Creating a lockdown plan for your campus

Key elements of an emergency lockdown plan

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Although there are no national guidelines for university lockdown, an effective emergency lockdown plan includes prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Protocols should be developed to fit local conditions, including risk levels, building designs, law enforcement response capabilities, technology and other considerations.

Proper planning should include collaboration with all community responders – campus security, public safety officials, law enforcement, fire and rescue teams, and other community agencies.

Open campus environments pose significant challenges, particularly during emergency conditions that call for a lockdown of some or all buildings. With traditional security controls and procedures in place, campus officials may struggle to lockdown buildings quickly. Mass notification systems may rely on landline phone systems to call each department with instructions to lock facility access doors manually, one building at a time. After resolution of a security issue, the reverse process may prove equally inefficient when manual procedures are used to return facilities to their normal state.

With recent advancements in electronic security management systems, many campuses have implemented systematic efforts to upgrade traditional locks around building perimeters with access control devices that are connected to a centralized system. These systems allow authorized individuals to quickly lock down a building, a series of buildings or even an entire campus. With advanced programming, access control systems can respond to different threat levels to automatically lockdown buildings and turn control over to a pre-determined system procedure.

Locking devices also can be programmed to automatically secure all or part of the campus at different times. The system can keep doors unlocked, allowing free access, or maintain a locked system that requires proper ID cards for entry. Keyless systems that use electronic locks and proximity or smart cards also can effectively control access.
Communication
Emergency notification and broadcast alert systems provide an effective way to notify people of the need to lockdown facilities. These emergency alert systems include sending text messages to students’ cell phones and other mobile communications devices, linking campus buildings to a public address system, and broadcasting messages to a variety of communication channels. Mass notification systems should fit the local situation and type of campus organization. When possible, redundant systems provide the best solution.

Involvement with a variety of stakeholders can strengthen a university’s lockdown protocols. As campus organizations define emergency management plans, they may bring together representatives from the campus community, area law enforcement, fire service and emergency management agencies.

Training
Appropriate training in lockdown procedures should include all faculty, staff and students. Many campus organizations use online safety training programs to reach all of their constituents. A variety of training methods are available to suit an organization’s situation, budget and internal resources.

Solutions
Migrating your campus to a fully integrated electronic access control system that supports fast and secure lockdown is possible, but you may need to spread that cost out over multiple budget years. From wireless programmable electronic locks to fully networked and IP-based access management systems, hardware and technology solutions can help protect people and assets across campus every day and in emergency situations.

Learn more about creating a lockdown plan
For more information about lockdown solutions, please contact a professional security consultant in your area by calling 888.758.9823 or fill out the Contact Us form on our website at allegion.com.