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Navigating School Safety and Lockdown Options

by Herb Bindel

Every day, schools face the potential for a wide array of violent incidents. That is why administrators, parents and the focused public are focused on school safety and lockdown options.

To stay current in the industry and provide customers and end-users with the latest in safety and security solutions, door and hardware professionals recognize the importance of offering electronic access control (EAC) systems.

When electronic access control was first introduced, it was overwhelmingly complicated. The good news is, as technology has improved, EAC systems are easier to understand and present to the architectural community and facility decision-makers.

There are a variety of electronic access control systems with lockdown capabilities on the market, along with many possible non-code compliant classroom barricade devices. It can be overwhelming for door hardware consultants and decision-makers to determine the best choice that meets the building code for life safety while also making schools more secure.

"To consult effectively as a door and hardware professional, you need to be comfortable with the system," explains Nick Ealy, technical sales specialist, access control, for Hager Companies. "The more you use it, the more you understand it and the more comfortable you get. That goes for all access control, security and lockdown systems on the market."

I] ^n ^n l] n ï] Z [^ghi ^hi Ze ^n Va Vrh ïd ZYj XVi Z ï] Z ZcY" j hZ gdc Y [Zg Z ci ïVeegd VX] Zh ïd ZcWaZ ïVa dX Ydl c egdVXh ïh" VcY ï dl ïi] Zn V[[ZX ïhV[Z Z\gZhh#I V Z ï [dg Zn^o eaZ ï i] ZhZ ï i] gZ ïVeegd VX] Zh#

&# **Unrestricted Lockdown:** A button on a wall or desk can be designed to initiate the lockdown process as soon as it is pressed. The advantage is that anyone — from principal to parent — that sees a threat can begin the lockdown process by merely pushing that button.

This scenario could also be a disadvantage, as an intruder could also initiate the lockdown process by pressing the button. It is important to understand that while this type of lockdown could prevent emergency personal from entering the building, it would not stop people from egressing.

'# **Authorized Lockdown:** Only those with an authorized credential can initiate lockdown. Often this is the principal, the security team and other designated personnel. Each person has a specialized credential, such as a fob, that they present to any online access points that creates a pre-determined stream of events (as set up in the software) to initiate lockdown.

(# **Software-Enabled Lockdown:** The software is programmed to trigger a lockdown. Even the most basic electronic access control system has this feature. Still, there are ways to enhance performance, either with add-ons or integration with third-party software.

Lockdown Approaches

Every school district is widely different, from the student population to building layouts. This means each has its own unique set of perceived threats and security needs. In our experience, a school typically approaches lockdown in one of three ways:

1. **9dddgh ïat Vrh ïAdX ZY /** Hdb Z ïhX] dddn Vgz X] ddh ïc \ ïid ` ïZZe ï] Z ïg ïXvrhhgddb ïYddd gh ïadX ZY ïV ïVaii ïb Zh# Egd XZYj ïgVa ïn ï] ^n ^n h ïb ea Z ïVZXVj hZ ïZ ïZkZgndc Z ` ` cdl h ïn ï] Z ïYddd gh ïVgZ ïVal Vrh ïadX ZY#[ ï j h ïc \ ïb ZX ïVc Xa Va ïadX h ï ^n ^n ïb ï edgjVci ïn ï] Z ïhX] ddab V ïc ïV ïch ïhZ ï Xj g ï]n] ïb a \gfn ï Z ïb VhiZg` ïZn ïhnihib ïb #L ^n ï ïZaZXgdc ïX VXXZhh ïXdc igda ïVc ïd[[a ïc Z ïegdYj X ïXVc ïdhi " Z[[ZXïkZanïVX] ïkZ ï] Z ïhVb Z ïg^ghj ïäh#

2. **8avrhgddb ïsd gj YZgAdX h :** l] ^n ïadX ïj cXdc ïdc ïh VkV ïaVwaZ ï ^n ï b ïZX ïVc Xa Va ïaddX h ïd d gh ïZaaZcY ïadX ïn ïaaZcY ïXdvrhZY ïZaZXg dc ïX VXXZhh ïXdc igda ïg ï ï dg h ïVm ïVaadl ïc \ ïn ï] Z ïiZVX] Zg ïd ïj ï] Z ïZgddb ïb #BVcn ïhX] ddd ïVh igV ïn ïZ ïegd XZhh ïid ïc ïd c c ïVc Z ïZ ïVdX ïdei ï dc #gddb ïb ïn ï] Z ïiZVX] Zg ïd ïj ï] Z ïYddd g[gdb ïc ï] Z ïZ ïXavrhgddb ïn ïgdj ïj ïj i ïVk c \ ï ïid ïhZ ï c ïid ï] Z ïZ ïZ ïZ ïVdX ïdei ïdc ïVck c \ ïid ïZnï ï] Z ïb V XdgigddY ïc ïd[i ïZ ï ïdc ï XZ ïb ï ïZ ïVe 'c \ ïc ïVc ïd c c ïVc Z ïZ ïb VwiZg` ïZn ïn ïb ïb V Xaidd ïn ï] Z ïVdd gj caddg ï a b ïb ïVk c \ ïVZ ïZdXa#

3. **6c ïsd Z Z \g Vi ZY ïdeegdVX] ïl / ^n ï i] ^n ïZaZXgdc ïX VXXZhh ïXdc igda ïdei ïdc ï] Z ï iadX h ïVgZ ïc ïiZ \g Vi ZY ïl ^n ïdi ïj ïZg ïhZg ïg ïc \ ïi XVj c ïc \ ï \ Vi ïadX Ydl c#; dg ïZnVb ea Z !k ïk ïZVd ïXVb ïZg dgh ïVc ïd ïYZ ïZX ïi ïZ ïVd[ïV \ j c ïd ïi ïdg ïVj Yn Y ïhi ïdch ïVVi ïYZ ïZX ïi ïZ ïhdj cYj XVc ïid ïVo ï] Z ïZVg Xh ïd ïi ïXVc ï Xj ïg ïg ïXd ïVVg XVic ïVoc ïd \ ï\ Z VdVk c ïVg VdX ïY Ydl c c#; j VdX h ïVc ïd ïZ ïVdX ïddd gh ïVbd #z ïc ï^n ïZ nWb ïb ea Z ïn ïZ ïVeegdVX] ïXdj a à ïc ïckddaZ ïVc bb Z ï ïeZg d ïZ Zg gd Zg gga ïVa dX ïYdl c ïVV ïZd Z ïä ïVYYc ïd[ï(%ïid ï) * ïhZ ïXdcYh ïWZ[dgj ïn ï] Z ï hnihiZb ïadX h ïYdl c ïn ïciZg gddg ïYddgh ïa] ï ïXJ ïX \ZZh ïeZdeaZ ïi ïb ïZ ïid ïgZ VXi#

These are just a few of the many options available.

Identifying the Best Option

Electronic access control gives a school facility the greatest versatility for safety and security needs, now and in the future. As the safety and security expert, the leading lockdown look like for you?"

"One action could be as simple as locking down the perimeter of the school, which blocks active credentials from entry unless they have lockdown override," Ealy suggests. "Another approach could be closing all doors with magnetic ability for someone to move from one part of the school to another. It depends on what actions the school wants to see when a lockdown is initiated."

John Acton of Mitchell Sales & Associates agrees. "In choosing the right variables for lockdown, it's important to note that schools all have different needs. Additionally, the administrators have differing opinions on how to enact a physical lockdown and when precisely to do it. The key is to help them walk through all the decisions logically so they can determine what that looks like for them."

A distributor in Texas takes the approach of selling the full electronic access control software package to each of their clients, including modules that may not be immediately used. "This works well for them because the schools want assurances that as their needs change, they can implement nearly any new lockdown protocol without upgrading the software," Ealy explains.

Mike Stefani of Integrity Architectural Solutions notes that most of the school district end-users they consult with are smaller with 10 or fewer buildings. However, they are in a high-growth area and will be expanding in the next three to five years.

"If these schools don't have access control yet, we start by educating them on the basics and focusing on locking down the exteriors," Stefani says. "We've seen that once they become comfortable with the basics of electronic access control, and when they get more funding to expand security, they turn to us for their needs."

Because of the rapid advancement of technology, nearly any lockdown scenario is possible. That means if a client wants a complex series of events to happen to enable lockdown, it can probably happen.

Stefani has a project that currently involves 3,000 locks. The client expressed the importance of having the system correspond with the bell schedule. The locksets on the classroom doors unlock when the period ends and automatically lock again when a new period begins.

"When a school is willing to analyze their current structure and identify their potential security flaws, they will also gain an understanding of the level of security they need to keep their kids and staff safe," says Ealy.

Door and hardware professionals have the opportunity to educate the channel, from the architect to the general contractor and end-user. Starting the conversation early in the new build or retrofit process is essential.