

E911 Challenges in a Campus Environment

Higher education organizations using IP telephony face several challenges when it comes to emergency calling and IP telephony. Two of the most critical challenges commonly faced are quickly pinpointing the location of a 911 caller, and integrating campus security personnel into the emergency response process. Both of these challenges put students, faculty, and staff at risk and may put an educational organization at odds with their state and local E911 legislation. By addressing these two challenges, organizations can greatly improve their emergency response procedure and save precious time when seconds count.

The first key challenge faced by many educational organizations is determining the precise location of a caller who has dialed 911. Many educational organizations occupy multi-building campuses, where each building may additionally have several different floors or wings. In a standard IP telephony deployment, the emergency dispatcher will only receive the organization's main address with the 911 call. Thus, finding the emergency caller can be like searching for a needle in a haystack.

To mitigate this problem, organizations can deploy an on-site hardware or virtualized E911 management appliance that makes it easy to pinpoint the location of a distressed caller. It automatically tracks IP phone locations to the building, floor, wing, or classroom level, so when 911 is dialed, the emergency dispatcher receives the caller's exact location along with the callback number. To enable the automatic tracking of IP phones, the organization simply provisions the E911 management appliance with layer 2, layer 3 and/or wireless LAN network maps and locations. The management appliance then discovers a phone's location based on the switch port, subnet, or access point to which it is connected. This allows emergency personnel to go directly to the scene of the emergency, without spending time narrowing down the caller's location.

The second challenge faced by many educational organizations is integrating campus security into the early stages of an emergency response. Campus security personnel are well-equipped to respond to emergency situations, but often only learn that a 911 call has been placed when first responders arrive on scene. Implementing an E911 notification solution is a simple way to inform security personnel of an emergency situation as soon as 911 is dialed. Notifications are available via email, SMS, and screen pop, which allows an organization to select the most appropriate delivery method for their personnel.

In addition to implementing security notification capabilities, many educational organizations find it valuable to employ security desk monitoring solutions. These solutions allow their own security personnel to listen in on a 911 call in progress with the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). Security desk monitoring ensures security personnel are advised of the nature of the emergency and can immediately implement a response in accordance with an educational organization's emergency response policies.

Educational organizations face several challenges when it comes to IP telephony and 911. Working with an E911 expert to implement solutions proven in the campus environment can help an educational organization address these challenges to keep students, faculty, and staff safe and meet E911 regulations.

To learn more about E911 solutions for educational organizations, visit 911 Enable at booth #303 or visit us online at www.911enable.com/education.