



**Farmington
Municipal Schools**

SCHOOL SAFETY
IMPACT STORY

RADIO-TO-INTERCOM BRIDGE SHAVES SECONDS OFF RESPONSE TIME

THE SITUATION

The school intercom system is at the heart of every school day - used for morning announcements, reading the lunch menu, paging, playing tones to signal the start and end of the class period, and even for announcing the beginning of the much anticipated summer break.

That romantic notion of the intercom system only being used to convey positive messages has been abruptly changed by the realities of today - threats to the physical safety of our children while at school.

Every school system wants to keep children and staff safe from threats, and to eliminate weaknesses that surface when assessing vulnerabilities. One such vulnerability was discovered by Ben McGaha, Communications Specialist with the Farmington, New Mexico police department. Ben understood that the school intercom system is the ideal tool to increase speed of communication and facilitate actions in case of emergencies. But what if that intercom system, with its single point of access (often the school office) is compromised by intruders? How would communication be facilitated over the public address system?

THE SOLUTION

Ben advocates equipping every teacher and staff member with a hand-held radio. This enables communication not only with school administrators, but also with the district office, local police, and emergency dispatch.

The importance of these handhelds became very apparent during the Aztec, New Mexico school shooting incident in December 2017. The school's custodian first used his handheld radio to inform administrators of an intrusion. Second, the administrators accessed the school intercom. Then, emergency messages were relayed throughout the school campus via the intercom.



RADIO-TO-INTERCOM BRIDGE

Ben McGaha of the Farmington, New Mexico police department advocates use of the Radio-To-Intercom Bridge to enable intercom announcements to originate from selected handheld radios, which adds an additional layer of security.

For more information, visit www.ritron.com; call 800-872-1872; email ritron@ritron.com;
or write to Ritron, Inc. at 505 W. Carmel Drive, Carmel, IN 46032.



SCHOOL SAFETY IMPACT STORY



Farmington Municipal Schools

As Ben studied the situation in Aztec, he came up with an idea to connect handheld radios directly to the school intercom system - something that had not been done before - to shave seconds off response time. This also eliminates the single point of access vulnerability.



Connecting the handhelds to the intercom would allow for immediate and direct messaging to the school campus.

Ben searched for and found such a device - the "Radio-To-Intercom Bridge" from the American manufacturing company Ritron, Inc. Ben connected the interface device to the intercom in the Farmington, New Mexico school system. When radios programmed to the device's frequency request access to the intercom via a passcode keyed in from the radio, the device prioritizes the radio transmission by overriding what may be playing on the intercom. Voice messages from selected trained school administrators as well as emergency personnel may now be transmitted over the intercom. "Connecting these systems is a dream come true for me," Ben stated.

Ben's idea to use this Radio-To-Intercom Bridge has alleviated the school system's single point of access to the intercom vulnerability while adding an additional layer of security.

In cooperation with local public emergency services, the school administrators have received training and use the system regularly to ensure familiarity if an emergency situation should arise.

Ben would like to see the Radio-To-Intercom Bridge used in all school systems to increase the level of safety in the school environment. Connecting an existing handheld radio network to the current intercom system adds new levels of capability while preserving the investment in both systems.

Connecting existing radios to the intercom system through the Radio-To-Intercom Bridge shaves seconds off response times. The school system has increased the ability to protect our children, as well as alleviated fears that the intercom system might be compromised.

The Farmington, New Mexico school system now has a high level of confidence that they'll be able to communicate quickly, and that swift action will be taken in the case of emergency.



RADIO-TO-INTERCOM BRIDGE

The device used here is the Radio-To-Intercom Bridge from Ritron, Inc. This receiver is designed for interface to existing wired Public Address / Intercom systems to allow PA announcements using VHF or UHF business band, FRS, or MURS radios. The Radio-To-Intercom Bridge allows all the wired speakers in an existing PA / Intercom system to be accessed via code, or accessed immediately, depending on programming.

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