# CENTEGIX®

# Supporting Rural Campus Safety Needs with Wearable Safety Solutions

Located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Rudyard Area Schools is a single-building district serving a small but vibrant rural community. With approximately 625 students and 110 staff members, the district encompasses a sprawling 15-acre campus that includes playgrounds, athletic fields, and wooded areas. The unique, single-level layout of the school presented significant safety and communication challenges, making a comprehensive security approach essential.

Tom McKee, a 2004 graduate of Rudyard Area Schools, returned to his hometown three years ago to serve as superintendent. With a deep connection to the community and a keen understanding of rural safety challenges, McKee brought a vision for safety that went beyond traditional measures. His experience as superintendent of Paradise, a remote district in a high-traffic tourist area, equipped him with the expertise to address complex safety and security needs in rural environments.

"Safety was always something that echoed in my head, and when I came back home to Rudyard, [the district's focus was] not necessarily on the safety and the security," McKee shared. "That was the platform that I've always pushed, that pushed us towards CENTEGIX, and we couldn't be happier."

Rudyard Area Schools has implemented a multi-layered safety strategy designed to address its unique challenges. Their approach integrates technology, personnel, and community partnerships, which include:

- **CENTEGIX CrisisAlert™:** Every Rudyard staff member wears a CrisisAlert badge, which enables them to summon help or initiate a campus-wide lockdown immediately.

- **Physical Security Measures**: The district has traditional lockdown buttons in the main office that lock all doors and secure the campus in the event of a larger emergency.

- **Dedicated Staff Responder Group:** Rudyard deploys a team of staff members who are trained in CPR and first aid. Positioned strategically, these responders are the first to address incidents like student behavioral incidents or medical emergencies, ensuring that potential confrontations are diffused quickly and safely.

> "We love it. It's such a great product. There are not too many things that are easy anymore, especially in education, and this is an easy one."
>
> **Thomas McKee, Superintendent at Rudyard Area Schools, MI**

## Customer Highlight

**01** Before implementing CENTEGIX's CrisisAlert solution, Rudyard Area Schools faced numerous challenges that left staff and students vulnerable during emergency situations, including lack of rapid response capabilities, limited SRO presense on campus, and more.

**02** Rudyard Area Schools implemented CrisisAlert wearable panic buttons to enable staff to instantly request help from anywhere on campus and to eliminate the bottlenecks and delays that previously hampered safety efforts.

**03** Rudyard Area Schools has significantly enhanced its emergency response capabilities since adopting CrisisAlert, ensuring faster and more efficient responses to both everyday incidents and critical emergencies. Integration with local central dispatch and data-driven insights from the solution have also improved resource allocation and proactive safety planning.

> *I wanted something that everybody could, no matter what, hit the button and call for a lockdown if they needed it.*
>
> **Thomas McKee, Superintendent Rudyard Area Schools**

- **School Resource Officer (SRO):** The district currently shares an SRO with five other schools.
- **Canine Security Program:** Rudyard Area Schools have partnered with Zebra Canine to introduce a dog trained in a dual role as a support animal and a detector of ammunition and explosives, providing an additional layer of safety while promoting a positive school environment.

## The Safety Challenges

Before implementing CENTEGIX's CrisisAlert solution, Rudyard Area Schools faced numerous challenges that left staff and students vulnerable during emergency situations:

**Lack of Immediate Response Capabilities:** Before implementing the CrisisAlert solution, staff had to rely on manual communication methods, such as sending a student to the office or waiting for a text message, to relay emergencies. This resulted in delays that could potentially worsen the situation and left staff feeling unsupported and isolated. The lack of a rapid response system also meant that incidents could escalate before help arrived, putting both students and teachers at risk.

**Limited On-Site Law Enforcement Presence:** The district shares an SRO with five other schools, meaning that there are significant periods of time when the officer is not present on campus. This created a gap in the school's safety coverage and left the administration and staff feeling less supported during high-stress situations. Without a dedicated SRO, the district struggled to maintain a consistent security presence, which is particularly critical in rural areas where external law enforcement may take longer to respond.

**Managing Emergencies Across a Large, Rural Campus:** The spread-out nature of the campus, which spans 15 acres and includes a playground, football field, and ravine, made managing emergencies quickly and efficiently challenging.

In some cases, teachers had to walk long distances to communicate, or wait for someone in the office to initiate lockdown procedures, causing critical delays in emergency situations. The challenge was exacerbated by the school's long, single-level design, which made it hard to monitor all areas at once.

**Lack of Data for Proactive Safety Planning:** Prior to using the CrisisAlert solution, the district had limited visibility into the frequency and location of incidents on campus, making it difficult to identify trends or predict potential safety concerns. This lack of data hindered the administration's ability to allocate resources effectively and left them reactive rather than proactive. The absence of detailed incident data also made it challenging to present a clear case for additional safety investments to stakeholders.
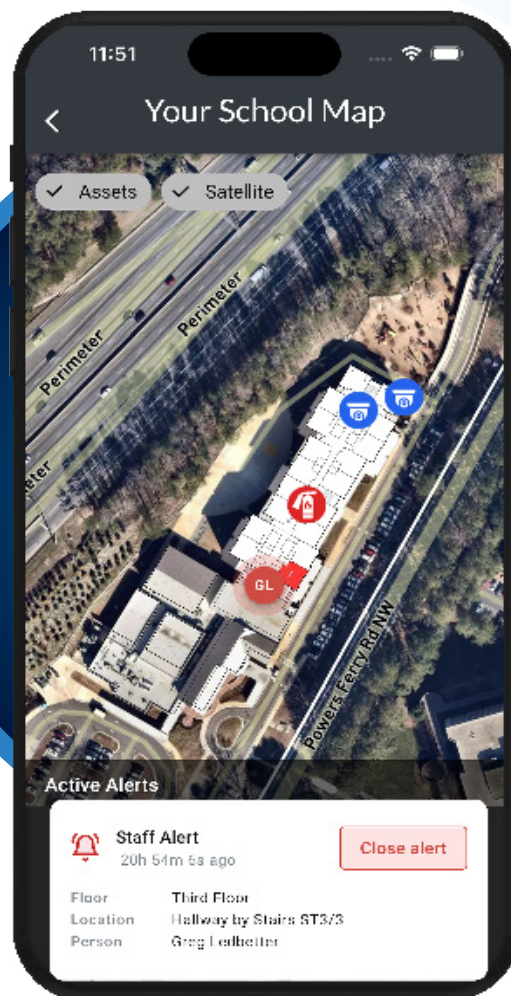
## Supporting Rural Campus School Safety Needs with CENTEGIX

To address these challenges, Rudyard Area Schools implemented CENTEGIX's CrisisAlert—a wearable panic button that allows staff to instantly request help from anywhere on campus. This comprehensive emergency response solution eliminates the bottlenecks and delays that previously hampered safety efforts.

**Empowering Staff with Easy-to-Use, Accessible Technology:** McKee emphasized the importance of staff feeling in control of their safety by using a simple, accessible solution. With CrisisAlert, "three flicks of your thumb" is all it takes to request help, making the platform easy to use and reducing hesitation during emergencies.

Simple solutions promote higher adoption and instill confidence, especially in high-stress scenarios where complexity can cause delays or errors. In rural schools, where help can be farther away or there may be fewer staff members available to respond, having an easy-to-operate

solution enables staff to request help without confusion. This is especially true for districts like Rudyard, where the campus layout can present obstacles to communicating across the entire property quickly. "It's brought the everyday anxiety down for our staff and students alike. That's huge."

**Reduce Emergency Response Times:** With just three pushes of a button on their CrisisAlert badge, staff can instantly send an alert to responders—this offers unprecedented peace of mind that help is on its way. This streamlined communication has drastically reduced response times for Rudyard Area Schools, making it possible to respond effectively to incidents no matter where they occur on campus.

The large, spread-out nature of rural campuses like Rudyard's means that getting help to the correct location quickly can be a logistical challenge. Without a fast communication system, incidents can escalate before help arrives. CrisisAlert's rapid response capability ensures that even in hard-to-reach areas, support is always just a few clicks away.

**Summon Help to a Precise Location Across a Large, Expansive Campus:** CrisisAlert's integrated mapping feature enables responders to see the precise location of an alert on campus, minimizing confusion and maximizing the speed and efficiency of responses. This streamlined process has helped reduce response times for Rudyard area schools, ensuring that assistance arrives within seconds rather than minutes. This capability has been particularly impactful during incidents such as student behavioral incidents and emergencies in hard-to-reach areas like the pool or playground. "[When an alert goes off], there's a school map. I can see where [the alert] is," said McKee. "[Teachers] feel a little bit more secure in the sense that in the classroom, they're not by themselves."

When responders don't have precise location information, delays in finding the incident can lead to negative outcomes. CrisisAlert's precise locating feature eliminates this problem, enabling a rapid response to emergencies even across vast, sprawling properties.

**Seamless Central Dispatch Integration:** CrisisAlert's integration with local law enforcement and 911 dispatch has proven crucial, as it ensures that the entire county is notified immediately when a campus-wide alert is

initiated. Small districts like Rudyard often lack immediate on-site law enforcement support. Rapid communication with external responders is crucial to bridging this gap. By seamlessly integrating with 911 dispatch, the CrisisAlert solution enables help to be mobilized quickly.

**Comprehensive Mapping and Data Analysis for Proactive Safety Management:** CENTEGIX provides detailed reports and visual maps of all incidents, allowing Rudyard administration to analyze patterns and identify areas of concern across the campus. "It's good data. It [helps us] make our decisions, helps us map out 'Where are our trouble spots?'"

This data-driven approach has enabled Rudyard to deploy resources more strategically, such as adding cameras in high-traffic areas and increasing adult presence where needed. By leveraging data, they can anticipate issues before they become critical, providing a safer environment for both students and staff.

Every safety investment must be justified for a rural district with limited funding. Having data to back up decisions not only improves safety planning but also helps secure additional resources and support.

**Building Community Trust Through Transparency:** McKee frequently showcases the platform's capabilities and impact to board members and parents, emphasizing the district's commitment to safety. As a member of his building's responder team, he's been able to demonstrate the platform's impact in real-time. "During a board meeting, my phone would go off [showing an alert had been initiated at the school]...and I can explain, this is what we get. And this is how it is."

By demonstrating how quickly it works and sharing concrete results, he helps stakeholders understand the value of CrisisAlert and builds trust within the community. This transparency is crucial in rural areas, where community perception can significantly support new initiatives.

## Real-World Impact: CrisisAlert in Action

Since implementing CrisisAlert, Rudyard Area Schools has experienced a significant shift in how they manage safety. One of the first incidents that underscored the value of the solution occurred in the school's swimming pool. During a routine class, a student cramped up and was struggling while swimming, causing panic among classmates. The instructor immediately activated their CrisisAlert badge and dove in to pull the student out, and within seconds, responders were at the pool to assist. Although no medical intervention was needed, the quick response calmed the other students and turned a potentially traumatic experience into a learning moment. "Before, you'd have to get one of the kids out of the pool and have them run down to the office...now they hit a couple buttons, and we're going to them."

## Looking Ahead: Expanding the Safety Vision

Rudyard Area Schools has significantly enhanced its emergency response capabilities since adopting CrisisAlert, ensuring faster and more efficient responses to both everyday incidents and critical emergencies. The simple, easy-to-use CrisisAlert badges enable staff to request help in seconds, empowering them to act quickly and confidently. This rapid response has been especially impactful for managing student behavioral incidents and emergencies in remote areas like the pool and playground. Additionally, the integration with 911 dispatch and data-driven insights from the solution have improved resource allocation and proactive safety planning.

As Rudyard Area Schools continues to refine its safety strategy, McKee sees CrisisAlert as an integral part of the district's long-term strategy. Next year, the district will transition to having a dedicated, full-time SRO on campus, which will further strengthen their security framework. McKee also envisions integrating video feeds with CrisisAlert to give responders real-time visibility during incidents.

**"We love it. It's such a great product. There are not too many things that are easy anymore, especially in education, and this is an easy one."**

**CENTEGIX**®

To learn more about how the CENTEGIX Safety Platform™ can help support your staff, students, and the school community as a whole, visit our website at www.centegix.com/education.

**Learn more today. Because every second matters.™**

800-950-9202  •  info@centegix.com