



CASE STUDY

Weatherford (TX) ISD Evacuates School for Toxic Leak, Reunifies 99% of 369 Students by Lunchtime

WEATHERFORD (TX) INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



Weatherford ISD serves students in Parker County, Texas, on the western edge of the Fort Worth-Dallas metropolitan area.

- 8000+ students
- 990+ staff (520+ teachers)
- 11 schools (7 elementary, 2 middle, 1 Ninth Grade Center, 1 high school) serving grades PK-12

CHALLENGE

Early in the school day on February 1, 2019, staff members at Weatherford (TX) Independent School District’s Seguin Elementary school alerted district leadership of an overpowering smell in one of the building’s hallways. A quick investigation by facilities staff revealed a sewer gas leak in one of the restrooms. A sewage line cap had failed, and gas was escaping into the building. Dias, the district’s director of safety and security, as well as a former police commander and Homeland Security task force officer, knew that the odor wasn’t just strong and nauseating but in fact an imminent risk to both student and staff safety. Sewer gas contains both toxic and flammable components, so in rapid consultation with district leadership an immediate evacuation of the school was implemented.

SOLUTION

Weatherford ISD had been familiar with Raptor Technologies® for several years, the district having successfully used the Raptor® Visitor Management system to screen visitors’ state-issued IDs against the sex offender registries in all 50 states and locally customized custody database with no-admit lists to prevent school intrusions by potentially threatening individuals. In the summer of 2018, Weatherford purchased and implemented the Raptor Emergency Management system, which is designed to help school districts prepare for, respond to, and recover from actual emergencies. Dias joined the district team immediately prior to implementation of the Emergency Management system, so he was able to participate directly in—and even supervise—its rollout.



The app brings legitimacy to the [reunification] process, and the digital signature sign-off with parents really makes it official.

- Bruno Dias, Director of Safety and Security, Weatherford (TX) ISD



The Raptor® Emergency Management system combines the “I Love U Guys” Foundation’s proven school emergency practices of the Standard Response Protocol (SRP) and Standard Reunification Method (SRM) with advanced mobile technology to give school leaders a single integrated tool for drills, real-time incident management, and speedy parent-student reunification. Administrators or emergency commanders can conduct drills or initiate an actual emergency from their mobile devices with the touch of a button. Through the mobile app, emergency managers and designated first responders can access facility maps and emergency procedures. Incident commanders and designated personnel can see the status and location of every student and staff member within minutes of the start of an emergency.

RESULTS

Weatherford’s superintendent, Dr. Jeffrey Hanks, initiated the emergency at Seguin Elementary via the Raptor app at 8:55 AM. Instantly, all Seguin teachers received an alert to evacuate their students according to procedures the district put in place. “Before we had Raptor Emergency Management, we were already versed in the SRP and pen-and-paper reunification procedures,” says Dias. “The staff had a basic understanding of what we were going to do. What was so great, though, was how easily the teachers and administrators at the school—across the whole district, really—had taken to the Raptor system. I showed the staff how the app worked, how easily they could pull up their student rosters and confirm both status and location for themselves and their students.” Dias showed staff how the data is transmitted instantly to the incident commander, giving leaders and emergency personnel full visibility into the real-time status of every single student and staff member. “They all got it,” Dias enthused. “Then, of course, the pay-off was when we had this real emergency. They saw firsthand just how fantastically it works and how fast and accurately reunification went with Raptor.”

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— Bruno Dias, Director of Safety and Security,
Weatherford (TX) ISD

The Seguin staff moved the 369 evacuated students to the school gym, where they boarded buses to the pre-designated reunification site at the district’s Ninth Grade Center. Parents were notified of the evacuation through the district’s SchoolMessenger® system using a combination of direct text, email, and phone communications. By 9:30 AM, reunification through the Raptor mobile app had begun—just 35 minutes after the evacuation had been ordered and the incident initiated. Half of the students were reunified with their approved guardians in the first hour, and 80% were reunified before noon. Nearly all the rest were reunified during the lunch period. Between 1:30 and 3:30, four students remained, and they were reconnected with their parents by the regular school dismissal time. Students and staff suffered no injuries or illnesses.

“Our parents were very impressed,” says Dias. “They saw our team checking IDs and using their mobile phones to direct the reunification. They knew that no mistakes were being made. We’ve heard nothing but positive remarks. The app brings legitimacy to the process, and the digital signature sign-off with parents really makes it official.”

Would Dias and Weatherford ISD recommend the Raptor Emergency Management system to other districts looking to put an integrated emergency management tool in place? “We’re strong supporters. We’ve promoted the Raptor system to neighboring districts because our experience with it that day was nothing short of remarkable.”

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EVERY SCHOOL, EVERY DAY.**

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