



Case Study

# Rio Rancho Public Schools Enhance Emergency Drills and Safety Initiatives Through Rave

**Students, teachers, staff and school leaders are now on campuses across Rio Rancho Public Schools. As part of their return, the Rio Rancho Public Schools Safety & Security Department is rolling out the Rave Panic Button app to all staff members.**

“We want all employees to be able to use it in an emergency if they need to,” said April Edwards, safety and security specialist at Rio Rancho Public Schools. “Whether it’s a coach on the football field and one of their kids go into cardiac arrest or breaks their arm, or it’s in the front office and an active shooter with a gun is approaching the door. We want everybody to be comfortable with pushing these buttons because it’s going to call 9-1-1 and get them help immediately.”

The Rio Rancho Public Schools consist of 21 schools, with 18,000 students and about 2,500 staff members. The school district includes 11 elementary schools, four middle schools, two comprehensive high schools and a preschool. The district’s safety and security operations feature access control measures, a shot detection system and a visitor management system, as well as 29 armed security officers stationed at specific schools.

## Customer

Rio Rancho Public Schools

## Location

Rio Rancho, New Mexico

## Industry

K-12 Solutions

Includes 21 schools, with 18,000 students and 2,500 staff members.

Holds mandatory emergency drills, including fire and evacuation, throughout the academic year.

Features various safety and security measures, including access control and visitor management systems.

Part of New Mexico’s statewide Panic Button deployment.

## Fostering an effective emergency response

The Rave Panic Button, which is part of the Rave critical communication and collaboration platform, is a one-click mobile app that allows employees to instantly connect to 9-1-1, first responders and necessary personnel simultaneously to activate an emergency response. The app shares critical response data, as well as automatically broadcasts to desktop alerts, digital signage and other channels.

The safety and security solution's ability to send details quickly is key to the Rio Rancho Public Schools' own safety efforts.

"When the Panic Button was presented to us and we found out what its capabilities were, I immediately recognized how it would strengthen our existing emergency procedures," said Salvatore Maniaci, executive director of safety and security at Rio Rancho Public Schools. "It gives the Rio Rancho Regional Emergency Communications Center the opportunity to see exactly where on a campus that Panic Button was pressed. That in turn helps the dispatcher, first responders and other personnel know the location, rather than waiting to get that location from the reporting party."

"And that's the biggest thing depending on the situation," he continued. "It sometimes takes a minute or even more to get that information out of that person. This tool does it immediately and gives you the location."

Ensuring all staff members are involved in notifications will assist administrators and members of the Rio Rancho Public Schools Safety & Security Department in their response, providing them with situational awareness as an incident unfolds. Plus, having the ability to push a button to automatically start an emergency response will likely ease some of the possible confusion and challenges.

"People react differently under stress, and I think if you give them a simple tool it helps them through a crisis situation to get that notification to first responders," said Maniaci.

Rio Rancho Public Schools' deployment of the Rave Panic Button app is part of a statewide initiative to enhance school safety across New Mexico. In a joint effort between the governor's office and key members of the New Mexico legislature, funding was appropriated to support the initiative and Rave's school safety and protection solution will be offered to every New Mexico public school district at no cost. The Panic Button mobile app will be available to 866 schools across 89 districts.

Edwards is overseeing the Panic Button deployment in the Rio Rancho Public Schools, rolling out the safety and security solution in phases. As part of the rollout, she sent out informational emails about the app, a 5-minute introductory video, frequently asked questions and download instructions to download.

Members of the safety and security department are also highlighting the Panic Button as they conduct active shooter preparedness training. The education program, called ALICE Training, centers around these components – alert, lockdown, inform, counter and evacuate – with tools and resources to help implement a proactive approach to an active shooter event.

"Our safety and security team has done a tremendous job of communicating the power of Rave Panic Button to staff members," Edwards said. "They will know when to get back into the school when it's all clear. We can send them a message through a status check. It's great because right now we send out emails and some of them don't have email on their phones. This way they could get a text with this information."



We want everybody to be comfortable with pushing these buttons because it's going to call 9-1-1 and get them help immediately.

– **April Edwards**  
Safety and Security Specialist  
Rio Rancho Public Schools



## Preparing for that moment

Rio Rancho Public Schools are mandated to run various emergency drills, including fire, lockdown, shelter in place and evacuation, throughout the academic year. Students and staff are involved in these drills, which differ in actions and length. For example, an evacuation drill with high school students and staff going from one school to a designated secondary location can last up to 90 minutes.

The Rio Rancho Public Schools Safety & Security Department and other school leaders recently wanted to test all of the district's security features.

"We wanted to create a situation where our students and staff, in cooperation with law enforcement and other first responders, participated in an active shooter drill," Maniaci said. "When we have another situation, we can all come together and work cohesively because we've done it before with the training."

The two-hour active shooter drill was held in July 2021 and had about 100 participants, including personnel from the Rio Rancho police, fire and rescue departments, New Mexico State Police Bomb Squad and Rio Rancho Public Schools security force. About 50 district leaders watched the drill live from the Joe Harris Elementary School's gymnasium.

The premise of the drill centered around a parent (played by a New Mexico State police officer) who was going through a divorce and could only see the child at school. The storyline unfolded into a hostage situation. Participants acted out real-life possible scenarios, including injuries and hostage negotiations.

"The Rave Panic Button worked beautifully," Edwards said. "A staff member pushed the button, and the app made a call to 9-1-1 while at the same time the rest of the staff received alerts of the emergency. You receive the alerts on your phone even as the 9-1-1 dispatcher was updating the incident, saying 9-1-1 has received not just a phone call, but an active shooter notification. You know what the emergency is about, and you get the follow-up messages to keep you informed."

"Three or four messages were delivered by Rave Panic Button throughout the course of the exercise," she continued. "

It immediately called 9-1-1 and texted all our people. It did exactly what Rave said it would do."

In addition to launching an emergency response and helping coordinate multiple agencies and stakeholders, the app also allows administrators to track compliance of drill regulations or requirements for each school or an entire district. Administrators can automatically generate reports for separate events, including fire and active assailant, and have a record of the date, time, participants and the campus(es) involved. Administrators can also customize their drill forms to their needs, adding start/end time, successful actions and area for improvement.

"We're showcasing the value and demonstrating how Panic Button can assist us in a crisis situation," Maniaci said. "It was such a relevant situation, and it was something that every one of them can relate to."

## Enhancing communication every day

The Panic Button mobile app is an essential part of the security measures across the Rio Rancho Public Schools. The app allows authorized personnel to notify staff members about daily matters, such as meetings and school updates, through its internal staff communication feature while also helping prepare for and handle major emergency situations. By using Panic Button for daily communication and everyday matters, staff members become familiarized with all of the app's capabilities beyond the unthinkable.

"When a terrible situation occurs — and we know it's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when — staff will be more willing to use it because they're using it on a regular basis," Maniaci said. "Using Panic Button for less critical incidents and even for more routine situations allows it to become second nature. I think that's the key and if I stress anything else to another school would be to do that."

To learn more, visit: [www.ravemobilesafety.com](http://www.ravemobilesafety.com)



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