

DOUGLAS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

MEDIA RELEASE

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WHAT: Sheriff Partners with Douglas County Schools to be SchoolSAFE

NARRATIVE: DOUGLAS COUNTY: Sheriff David A. Weaver announced today that the Douglas County Sheriff's Office is the first law enforcement agency in the Denver-Metro Area to widely deploy a new communications tool that will improve coordination between first responders and schools during a school incident.

In the past, first responders have been unable to instantly communicate directly with all school personnel handling an emergency. This is a critical issue in dealing with school violence, natural disasters or any other threats covered in school safety plans. The problem stems from the inability of the different radio systems involved to communicate with each other. The county's new SchoolSAFE system now bridges all radio systems, allowing for a quicker and more coordinated response.

SchoolSAFE is a web-based system that allows for simultaneous communications interoperability between school radios and public safety radios. When activated, it allows local responders, participating schools and school security dispatch to talk directly to each other using the radios they use every day.

Currently, fifteen Douglas County high schools and middle schools are protected with the system. Sheriff Weaver is seeking funding from other sources to extend the protection to all Douglas County school facilities, including private schools.

This program will bring Douglas County schools in compliance with the Colorado Safe School Act (expanded through Senate Bill 08-181 introduced by Senator Tom Wiens) which requires schools to partner with local responders to improve crisis response. To do this, Colorado has adopted the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS).

"The safety of our students is always paramount," says Douglas County School District Interim Superintendent Steve Herzog. "In a crisis situation, improving communication between our schools and emergency personnel will save valuable time."

The program cost \$247,500 and was funded through the Department of Homeland Security's Public Safety Interoperability Communications program.

"We have always had a great line of communication with our schools, so we're always looking for ways to make our response quicker and more efficient," Sheriff Weaver said.

For technical details about the SchoolSAFE system, visit www.schoolsafecom.org