

### Flying the friendly skies?

In today's environment, security directors are watching for possible risks everywhere. **SEE PAGE 8**



### Coast Mt. rides safer trolley system

Officials hope cameras cut down on violent incidents. **SEE PAGE 10**

### Transporter enhances guard visibility

Macerich takes a road-less-traveled approach to shopping mall security to speed patrols. **SEE PAGE 14**

# SECURITY DIRECTOR NEWS

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## Guest commentary

# Wireless enhances security in older structures

BY MARK JARMAN

**A**S THE DEMAND FOR heightened security in public school districts increases, the installation of modern technology is needed to ensure the safety and learning environment of today's student body. But old buildings and antiquated systems are proving to be a significant problem.

In 1998, a study was conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics to determine the average age of the structures that house our nation's public schools. The data collected indicated the average age of public school buildings was 42 years old — and that data is nearly nine years old.

"The majority of public learning institutions were built between 1950 and 1969 to keep pace with the exploding Baby Boom population," noted Guy Grace, director of security and emergency planning for Littleton, Colo. Public Schools. "In those days, security was not a high priority for public schools."

Security directors and school administrators are regularly faced with the challenge of establishing security solutions. The first step in creating a school that facilitates learning, mutual respect and responsibility among students is to reduce the number of disruptions and outside intrusions that can interfere with this environment. With this in mind, instituting effective access control and intrusion monitoring is of the utmost importance, but with old wiring, antiquated systems and tight budgets, school administrators often encounter major obstacles.

As better technology has emerged, manufacturers have developed more accurate and less expensive wireless security systems capable of overcoming challenges facing school districts.

"Most of our schools were renovated and

expanded during the summers in the late 90s. As trenches were dug for new water lines and sewers, they often cut the wiring for our original security system, rendering the entire system inoperable," noted Jerry Fankhouser, intrusion alarm specialist for the Scottsdale Unified School District in Arizona. "We needed to reinstall a system quickly and cost-effectively before school was back in session."

Unlike wired systems, which require extensive retrofitting and reconstruction, wireless systems can easily be installed virtually anywhere inside or around the perimeter of a campus.

For better monitoring, Scottsdale installed all new wireless motion sensors throughout the buildings to alert central monitoring in the event of an unauthorized entry after hours or during school closures. Motion sensors were set up in classrooms, high traffic areas and entry points from outside the school. To ensure all the sensors worked properly and communicated with the central monitoring station, several wireless repeaters were used to boost coverage on property grounds. The district also implemented multiple door contacts for better protection and has started installing security cameras with digital video recorders to gain more information on intruders upon entry.

Like the Scottsdale school district, the Hayward Unified School District recognized the value of a wireless system. With exception of one new school, all of the Hayward public school structures were more than 50 years old and in need of modern updates. Overall renovations were undertaken in 1996 and 1997 and during the same timeframe the district reformed security policies.

"We needed to install nearly 1,000 motion

sensors in 23 school sites and a wired system was going to make that very complicated," said Brett Swenson, supervisor of electronics for the Hayward Unified School District. "In one day my team of three technicians was able to install an entire wireless system in an elementary school. In just six months, we installed new wireless security in all 23 schools in the district, which would have been impossible with a wired system."

As the director of security and emergency planning for his district, Grace needed a system that could easily integrate with an established wired system and deliver exceptional reliability at all 28 school sites. Another important benefit Grace was seeking in a wireless solution was its ability to function cohesively with an existing security panel.

"Today 60 percent of our security is wireless and includes motion sensors, wireless door contacts and panic pendants for key personnel," Grace said.

Since 1995, when the wireless system was added to Littleton Public Schools, every burglary attempt has been thwarted and vandalism has been reduced by 80 percent.

As security continues to be an important assignment at our schools, wireless security will be an integral part of the solution. Installing and maintaining a reliable security system doesn't have to be complicated or exceptionally expensive. Wireless technology is making it possible to protect new schools as well as those that have seen multiple generations of students pass through them. **SDN**

Mark Jarman is the president of Inovonics Wireless Corp. For additional information, visit [www.inovonics.com](http://www.inovonics.com).