

CASE STUDY
University of Salford



Located just minutes from Manchester's vibrant city centre, the University of Salford is a hub of contemporary learning and creativity. The University adopted CriticalArc's SafeZone® technology as the best solution for student safety and wellbeing - and when two major emergencies occurred, the technology's multiple functions within a unified platform proved invaluable in managing the incidents.

The University of Salford introduced SafeZone in 2020 selecting it as the best solution to ensure that staff and students were not only safe, but that they felt safe too. Whether studying late at the 24/7 library, working alone on campus, or walking home at night, now any student or staff

member could call for assistance from the security team at the touch of a button.

But in 2023, when two major incidents affected Salford's Media City building just weeks apart – a power outage, and a flood – and with the facility needing to close, it was SafeZone's targeted communications and mass communications tools that proved their worth. The University's silver command team was able to coordinate responses seamlessly, sending out notifications and answering questions, so that teaching could be taken on-line, practical work transferred to emergency studios, and disruption kept to a minimum reducing the impact to the student experience.

SafeZone solution

Timely and clear communications are key to limiting the impact of any major incident, to steering responses from the community, coordinating events, and preventing reputational damage.



SafeZone

“At Salford we have 20,000 students in our care, and thanks to SafeZone we can ensure that they all feel safe, and they can have easy, direct communications with our support team whenever they need it – including during emergency situations.”

HANNAH BURCHELL
Director of Marketing,
Communications & External
Relations, University of Salford

Director of Security Trevor Jones, and Director of Communications Hannah Burchell lead the silver command team's handling of both incidents.

In each case, within a few minutes, SafeZone communications tools allowed the command team to notify students and staff about the emergency access restrictions to the Media City building. Push notifications via SMS, desktop notifications, and e-mails were sent to all registered SafeZone users, and because engagement and use of the app is consistently high, that meant updates were disseminated effectively. With their communications strategy preventing large numbers of people arriving at the site, or calling the university for information, the silver command team and frontline staff were able to concentrate effort on managing emergency repairs, and putting in place alternative study arrangements.

SafeZone's Omniguard team coordination tools, which give control rooms clear visibility of the location of officers and support staff, now helped the silver command team to adapt operations and implement emergency patrol patterns to keep the site secure. The following week, once the repairs were completed, SafeZone's mass communications tools enabled an efficient switch back to normal learning.

Salford's communications team regularly uses social media to amplify messages and work closely with the security department to decide which information to share publicly, and which to disseminate via SafeZone. They have the technology they need for a flexible and responsive messaging strategy, which includes well managed crisis communications.

Benefits and Outcomes

The SafeZone technology not only worked perfectly during both emergencies, but its benefits were also self-reinforcing. Before the incidents, already more than 75% of staff and over a third of students were active SafeZone users, but afterwards that figure increased significantly, as the solution's usefulness was proven.

Day to day, SafeZone demonstrates value for the University as whenever students or staff activate the app - for emergency help, first aid incidents, to report a concern, or request routine advice – its value is demonstrated each and every time, even in the case of accidental activations. Security teams take every activation as an opportunity to engage with users, to reinforce their wellbeing and safety is being watched over whenever they activate the app.

Solution benefits include:

- ▶ Rapid, targeted and mass communications, with customised menu options supporting consistent and efficient messaging.
- ▶ Security teams and responders can see the precise locations of all checked-in users and ensure rapid response to emergencies.
- ▶ Coordination of response to major incidents, with the locations of security personnel, volunteer first aiders, fire marshals, and support staff visible to the control room team.
- ▶ 24/7 lone worker protection for isolated team members and those at heightened risk.
- ▶ Rapid implementation and ease of scalability.
- ▶ Cost-savings compared with disparate systems, yet improved functionality.
- ▶ More effective communications to meet the needs of users with hearing impairment, for example with desktop notifications for fire alarms etc.



CriticalArc is a leading technology innovator, designing, and developing the distributed command and control solution, SafeZone, which is revolutionizing the way organizations manage safety and security operations.

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