



## **Precision. Simplicity. Reliability.**

### **The 3 Mainstays of a School's Mass Notification System.**

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*A unified Mass Communication System (MNS) offers a robust, multi-channel and immediate response to crisis situations. Modular and integrated with your IP network, an MNS can be tailored to your K-12 campus.*

**E**very parent's nightmare is the threat of a dangerous incident occurring in their child's school. While parents bear the worry, school administrators are losing sleep – and with good reason. Once we look at school facilities through the lens of safety and security, we start to realize the logistical complexity of keeping schools safe.

School campuses can span multiple buildings, outdoor play spaces and isolated athletic fields, rooms with poor acoustics such as gyms and lunchrooms, and unstaffed locations such as bathrooms and hallways. Occupants of school buildings range from faculty and staff to children,

parents and visiting professionals – with no one of these groups having access to a consistent communication channel. Teachers do not always carry their phones or pagers on their persons; school visitors are not familiar with the school's emergency protocols; and of course, the children themselves are entirely reliant on their teachers for face-to-face guidance.

Remember too, that emergencies breed confusion and panic. While a conventional alarm siren succeeds at alerting the school campus of an emergency, it does little to convey necessary information or to assuage the chaos. Any number of realities could exist: What is the

nature of the emergency – is it a power outage or an active shooter? Where is the incident occurring? Is it contained or is there a campus-wide danger?

A **Mass Notification System (MNS)**, as the description indicates, does more than solely alert of danger—it notifies people how to respond to the danger and how to best protect themselves and the children around them.

The key components of an MNS are its **precision** – its ability to convey accurate information to distinct groups of people;

its **seamless integration** with multiple communication channels; and its **reliability** to withstand the technical upheavals of a crisis situation.

## *Stay in Place or Evacuate? Precision Saves Lives.*

**A** generation ago, emergency alarms would signal an evacuation. All children and teachers would stream out of the buildings and into the nearest open space. Now, unfortunately,



▲ An Emergency Mass Notification Overlay from our Partner, Alertus Technologies

with gun violence occurring inside the school building, an evacuation through a public hallway could lead children directly into the danger zone.

An MNS will transmit clear and consistent communication through **multi-channel delivery**, so that everyone, wherever they may be, knows exactly what to do. A dedicated alerting device, such as the **wall-mounted Alertus Alert Beacon®** will flash out lights to gain attention, emit sounds, and display text messages detailing essential information. In outdoor spaces, **flashing strobes** communicate visually, while **high-power speakers** announce crystal-clear notifications.

Because an MNS is connected to your existing IP network, the system can be configured to leverage your existing communication devices. All **digital signage** and **LED marquees** across the campus will instantly display emergency alerts, as well as **VoIP phones with video capabilities**. **Networked computers** can be deployed to pause operation and to receive crisis communication. Custom broadcasts can be synced through your current **PA and pager system**. Additionally, the MNS can connect to third party networks and send updates to **social media**.

The combination of **visual and auditory notifications** in an MNS aligns with the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** that requires public institutions to ensure accessibility to information in emergency situations. Additionally, because an MNS is digital and responsive, it can be quickly customized to categorize audiences based on location, function or other attributes, and deliver **differentiated messages**.

## ***When Every Second Counts, Simplicity is Crucial.***

**A**s you can see, an MNS mobilizes the complexity of a school system through sophisticated networking. However, a developing crisis is not the time to fiddle with complicated software applications. The dashboard and functionality of your MNS must be implicitly simple for your operator to deploy. **Single-button activation** can be configured to set an advanced plan into motion in an instant.

A smart MNS platform will offer a variety of configuration tools so that the system is crisis-ready. When an alert triggers the system, your operator can drill down through a **visual diagram** of your facility, **sketch a virtual boundary** around the active crisis location and **designate that zone** for targeted communication. The dashboard will offer the option of using **pre-recorded messages** or to issue **custom messages** that can be broadcast through **text-to-speech**. There is never a doubt that the output will be unintelligible since the speech mode is always calm and clear.

**Remote access** is another critical advantage to an MNS. When a delayed response can cost lives, having a system that you can immediately deploy – whether you are onsite or away – is essential. Additionally, **two-way communication devices**, such as two-way radios or intercoms, can be accessed through the control panel for real time reporting.

## *The Lights are Off, but Your MNS is On.*

**T**he **National Fire Alarm Signaling Code** (NFPA 72) outlines the requirements for an MNS. Apart from fire emergencies, it includes requirements for mass notification systems in cases of weather emergencies; terrorist events; biological, chemical, and nuclear emergencies; and other threats. These disasters can cause significant damage to your network infrastructure, and to a proportionate degree, your school MNS should be able to withstand the more common dangers such as **power outages** and **cyberattack**.

Your MNS solution provider will configure the system on a private network that is not dependent on third-party operators. This ensures your emergency network is **hackproof** and behind a **secure firewall**. All dedicated MNS hardware will be **hardcoded** to only communicate within the **closed network** of your MNS. Should disaster strike, you know with absolute certainty that the MNS is reliably operating.

## *Scalable & Smartly Integrated with Your Existing Networked Hardware*

**A**n MNS isn't typically purchased as an independent package but is **modular**. Your solution provider will begin by analyzing your existing network, harnessing your existing

communication devices for emergency configuration, and then recommend installing dedicated hardware according to your requirements. In terms of value, an MNS is not a disproportionate investment for a potentially unlikely occurrence; rather, it is an **overlay system** that - should the threat occur - will give you rigorous security. On a daily basis, it is a platform with **granular communication capabilities** that has many uses aside from school emergency communication. Weather delays, special events and schedule changes can each be communicated through the MNS's **unified platform**.

Additionally, because school security is a high priority item, many state and federal organizations provide **grant funding** to cover some associated costs.

Thinking ahead, as **smart technology** becomes more tightly integrated with our IP networks, your technology solution provider can adapt your MNS for other **innovative applications**. For example, your access control software detects unauthorized entry to a sensitive location and triggers the MNS system to alert security personnel. Or, your networked vape detector is triggered, and sends a text message to the wall-mounted emergency panel in the teacher's lounge.

School safety is a paramount concern. Building an MNS in your school provides **a toolbox of immediate responses** to limit dangerous threats and protect your school's most important asset, its children. 