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1. Introduction

Communications can quite literally be a lifeline for businesses and schools. A solid unified communications (UC) and collaboration solution can keep organizations in close touch within their staff as well as customers and partners. And that becomes even more critical when assistance is urgently required or emergency services are needed.

2. Staying safe at school

When parents send their kids off to school, they have an expectation that they will not only be educated but also be kept safe during the school day. And schools are taking this trust to keep their campuses safe very seriously these days. When Worcester Academy, a 175-year-old private co-ed boarding school in Massachusetts, was looking to modernize its phone system, key criteria for the school were to ensure a safe environment and enable better ways to keep teachers, students and parents connected.

Part of this strategy involved bringing telephones into the classroom for the first time.

"We didn’t have telephones in the classrooms on campus and wanted to initiate a systematic way to call, page and contact emergency services from anywhere," said Drew Forsberg, director of IT at Worcester Academy.

The school selected ShoreTel's phone system, including its Emergency Notification application, which enhances the native E-911 functionality in the ShoreTel solution.

Now, when a 911 call is initiated from anywhere on Worcester Academy’s campus, Forsberg and others on his staff receive real-time, audible notifications on desktops and phones.

"The application creates a call log of all the emergency-related activity including the extension where the call is placed and other important details," he says.

"More importantly, the school is now able to mobilize security resources in a way that best ensures the safety of students and teachers."
The Kaukauna Area School District near Milwaukee also had safety and security top-of-mind when it was ready to update its VoIP service and refresh its overall network infrastructure. Specifically, the school district wanted to improve its emergency 911 procedures and tie that into its IP phone system. ShoreTel’s Emergency Notification application gives the school district greater flexibility for emergency response, including connecting 911 calls to local police while also alerting designated school officials at specific schools where the calls originate.

According to Bob Summers, IT manager for the school district, previously 911 calls from schools went straight to police dispatch, and school administrators were often unaware of an emergency until emergency vehicles arrived on site. The Kaukauna Area School District also relies on Code Blue, a feature within the ShoreTel Emergency Notification application that handles less critical events. For example, if a teacher needs assistance in the classroom due to unruly behavior or another situation, he or she can initiate a Code Blue to call for assistance.

3. 911, what’s your emergency?

The need for quick and reliable communications with first responders cuts across industry sectors, which was the case at Madison-Kipp, a manufacturer of zinc and aluminum die casting components and systems for customers in the transportation and light industrial markets.

The company overhauled an outdated phone system and brought in ShoreTel UC solutions, including the ShoreTel Emergency Notification application, which gives Madison-Kipp automated alerts and real-time internal announcements when 911 calls are placed from anywhere across its networked facilities, which include three plants that employ about 400 workers.

“E911 expands ShoreTel’s native emergency support and is going to be essential in meeting our safety needs,” says Jackie Giller, manager of IT at Madison-Kipp.

“In the past with our old phone system, we’d had instances where an emergency vehicle was dispatched to the wrong location. Now, employees can be confident that an emergency call placed from anywhere on any of our sites will be immediately dispatched to both the emergency services as well as to our internal response designees.”

4. UC delivers peace of mind

With IT departments across the board making the most of every purchase, the ShoreTel UC solution is a brilliantly simple choice because it delivers so much in one package, making it unnecessary for organizations to look to other products to fill any gaps.
Unified Communications Dials 911 for Emergency Services

The emergency services features included in ShoreTel's business phone system offering has made Worcester Academy’s communications across its entire campus much more streamlined.

“Teachers are so grateful for the accessibility from anywhere, and we all feel safer knowing that the classrooms and dorms and other buildings are reachable via the interactive tools such as caller ID, paging and emergency services,” Forsberg says.

“We’ve needed these features for years and now we have them.”