

How and Why Safety and Security Film Works

FUNDING POSES CHALLENGES TO PROJECTS

As with any large school project, funding security upgrades has been the biggest barrier. Connecticut and Illinois are leading the way in safety and security film installation projects for good reason: Each state has provided significant funding to school districts for overall security upgrades.

Not surprisingly, it started in Connecticut soon after Sandy Hook. The state legislature quickly passed the Violence Prevention and Children's Safety Act, which led to the Competitive Grant Program for school security. In the 2013-14 school year, the state awarded \$21.1 million in grants to 111 districts impacting 604 school buildings. A required local match, tied to each district's resources, totaled \$19.4 million. The program was renewed for 2014-15, with the state awarding \$21.6 million to 98 districts and 445 school buildings. The local match was \$16.2 million.

"We all wish that this program was not needed, but unfortunately we must adapt to the new reality that Sandy Hook tragically brought to our state," said Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman when the grant program was announced. "This funding will not only make our schools more secure, but will give us the peace of mind that we are doing everything we can to live up to our obligation to provide a safe learning environment for our children."

In Illinois, \$25 million was awarded in May 2014 by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency to 448 districts involving security upgrades to 1,312 school buildings.

Which Schools Have Deployed Safety and Security Window Film?

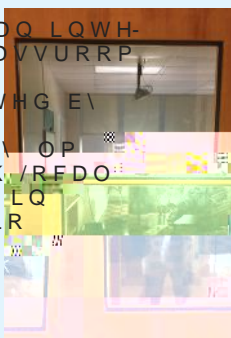
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DISTRICTS GET CREATIVE IN FINDING RESOURCES

School districts not receiving state funding have to tap into their own resources — or come up with a creative alternative — to support security projects. In Houston, the PTO at Barbara Bush Elementary School raised \$20,000 to have safety and security window film installed at the school. In Fairbanks, Alaska, Fairbanks ISD, the state's third largest school district, voters last May approved a bond issue that includes \$55 million for security upgrades to 50 school buildings. Roy Sprague, associate superintendent for facilities, says glass protection is part of the six-year project and that he favors safety and security film installation over replacing the glass. In Geneva, the state funding only covered film costs for school entryways of the nine buildings and first-floor windows of the high school. School officials wanted to have film installed on the first-floor windows at the other eight buildings, so they tapped a special school reserve fund to cover the remaining costs.

The federal government gave \$75 million last year to the National Institute of Justice for school security grants, but it appears the funding is tilted more toward research rather than security upgrade hardware. Other federal organizations such as Homeland Security and Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services also say they have available funding for school security projects, but the process is somewhat muddled.

A number of nonprofit organizations, such as eGrantHelpers.com, can give school districts searching for security funding ideas on where to look for support.

FILM CAN DETER ATTACKS

Still, if the wish list is long and you can't afford everything but want to do something to protect your buildings, safety and security window films are a low-cost and efficient way to deter intruders. Also, the film is relatively easy and fast to install, provided the work is completed by an experienced installer.

The film, thicker than regular window films, is adhered to the inside of the glass and then — if installed properly — is firmly secured to the glass with a perimeter wet glaze attachment system. It's the combination of the film and attachment system that makes the solution effective.

For many school districts, Geneva among them, the film provides an added safety benefit during severe weather.

"In the Midwest we're always concerned about high winds and tornadoes," says Campbell. "A film holds the glass in place and keeps it from shattering."

Schools in hurricane belts can achieve a similar benefit from safety and security window film installation.

BALANCE SAFETY WITH SECURITY

The Geneva project was notable for another reason. The school worked closely with local police and fire fighters to make sure everyone was on the same page with the security upgrades and potential emergency situations. In particular, fire fighters were concerned about gaining access to a school building through a limited window or door in case of a fire or other emergency.

To make sure they have access, they carried out a test on a limited 2-by-2-foot window at one of the schools, gaining access by using a Halligan bar. Although the test worked, Geneva fire fighters say more testing is required. Fire officials continually try to find the balance between security and fire fighter access.

In government buildings where film has been installed, the solution to this issue has sometimes been to choose one ground-floor window to have film installed without the wet glaze attachment, making for an easier entry. The designated window is known only to first responders and building officials.

One thing is certain: School building security improvements are just beginning, and safety and security film installation will be a major part of the process as campuses around the country share information and observe one another's security upgrades. CS

GEORGE J. TANBER is marketing and website content manager for Commercial WindowShield (CommercialWindowShield.com).