

How a Michigan District Reduced Reunification Time by 75%



Brighton Area Schools has 6,000 students and 400 staff spread across eight schools. While creating their emergency plans, the district recognized the need to fully understand parent-student reunification and to test their plans with a robust exercise.

THE CHALLENGE

“We needed a blueprint for disaster . . . from emergency first response to human services,” Livingston County (MI) Emergency Planning and Response Director Therese Cremonte says. “But what I really wanted was to pay attention to post-incident recovery.”

Since Columbine, Cremonte thinks law enforcement has improved its real-time incident response. But she thinks post-event recovery hasn’t received enough focus.

Emergency planners wanted to completely understand off-site parent-student reunification, from notification to student management accountability and reunification. They held a mock event in 2017. Participants used paper rosters, checklists, and walkie-talkies for in-incident communications.

Christopher Parks, Brighton High School Resource Officer and member of the Brighton PD, participated in the mock drill and knew planners needed to think bigger.



HOW RAPTOR HELPED

“We had to scale up. Any real incident was going to involve more resources, more buildings, more students, and more parents — with more potential for confusion. So I wanted a much bigger drill,” Parks said.

More than 240 participants, including students and their parents, took part, along with school staff, police, fire, EMS, and media. After Officer Parks initiated the incident in Raptor, first responders attended to “injured” students, cleared classrooms, and guided “uninjured” students to a designated transport area, where they were bussed to the off-site reunification area. Parents were notified, and the critical reunification process was performed — twice.

“

The fact that parents could see incident leaders tracking their kids on their phones or tablets ...in real time meant that they knew things were under control. It really calmed parents' nerves.

Therese Cremonte

”

THE RESULTS

The first reunification was done using the Raptor system, which communicated the status of every student and staff member in real time, instantly confirmed authorized parents or guardians, and allowed for real-time monitoring of incident status by the leaders in the command center. ***Every student was reunited with an approved guardian in less than 20 minutes.***

The second reunification was conducted with paper-and-pencil forms and walkie-talkie communications, requiring messaging to occur consecutively rather than simultaneously, and introducing the real possibility of identification and record-keeping errors. It took nearly an hour and a half to reunify the same parents and students.

“The advantages of the Raptor® system over standard paper-and-pencil processing were obvious,” said Parks. “Simultaneous communications and the ability to give multiple incident leaders updated status reports in an instant — the ability to monitor status without a lot of confusing chatter — plus the accountability: we knew where resources were needed, and the app freed personnel to be shifted appropriately. And of course, the command center could see it all.”

Cremonte and Parks also pointed out that using Raptor meant that incident response itself was quicker and easier. Set-up was almost instantaneous — there was no need to distribute clipboards with rosters, copies of emergency plans, and site maps.

[Read More Success Stories](#)