

“As a result, we may not have gotten the full and accurate story until we were on the scene at a school — face-to-face with the emergency.”



Communication Challenges in a Growing District

With the tremendous growth within School District 27J have come new hires and changes in personnel. The district recognized the need to not only shift to more reliable technology, but to have employees regularly trained on the new district-wide radio usage, especially for emergency situations, on a regular basis. This would allow designated safety team members moving throughout the district to carry that information to their new position, as well as empower new employees to participate in critical training.

All schools had already purchased two-way radios, but employees weren’t using the devices to their full potential. When an emergency situation occurred, there was a risk of additional communication challenges if the equipment wasn’t operated properly. Training was needed to get school personnel more comfortable with district-wide radio protocols for crisis situations, including communicating with first responders.

“Certain schools were starting to recognize the benefits of two-way radios to improve day-to-day activities, such as requesting janitorial assistance,” said Delgado. “But, many employees weren’t formally trained on using various channels and were concerned about who could hear conversations and how best to engage.”

“It was truly a game of ‘telephone’ at times, with dispatch summarizing the information provided by the caller. As a result, we may not have gotten the full and accurate story until we were on the scene at a school — face-to-face with the emergency.”

— Bobby Noel, Battalion Chief, South Adams County Fire Protection District





SOLUTION

District 27J wanted to build on the current use of two-way radios and develop a consistent and scalable way to communicate during emergency situations. The district turned to Motorola Solutions and SchoolSAFE.

Motorola Solutions is the two-way radio vendor of choice among schools making new purchases, due to its attractive price point, proven performance, and strong reputation within the education and public safety industries. Motorola partnered with SchoolSAFE to offer a solution that makes it possible for school-based radio systems to be connected directly and securely with radios used by first responders. Unlike other simple bridging products, with the SchoolSAFE solution, emergency personnel and school officials can communicate in real-time during the entire span of an incident, with multiple people exchanging information at the same time.

As a result of training and practice with local first responders, SchoolSAFE Certified Ready personnel are comfortable instantly communicating with community police, fire, EMS, and 9-1-1 call centers for reliable, secure, two-way communication during an emergency. Over 230 SchoolSAFE installations have been completed nationwide to help protect staff and students. Individual schools have the option to purchase as many two-way radios as they wish based on their budget.

"At some schools, every teacher and staff member has a two-way radio," said Delgado. "More and more schools within our district are moving that route as we continue to witness the effectiveness and ease of use."

BENEFITS

Interoperability — Across All Schools and Devices

SchoolSAFE seamlessly connects autonomous technology, including Motorola Solutions radios and others, with the radios used by first responders. This enables all schools to participate in public safety procedures, even if they are still in the process of upgrading to two-way radios. SchoolSAFE can grow or expand as radio systems change. A district can easily add a second channel for daily use by designated employees, optimizing each school's technology investments for day-to-day operations and emergencies.

One-Click Activation

With just the click of a button, SchoolSAFE and Motorola Solutions open critical lines of communication between school district personnel and first responders. If an individual from one school calls 9-1-1, the SchoolSAFE system is activated by a dispatcher, creating a connection to the school's two-way radios on an assigned channel, which can then be accessed by designated first responders. This allows the responders to speak directly to school personnel while in transit to determine the scope of the incident and what emergency resources are needed.

When activated, with the SchoolSAFE network and Motorola Solutions two-way radios, those listening to the channel can hear what's going on — instantly sharing information for a more organized response based on real-time changes occurring at the location.

"Bridging with the two-way radios is an immediate way to communicate and let people know what's going on," said Delgado. "With the size of our district, this is a critical feature."

"Bridging with the two-way radios is an immediate way to communicate and let people know what's going on, with the size of our district, this is a critical feature."

— Tom Delgado, Construction Project Manager, School District 27J



Ongoing Training and Preparedness

The school district's safety teams participated in training conducted by SchoolSAFE, which focused on how to communicate effectively with first responders throughout the entirety of an incident.

"One of the keys to success is repetition with training to get people comfortable," said Delgado. "We provide best practices on radio usage etiquette and wording so that employees know what to do, what to say and how to say it."

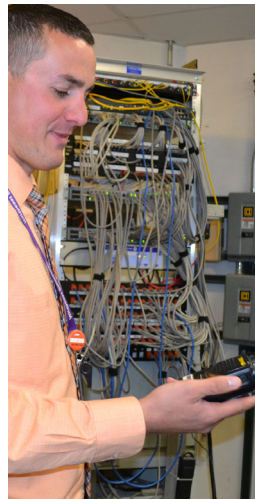
The schools routinely use the two-way radios when conducting fire drills or other safety-related drills and they can alert schools about what's taking place. Drills are now conducted more efficiently, allowing kids to get back to the classroom faster, with less disruption to the day.

"The real-time value of radios was quickly understood," said Delgado. "We regularly practice bridging via the radios to let other schools know that students are outside because a drill is underway. It's a great way to practice for critical situations."

District-wide Communication in Real Time

SchoolSAFE and Motorola Solutions radios were recently put into action when there was a report of an individual carrying a high-powered rifle located a few blocks away from one of the district's schools. Schools were immediately alerted of the situation and put on lockout, with no individuals allowed admittance. Each school used a different channel so that they could talk with their own teams, as well as a shared channel with the other schools to discuss the situation as it was developing.

"These individuals went to school to be teachers, but in today's world, they are forced to learn incident command strategies," said Noel.



"One of the keys to success is repetition with training to get people comfortable. We provide best practices on radio usage etiquette and wording so that employees know what to do, what to say and how to say it."

— Tom Delgado, Construction Project Manager,
School District 27J

First Responders Can Quickly Prioritize Actions

Once SchoolSAFE is activated, staff can exchange critical information while the first responder team is in transit and throughout the emergency response to ensure continuity.

For example, the fire department responded to a call at one of the schools and via SchoolSAFE, while en route, reached the assigned Incident Commander at the school. They immediately learned the fire was extinguished and all students and staff were accounted for. Since fire personnel had this confirmation, they could adjust their response instead of rushing into the building with full gear and equipment.

"Establishing a direct line between our team and school personnel helps us do our job better," said Noel. "Knowing what is happening in real-time lets us better direct priorities and resources — a huge advantage in keeping schools safe."

To learn more about increasing school safety through enhanced communication with first responders, visit www.MotorolaSolutions.com/SchoolSAFE.



Motorola Solutions, Inc. 500 W. Monroe Street Chicago, IL 60661 U.S.A. 800-367-2346 MotorolaSolutions.com

MOTOROLA, MOTO, MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS and the Stylized M Logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Motorola Trademark Holdings, LLC and are used under license. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. © 2017 Motorola Solutions, Inc. All rights reserved. 11-2017