SafeZone

West Texas A&M University was already ranked as one of the safest places in the U.S. to attend college, but wanted to do more to enhance the security and wellbeing of students, faculty and staff. After introducing SafeZone, the Police Department realized greater benefits than expected – including protecting the lives of two officers.

West Texas A&M University has been recognized in independent assessments as one of the safest study destinations in the US 1. Aware of the importance of this reputation for student recruitment and retention, the WTAMU Police Department wanted to invest in the best technology to enhance the safe environment in which students and staff live, work, and learn. The old system used by WTAMU was characterized by poor community engagement, high costs, and functionality that was limited to basic SMS communications.

Now, as well as being able to push out rapid notifications to everyone on the main 135-acre campus, the WTAMU PD wanted the ability to communicate directly with students and staff across three other WTAMU locations, and those in the local community. SafeZone was selected – and it delivered even better functionality than originally anticipated, including lone worker protection, patrol heat-mapping, tip reporting and more.

SafeZone solution

Through discussions with his peers, WTAMU's Chief of Police, Shawn Burns, was aware of some of the advantages CriticalArc's SafeZone technology and realized the campus community would benefit from the multiple functions combined under a more robust, unified platform.

"SafeZone has delivered a multi-faceted tool to help our campus community build a culture of safety, while also providing students and staff with a simple, streamlined way to call for help, both on and off campus."

SHAWN BURNS
Chief of Police,
West Texas A&M University

Managing budgets, he found that he could afford what would be a significant improvement in capability, and even reduce costs, simply by upgrading the old system.

SafeZone has achieved higher levels of community engagement, with students attracted by the technology's ease of use, and parents reassured by the enhanced safety it provides.

Officers can deliver a much faster response to requests for emergency help compared to calling 911, protecting users both on and off campus and providing Safety Everywhere™.

As soon as a WTAMU student or staff member requests help using the SafeZone app or wearable device,

SafeZone precisely identifies who has raised an alert and where they're located, thereby enabling control room dispatchers to coordinate the fastest possible response to the individual.

Following rapid roll-out, SafeZone's advantages were promoted at student orientation sessions, driving record engagement and adoption.

Meanwhile WTAMU's control room operations were enhanced by SafeZone's OmniGuard command and control functions, with geolocation positioning showing exactly where officers and supporting personnel are at all times, leading to more efficient coordination of resources and faster emergency response.

Benefits and Outcomes

SafeZone has further cemented WTAMU's reputation as one of the country's safest universities, with a high proportion of its 7,000 students, faculty and staff now registered and actively using the service. This level of engagement is significantly higher than the 10% usage achieved with WTAMU's previous emergency notification system, which also included far fewer functions and benefits.

In addition, the SafeZone OmniGuard command and control platform has delivered important operational insights, including - heat-mapping tools being used to analyze and improve police patrol coverage and protection of the 45 buildings across the 135-acre main campus.

The WTAMU Police Department now requires use of OmniGuard for all officers on duty, and that has already paid off. On one occasion it enabled Dispatch to rapidly locate and send assistance to an officer when he became non-responsive due to a serious medical condition – a timesaving and potentially lifesaving outcome. In another incident, it helped ensure an optimal outcome to an off-campus critical incident where the campus police provided support.

Looking ahead, the PD plans to begin using SafeZone to improve the safety of athletic events, protecting student athletes at home and when they travel for competition.

At leading universities globally SafeZone is now delivering major benefits:

- Cost-saving, unified platform solution that combines multiple functions – replacing inefficient siloed systems and streamlining operations.

- Better team coordination and faster response to emergencies, with the locations of security personnel and support staff visible to the command team.

- SafeZone's anonymous tip reporting feature also encourages students to discretely raise alerts, from security concerns to wellbeing issues affecting fellow students.