



CriticalArc interviewed Todd Kaplan, Associate Director and Emergency Manager at Northeastern University Police in Boston, to understand how SafeZone helps ensure the personal safety of students and staff, as well as enhance security operations.

Most of Northeastern University's students, faculty and staff are based at its central Boston facilities, although it also has four regional campuses including Toronto, Canada. The university has almost 28,000 people within its community and uses contracted security services alongside its own dedicated team – the Northeastern Police Department (NUPD).

SafeZone was brought in by NUPD in 2016 as part of a new strategy targeting greater safety awareness

and incident prevention. The mobile and web-enabled safety app was seen as being a great fit and is now available for anyone to raise an alert or report something including third-party vendors. But SafeZone also has some other unique features that help NUPD further expand and improve its services without requiring additional infrastructure or staff.

SafeZone solution

SafeZone has been fully integrated with Northeastern's extensive security operation so it can provide added reassurance for anyone living, working or studying at the university. The system is popular with students and staff, particularly for those who want to check-in when working alone late at night, or for those who need urgent medical assistance.

SafeZone also provides NUPD with access to significant new



SafeZone

SafeZoneApp.com

“SafeZone is simple to use, easy to explain and has powerful reporting, geo-fencing and communications features that help universities optimally deploy their resources and shrinks response times by up to 50%.”

capabilities. For example: all responders now have the OmniGuard app installed on dedicated smartphones that are issued to on-duty personnel, so they can immediately see each alert as it comes in, the type of alert and their location relative to the incident so they can respond quicker. In addition, SafeZone provides distributed situational awareness which enables officers and security personnel to see where their colleagues are relative to the incident, which enhances tactical response and safety when back-up is needed.

OmniGuard is also used within the control center for real-time visualization of all NUPD security assets including contracted security and its heat-mapping feature allows commanders to verify if known hot spots are being covered as prescribed. Any alerts from regional campuses or off campus going directly to an external security contractor or 911/emergency services are also highlighted centrally for future follow up.

SafeZone also allows NUPD to quickly geo-fence additional zones which is invaluable. For example, when the university leases TD Garden, the major sports arena where the Boston Celtics and Boston Bruins play, to host NU's

graduation ceremony, NUPD geo-fences the arena so the control room can see exactly where their patrols are and ensure all responders 'on the ground' receive all alerts via OmniGuard so they can help ensure a safe environment.

In addition, SafeZone is being used as an added or alternative resource to the university's existing system of hard-wired panic buttons. For example: it is being used by proctors in the university's residence halls when they are on patrol and away from their stations with access to panic buttons.

SafeZone is now an integral part of life at Northeastern but NUPD is also investing in new initiatives to further extend its use including: encouraging delegates who use the university's facilities during the summer for conferences and courses to sign up for and download the app. Northeastern is also trialing a network of BLE beacons for improved indoor positioning within one of the university's main administration buildings. If successful, the beacons will be rolled out on a broader deployment.

Benefits and outcomes

SafeZone is helping Northeastern University to provide a safer and more secure environment for everyone using its facilities. System benefits include:

- ┆ Elimination of dispatch delays for faster incident response
- ┆ Improved situational awareness for responders
- ┆ Improved monitoring of patrol strategies (via SafeZone heatmaps)
- ┆ Complete mapping of all security assets, including contractors



CriticalArc is a leading technology innovator, designing, and developing the distributed command and control solution, SafeZone, which is revolutionizing the way organizations manage safety and security operations.

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