

COLORADO SCHOOL DISTRICT TRANSFORMS EMERGENCY READINESS AND RESPONSE

MOTOTRBO™ RADIOS AND SCHOOLSAFE® SEAMLESSLY CONNECT SCHOOLS TO PUBLIC SAFETY



Pueblo County School District 70 (D-70) spans 2,400 square miles in central Colorado where the foothills of the Rocky Mountains meet the Great Plains. The largest district geographically in the state, D-70 enrolls approximately 9,500 students at 20 schools.

For Colorado administrators and their colleagues nationwide, school safety is a paramount concern. In fact, 97 percent of U.S. educators say it is their top priority and 96 percent believe having always-available communications for emergencies is important.¹

Colorado is the first state in the nation to envision “communications interoperability” to connect their schools to first responders. This enables personnel to talk the moment they need to on any radio and with public safety.

Like hundreds of K-12 schools throughout the nation, Pueblo County School D-70 grasped the importance of upgrading their communication system to improve emergency preparedness and response. They discovered the innovative partnership of Motorola digital technology and the SchoolSAFE network would increase safety and efficiency district-wide.

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Pueblo County School District 70

Largest geographical school district in Colorado

- 20 schools
- 9,500 students
- 57 bus routes

MOTOROLA SOLUTION

- MOTOTRBO XPR™ 7500 Portable Radios
- MOTOTRBO XPR 3500 Portable Radios
- XTL™ 1500 Mobile Radios
- APX™ 4000 Portable Radios
- XPR 8400 Repeaters
- SchoolSAFE Network 5.0

FEATURES

- Instant, clear, reliable communications
- Connects schools and first responders together in real time
- Seamless interoperability and faster response
- Sustainable “Certified Ready” safety training



THE CHALLENGE

Connect Quickly and Directly to First Responders

School administrators realize that in an emergency, every moment matters. Whether it's an everyday incident such as a sports injury or an extraordinary event like an active shooter, schools want to interact effectively and swiftly with first responders. "Even though we had an excellent relationship with the district, communication with their schools was like a string and a can," describes Kirk Taylor, Sheriff of Pueblo County.

"When our first responders responded to calls, they didn't have any updates via their radios," says Mark Mears, Bureau Chief at the Pueblo County Sheriff's Office. "Communications were spotty at best coming in from the schools. There was no interoperability."

Communicate and Collaborate Across the District

"We had a mix of radios of all ages or no radios in our schools," recalls Greg Keasing, Director of Student Services, Pueblo County School D-70. "We didn't have any radios at our central office so we had to manage crises disparately. We needed to pull information together to make decisions as quickly as possible – from janitors to administrators – before it even went out to first responders. We realized that to improve school safety, we had to be part of a bigger process with local agencies."

Pueblo County School D-70 and public safety agencies were looking for a unified, reliable solution to close these gaps. They wanted real-time communication and collaboration among schools and the district, and ultimately, with first responders.

THE SOLUTION

MOTOTRBO Digital Radios and SchoolSAFE Team Together

From administrators to public safety officials, Pueblo County sought a communications solution that would improve their technology and prepare personnel for any type of risk. Motorola and SchoolSAFE offered the ideal partnership to address these issues. Their intelligent communication solution brings together all entities with hardware, software and "Certified Ready" training. It enables diverse personnel using different radios (including analog, digital, and P25 public safety) to communicate together immediately when they need to. Motorola and SchoolSAFE offer a multi-prong approach with:

I. Clear, Reliable, Real-Time Technology

Almost 100 MOTOTRBO two-way digital radios were installed to supplement the district's existing radios, including five at each school's communications site. MOTOTRBO digital radios connect instantly to the SchoolSAFE network with the touch of a button. The SchoolSAFE network then links directly to public safety dispatchers at local 9-1-1 call centers.

Once the SchoolSAFE network is activated by 9-1-1, school safety teams use their MOTOTRBO radios to talk directly with 9-1-1 dispatchers and to first responders heading to an incident. Instead of information passing through multiple parties or being inaccurate or incomplete, everyone is on the same channel and receives regular updates and real-time information during an event. MOTOTRBO digital radios are easy for school personnel to operate and deliver clear voice communication in very noisy environments and hilly Colorado terrain.

During routine events, schools typically use their own radios and frequencies to communicate and stay off public safety frequencies. However, when critical response information is needed, the SchoolSAFE network can be activated to unify radio communications.

II. Real-Life Scenarios and Regular Training

The SchoolSAFE team helped develop policies and procedures and forged relationships with key Pueblo County stakeholders, including local law enforcement and other responding agencies. Central to the Motorola and SchoolSAFE solution is training with schools, the district and first responders.

The SchoolSAFE training protocol includes practice and instruction on Motorola two-way radios, system operations, interoperability and annual testing to certify the system, personnel and procedures. With assistance from Motorola and SchoolSAFE, each school creates their own safety team and participates regularly in tactical training exercises. The goal is to build a sustainable foundation of trained staff and school safety teams who are equipped to respond to all types of events.

Teachers and administrators learn how to operate a two-way radio and how to interoperate together with public safety. This enables them to convey vital information efficiently on a radio system and accelerate response during an incident. Students and parents are also integral to the exercises and according to School Superintendent Ed Smith, feel more confident knowing the administration and first responders are doing everything possible to keep schools safe.

In addition to training and drills, weekly testing of the SchoolSAFE network – along with regular monitoring and maintenance of the technology by Motorola – helps ensure reliable communications.

"MOTOTRBO and SchoolSAFE greatly improve response because information comes in directly from the schools through this interoperability."

Mark Mears, Bureau Chief,
Pueblo County Sheriff's Office



THE BENEFITS

Instant Interoperability and Seamless Collaboration

Now law enforcement, the sheriff's office, fire service and all 20 schools in Pueblo County D-70 are unified with seamless communications when an emergency occurs. This interoperability is significant because traditionally public safety P25 radios and school radios are incompatible.

"In an incident where seconds save lives, this direct communication has the potential to make a world of difference. Whether it is them giving us information we use to make tactical decisions during a critical event at the school or us advising them on a lockdown or shelter request when there is potential danger in their area, having this immediate notification means the students are safer, and so are the deputies," says Sheriff Kirk Taylor.

With SchoolSAFE and MOTOTRBO digital radios, personnel can communicate directly with schools, bus drivers and first responders as an event unfolds using their own equipment. First responders can provide instructions and directions to school safety teams without delay, and even broadcast alerts and time-sensitive information on the school's public address (PA) systems.

Since 9-1-1 dispatchers control the communication flow, the response is streamlined and more efficient. Schools use their own radios and frequencies during routine events, but are able to connect with public safety responders when critical situations happen.



Intelligent School Communications That are Cost-Effective

Like most districts across the country, funding can be a major constraint to communication upgrades. District personnel at D-70 discovered that in addition to providing critical education and training, Motorola and SchoolSAFE were the most cost-effective way to connect staff across their 2,400 square mile region.

Once the program was implemented, the school safety teams started building relationships, testing the solution, and even trying to overwhelm it – but the MOTOTRBO radios and SchoolSAFE network prevailed. This intelligent communication solution delivers the right tools to the right people, along with sustainable training, so everyone is prepared.

Accelerated Response Beyond Emergencies

As Pueblo County's first responders began training for an "active shooter" scenario, it didn't take them long to see how MOTOTRBO and SchoolSAFE can be used to minimize risks and response times for everyday issues. When a school buses break down or are delayed on snowy days, district personnel can contact all the schools using SchoolSAFE with a single, unified message to share weather alerts and updates.

According to Bureau Chief Mark Mears, "This communication solution is key to enable efficient situational awareness, not just for an active shooter, but for all types of school-related issues." Teachers carry MOTOTRBO radios to coordinate regular events more effectively, from elementary school recess to off-campus lunch. Daily operations are running more smoothly and Pueblo County schools are better equipped to deal with routine issues – all while being able to connect directly to first responders in an emergency with SchoolSAFE.

Strengthening School Safety District-Wide

The innovative combination of Motorola and SchoolSAFE intelligent communications and real-life training is giving Pueblo County School D-70 the valuable tools they need to keep their students and personnel safe. As Kirk Taylor, Sheriff of Pueblo County points out, "We are parents of students, too. I believe it is critical to have this type of communication to keep them safe. To have the best solution and best response is important so that we can say we did everything possible to prevent that and protect them. I can't imagine anyone not wanting to have this technology and interoperability in their schools."

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To transform your school's emergency readiness and response, visit www.motorolasolutions.com/education or contact your local Motorola representative.

Source: 1. 2015 Study: Communication Trends Shaping K-12 School Safety, Motorola Solutions.

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