# Cameras and Surveillance Systems in Schools

"Cameras may be useful tools in deterring, identifying, and investigating crimes and other unwanted or unauthorized behavior in schools." [1]  School officials need to be aware of their surroundings and/or have the capability to observe danger and potential threats.

## Benefits

Surveillance cameras in schools are used to monitor students, school staff, school grounds, and school assets. Additionally, these systems are used to identify visitors, deter crime, and investigate crimes that have been committed. Surveillance cameras are often considered less expensive and a better solution than devoting staff resources to monitor specific access points and higher-risk areas such as stairways and hallways.[1] When an incident occurs, security cameras can provide valuable information. Depending on the location of the incident relative to the camera, the recording could show exactly what happened or it could simply fill in any missing information, both about the perpetrator or what happened leading up to the incident.

School camera systems also act as a visual deterrent for crime.[4]  Cameras placed around the school make potential criminals think twice about their behavior on school grounds.

## Important Considerations

There are many types of cameras designed to perform under specific environmental conditions but cameras can be grouped into two primary categories: fixed and pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ). Fixed cameras are intended to constantly view a single scene, while PTZ cameras are motor driven and can pan left or right, tilt up or down, and zoom in or out to instantly customize the view as needed. A combination of fixed and PTZ cameras are often used to provide the required surveillance coverage.[2]

The type of camera used depends on a few different factors, such as; is the camera to be used inside or outside? How much area needs to be covered? How close is the next camera? It is important to consider these factors when choosing a camera system. For example: day/night cameras can be useful no matter what time of day it is.[2] These cameras adjust visibility depending on the current lighting, so they could prove more useful outside than a standard camera.



Placement of the cameras is very important. Internal cameras should cover all hallways, stairwells, and common areas within the building. Exterior cameras should cover all entrances and other key areas outside of the building, such as; parking areas, sports fields, and other areas of congregation. By establishing cameras at these key points, schools can ensure that they have full coverage of the building and school grounds. It is important to meet with the local Police Department prior to making any decisions about camera placement.

## Surveillance System Delay

It is important to know if your surveillance system has a delay in the feed. A delay in the video feed impacts how both the school faculty and the police respond to an incident. An example of this was seen in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida. Police, who were tracking the shooter's movements using the school's surveillance system were not aware that the video was on a delay. By the time the

**NEW HAMPSHIRE SCHOOL SAFETY RESOURCES**
SchoolSafetyResources.NH.GOV

**HOMELAND SECURITY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**
NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

For more information about this recommendation, please contact:

**School Readiness Program | schoolreadiness@dos.nh.gov | NH.gov/HSEM**

# Cameras and Surveillance Systems in Schools

police were notified, the shooter had already left the building.[3] The video feed was on a 26 minute delay, which meant that police were searching the building for a shooter who was no longer there instead of following him when he left the building.[3] Knowledge about surveillance system delays changes how police respond and impacts their ability to catch the perpetrator.

## Monitored Cameras

Monitored surveillance systems can allow school security and faculty to quickly respond to an incident on campus.[4] If the faculty can observe the incident in progress, they can alert responders to the incident effectively. Early detection of incidents is crucial to limiting the damage done, no matter the type of incident. These monitored systems can also be helpful for police during an emergency. Police and faculty can use the surveillance system to locate perpetrators in the building to bring the incident to an end.



## The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

It is important to consider FERPA rules when considering how camera systems will be monitored. For FERPA purposes, surveillance videotapes (or other media) with information about a specific student are considered education records if they are kept and maintained by the school system. If the school's law enforcement unit controls the cameras/videos and it is doing the surveillance for safety reasons, the ensuing videos would be considered law enforcement, rather than education, records.[5] Law enforcement units are designated personnel who monitor security records and can handle

investigative reports. Law enforcement units can disclose these records to police as necessary, in compliance with FERPA. If there is no School Resource Officer, this role can be filled by an administrative staff or faculty member, such as a Vice Principal. It is also recommended that law enforcement unit records and education records be held separately to maintain FERPA compliance.

*It is recommended that all schools meet with their local Police and Fire Departments when making decisions about physical security. This can ensure that all physical security changes adhere to fire codes and do not impede the ability of emergency services to respond to an incident.*

## References

1. - Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. A Comprehensive Report on School Safety Technology (Rep.). (2016). Laurel, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. Retrieved June, 2019, from https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/250274.pdf

2. - Department of Homeland Security. CCTV Technology Handbook (Rep.). (2013). Retrieved June, 2019, from https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/CCTV-Tech-HBK_0713-508.pdf

3. - Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission. Initial Report (Rep.). (2019). Retrieved June, 2019, from http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/CommissionReport.pdf p. 36 & p. 152

4. - Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. A Comprehensive Report on School Safety Technology (Rep.). (2016). Laurel, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. Retrieved June, 2019, from https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/250274.pdf.

5. - Department of Homeland Security. K-12 School Security Survey (Rep.). (2018). Department of Homeland Security. Retrieved June, 2019. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/stu_privacy/surveillance.asp#:_:text=For%20FERPA%20purposes%2C%20surveillance%20videotapes,maintained%20by%20the%20school%20system.

FREE EMERGENCY ALERTS APP

FACEBOOK @NH.HSEM

TWITTER @NH_HSEM

INSTAGRAM @NH_HSEM

## HOMELAND SECURITY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
### NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

For more information about this recommendation, please contact:

**School Readiness Program | schoolreadiness@dos.nh.gov | NH.gov/HSEM**