



*Unfortunately, school buildings and grounds are no longer the safe havens they once were. Criminal acts, vandalism and violence have become increasingly prevalent and no one expects that to change. It is instrumental that carefully thought out security systems and safety plans are in place to keep your administration, staff members and students safe.*

*Academic administrations are now taking a more involved and active role in establishing and developing safety plans and installing more thorough security upgrades.*

*Use the following information to help protect your students, your property and yourself from becoming a victim of vandalism or random violence.*

## **Five outdoor security upgrades every school should consider**

**1. Consider your foliage.** Keep all bushes around your buildings trimmed so people cannot hide behind them.

**2. Lock your doors.** An open-door policy at your school is a nice thought, but the fact is, you need to restrict access. Unlock the front door to your school only during the beginning of the school day when students are arriving, during which time doors should be monitored by security staff, teachers or administrators. Otherwise, install a front door buzzer system along with video monitors at the main entrance. Require all visitors to show a photo ID before letting them into the building.

**3. Keep track of your keys.** Limit key distribution to teachers, administrators and maintenance staff members and keep a record of everyone who has a key. Rekey your locks if a key is lost or not returned.

**4. Turn on the lights.** Outdoor lighting is essential. Ample lighting in the right places makes intruders less likely to target your school. The parking lot and street entrances also should be well lit.

*Security  
threats to  
your school  
system  
cannot be  
ignored*

**5. Invite the community to get involved.** If possible, invite neighborhood volunteers or local parent groups to start a watch program for your school. Neighborhood volunteers have a vested interest in their community and the safety of your school. Ask your local police or sheriff's department about how to get started.

## Ramp up protection with security teams

Creating a security team at your school can go a long way toward ensuring the safety of your teachers, students and employees.

Here are tips for creating your security team, putting a plan of action in place and setting standards for its operations.

1. A professional security team is highly recommended for schools.
2. Identify potential crisis events.
3. Establish a written security and violence response plan for your school.
4. Train and use your teachers and administrators as a first line of defense to detect potential threats involving suspicious people, packages and vehicles.
5. Establish procedures for patrolling exterior and interior areas before, during and after school hours, as well as over the weekend.
6. Conduct a security sweep of the entire school building before locking all doors and windows for the day.
7. Ask local community groups or Neighborhood Watch programs to keep an eye on the property and report unusual activities to law enforcement.



# An ounce of prevention keeps buildings, grounds safe

***To help avoid a potentially dangerous and costly situation, make sure you're following these practices to harden your school's perimeter:***

## 1. UPGRADE YOUR OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Using the right size lamps and fixtures helps create a feeling of safety for teachers, students and administrators. A great reference to review before installing your outdoor lighting system is the U.S. Department of Energy's Exterior Lighting for Energy Savings, Security, and Safety. You can view and download the free publication at <http://tinyurl.com/zsrhwms>.

Also consider replacing any incandescent lights with LED bulbs. LEDs are a little more expensive, but they last longer and are typically brighter and more energy efficient.

## 2. INSTALL SECURITY CAMERAS

Today's digital cameras can connect wirelessly to a recording system in your main office or directly to your security provider. Install them near doorways and other high-traffic areas. Make sure your cameras are near a light source so the images on your video are clear.

## 3. CONSIDER AUDIBLE ALARMS

Many times, audible alarm systems are overlooked in favor of silent alarms. The sound of an alarm, however, is exactly what you need to signal an emergency. The sound also can alert neighbors and

the surrounding community to the potential danger.

Many alarm systems now come with a pulsating strobe light that is visible for miles. This helps you or authorities pinpoint the exact location that needs attention.

## 4. INSTALL DEADBOLTS

Deadbolts provide the best possible security for interior doors. Consider them for faculty offices, storage rooms and the like. You can get models that use letter combinations, passcodes or even your fingerprint to open doors.

## 5. CONSIDER AN ELECTRONIC KEYCARD SYSTEM

With a keyless system, you can:

- Manage a person's access via computer
- Identify who used specific doors (and when)
- Deactivate a keycard when a staff member leaves your school

## 6. ADD SAFETY CURBS AND BARRIERS

If you think of your grounds as concentric circles, you want to be sure you have the right safety equipment in each area. In the outer circle, safety typically means controlling foot and automobile traffic.

Terraces, raised plant beds, trees, planters, fencing, gatehouses and bollards also are good protective tools. Many schools are using these types of alternatives to divert traffic, provide added security and beautify their grounds.

Consider temporary barriers for special events or graduation ceremonies, too.

**8.** Conduct periodic safety surveys of all school buildings and grounds and keep written records of conditions and corrective actions.

**9.** Call police if a suspicious person is on school property and let the police investigate the situation.

**10.** Establish a position on on-site armed protection.

## Add security practices that complement your strategy

Many schools have the typical combination of alarms, locks, gates and monitoring equipment, but those aren't always enough. Today you need to add proven security practices and procedures to complement your security strategy.

You should conduct a thorough security assessment of your buildings and grounds, for example.

Today, it's fairly common for schools to ask their local police departments to perform a security vulnerability assessment of the school buildings and grounds.

Emergency personnel can show you where your school is most vulnerable. It's a good idea to take some photos of those areas, too, so you can address the issues later.

Consider hiring a professional security team that specializes in schools. Students, teachers and administrators will immediately feel safer knowing there's a guard on duty. An in-house security team composed of teachers or staff members also can help identify potential risks as they occur.

Another security trend at schools today is the addition of 24/7 digital surveillance cameras. Having strategically placed cameras both indoors and out can be a powerful deterrent to vandals.

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