Performance Based Security Design for Schools   www.the-fpi.com

Performance based design concepts are starting to be used to address building code and life safety code issues. The FPI fully supports this concept and has been involved in many projects where performance based design or in the simplest state, equivalencies have been utilized from a fire protection standpoint yet the concept can raise concerns on several fronts. From a security standpoint, the concept of performance based design has been well accepted and FPI has worked on numerous projects using a performance based design approach for security. The educational occupancy group is one of the biggest users of security performance based design.

A parent sends their child to school and trusts that they are safe. The school guards, guides, and educates that child in a controlled environment conducive to learning. It is the role of the architect to design this environment that educators and parents approve of and feel secure within. The problem that exists is the need and desire for this secure environment oftentimes is in conflict to the open environment being sought. Parents believe that extreme security measures such as metal detectors do not belong in their schools. Cameras can be viewed as an invasion of privacy. Access control systems limit and control parents' free access to the school facilities. This inherent conflict requires a security consultant to help navigate or better yet negotiate the difference between what is perceived as creating a secure environment and what in actuality creates a secure environment.

FPI regularly works in the education field utilizing a performance based design approach. Typically in a Performance Based Design, an FPI security consultant will provide the following scope of services during the schematic design development phase of a project:

1. Meet with the architect to discuss the project. Develop a threat assessment associated with the project and prepare a list of identifiable risks and provide recommendations to present to the stakeholders to mitigate the identified risks.

2. Attend an initial meeting with the board (stakeholder #1) to discuss the security risks and the level of security being proposed. Revise the scheme as appropriate based on this meeting.

3. Meet with a teacher representative group (stakeholder #2) to discuss the security scheme and outline how it will impact them. Revise as appropriate.

4. Meet with the local police (stakeholder #3) to discuss the security scheme. This meeting is critical because they ultimately are responsible for coordinating an organized response to security emergencies.

5. Meet with students and parents (stakeholder #4) to explain what is being provided from a security standpoint and allay any concerns about "big brother" security system or a "prison type" environment.

Throughout the entire process, FPI will keep the stakeholders informed since stakeholder involvement and agreement to proposed solutions is key to a successful project. After an understanding is reached by all parties, only then will the FPI security consultant move into a design phase working closely with the architect to ensure that environmental issues (specifically Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design or CPTED), technology design, people and security policy and procedure issues achieve the level of protection being sought.

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