

A REGROUP GUIDE

# Active Shooter Preparedness for Colleges - 10 Essential Strategies



## Introduction

The recurring active shooter incidents across the U.S. leave colleges with the sobering reality that campuses are not immune to this grave threat. It becomes increasingly imperative for our educational institutions to confront this chilling possibility head-on.

Although active shooter events are relatively rare compared to other campus crimes, the unthinkable can no longer be brushed aside as a distant concern or statistical anomaly. Instead, it demands our unwavering attention and the development of comprehensive strategies to mitigate the impact of an active shooter event.

Most schools have emergency preparedness plans for active shooters; nevertheless, the need for heightened preparedness measures is critical. Drawing from the experience and lessons learned from these tragic events, this guide explores ten essential strategies to help colleges and universities forge resilient communities capable of confronting the unthinkable.





## Overview

An active shooter is a person who deliberately intends to cause harm or take lives within a confined and populated area. These incidents are marked by their unpredictable nature and rapidly changing circumstances.

Comprehensive real-time tracking of every U.S. campus shooting is lacking, and defining these incidents can be challenging due to the intricate connections between higher education institutions and their surrounding communities. Nonetheless, the gravity of this threat has prompted schools across the nation to make significant progress in preparing for active shooter incidents.

The following data that underscores the need for heightened vigilance

**12**

shootings at colleges  
since 1996 with

**3+**

deaths each

**300+**

instances of gunfire  
on college campuses

**94**

lives claimed

**215**

injured

**65%**

of college students  
expressed concern  
about  
school shootings

These statistics reveal the chilling reality that active shooter incidents have profoundly impacted college campuses. Students' sense of safety and well-being has been shaken, leading to a growing demand for enhanced security measures and policies.



# Regroup Mass Notification: Essential Strategies for Active Shooter Preparedness

In any college or university, an active shooter situation can escalate to tragedy within moments. Preparedness is essential for protecting people and reducing injury. Below are ten considerations colleges can plan for the best possible outcomes.

## 1 Include behavioral threat assessments

According to the National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC), mass shooters cannot be identified based on gender, age or other demographics, as there is no specific profile for such individuals. Instead, schools should implement a behavioral threat assessment (BTA), a process developed by the United States Secret Service (USSS), to identify and intervene with students who may be at risk of aggression or violence.

The BTA methodology involves:

- 📶 **Identifying threats and risks**
- 📶 **Assessing the seriousness and potential for violence**
- 📶 **Managing, mitigating and preventing violence and other adverse outcomes**

Key findings from the USSS analysis on targeted school violence highlight that attackers often have multiple motives, access firearms from homes and exhibit warning signs through psychological, behavioral and developmental symptoms.

**While the BTA methodology is evidence-based and integral to a school's active shooter preparedness plan, it should complement the other components of comprehensive school safety, such as vulnerability assessments, physical security measures, emergency preparedness training and a school culture centered around safety and security awareness.**

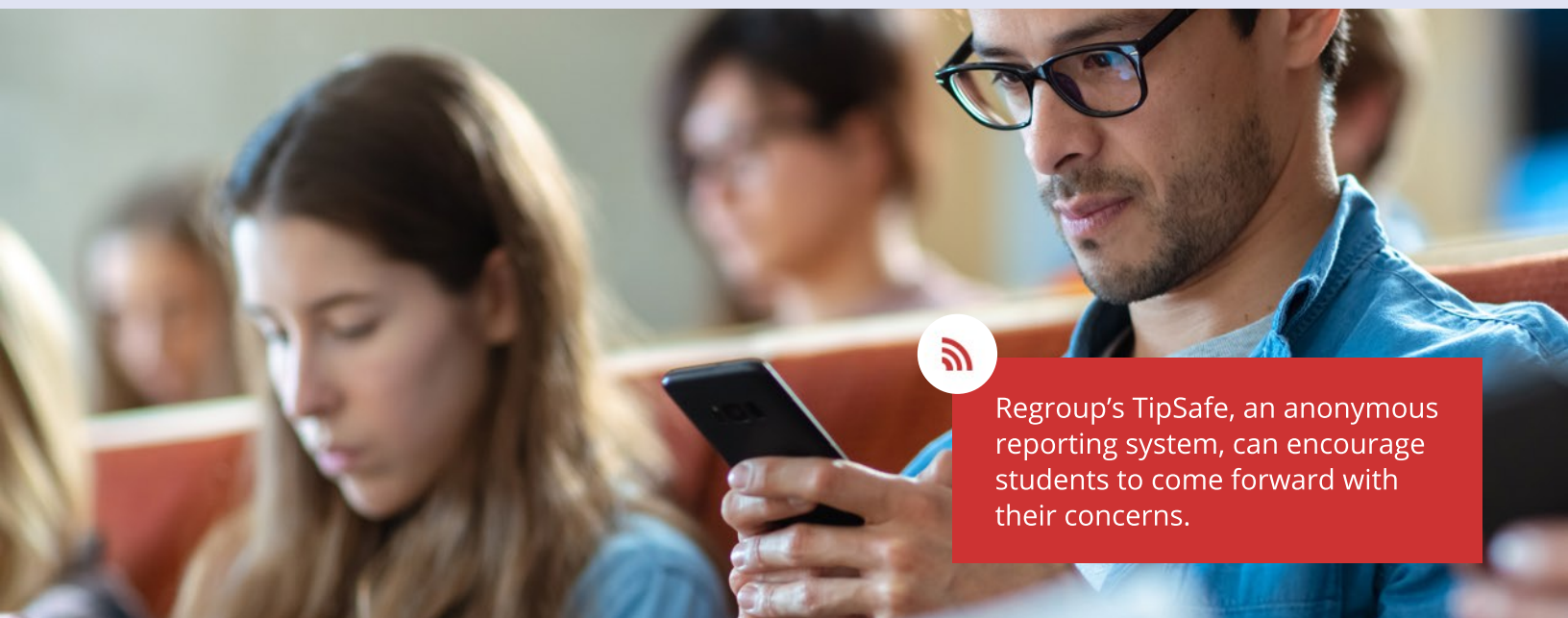
## 2 Anonymous reporting systems

Establishing robust communication channels and reporting mechanisms within the school community is instrumental in preventing active shooter incidents. By addressing concerns about students' well-being, aggressive acts and bullying, colleges and universities can create an environment that promotes reporting and support, enhancing overall safety and well-being.

An effective communication and reporting system plays a vital role in helping students and staff feel more comfortable communicating concerns. Implementing user-friendly and campus-wide technology solutions like Regroup's **TipSafe** can further facilitate a culture of reporting and support, encouraging students to come forward with their concerns.

Anonymous tip reporting systems have played a significant role in helping campus officials avert numerous planned campus shootings, suicides and other life-threatening situations. Their implementation has shown tangible results in enhancing campus safety and security.

**Prioritizing clear and accessible communication channels within colleges can create an environment where students feel empowered to share their concerns while ensuring prompt responses and appropriate support. This proactive approach is a crucial pillar in the broader strategy of preventing active shooter incidents and fostering a safe and nurturing educational environment.**



Regroup's TipSafe, an anonymous reporting system, can encourage students to come forward with their concerns.



# 3 Monitoring social media

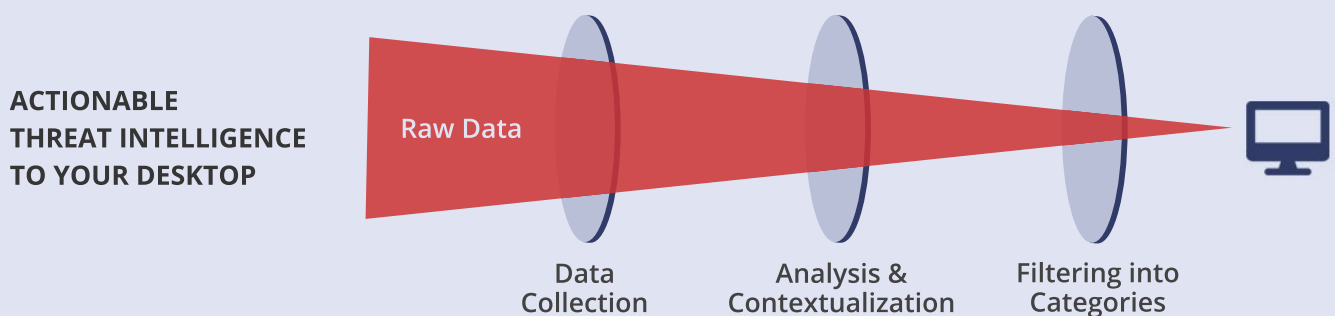
Although numerous challenges are associated with monitoring troubling social media posts, it presents an opportunity to detect indications of imminent danger. Recognizing the possibility that the next attacker may emerge from within their own student body, more than 100 public school districts and universities have taken proactive measures to reduce risks in the past five years, such as social media monitoring.

These institutions have enlisted the services of social media and threat intelligence monitoring companies, as evident from a comprehensive review of school spending records. By leveraging these resources, educational institutions aim to enhance their ability to identify potential threats and safeguard the well-being of their students.

**Threat intelligence**, sometimes called threat detection, is a way to become aware of potential risks and threats to your school. Threat intelligence helps schools stay ahead of those risks. Threat intelligence is a 24/7 function that supports day-to-day operations for organizations, which is essential even before a crisis occurs.

**Threat intelligence software receives information from thousands of sources worldwide, and trained professionals vet the data to ensure the threats are relevant to their clients. For example, Regroup partners with the TX360 threat intelligence platform, which looks at over 12 million events every month. The types of sources TX360 monitors include social media.**

While utilizing social media monitoring as a preventive measure comes with its share of challenges, it also signifies a growing commitment to proactively addressing active shooter incidents and intervening before potentially dangerous situations escalate.



## 4 Information sharing

Effective communication plays a pivotal role in ensuring the safety of all students during an active shooter event. Without proper communication channels, schools face challenges in tracking the well-being and whereabouts of their faculty, staff and students during a disaster, which leads to heightened chaos and confusion.





Furthermore, the normal modes of communication may not be accessible, or networks may fail during such a crisis. So, it is crucial to establish multiple communication channels, including email, cell phones, text messages and mobile apps. By leveraging a multi-channel two-way mass communication system like **Regroup Mass Notification**, schools can ensure that critical information reaches the widest distribution possible, facilitating a seamless and comprehensive communication process.

Implementing a modern emergency notification and alert system that is cloud-based enables colleges to effectively monitor and relay crucial information to students, faculty and staff in high-stress distance scenarios like an active shooter incident. Such advanced communication methods not only prove invaluable during emergencies but also contribute to the efficient day-to-day operations of the campus.

Additionally, these communications systems can aid multiple agencies in detecting and monitoring potentially dangerous individuals before a possible event occurs. Fostering collaboration and cooperation between campus organizations and local law enforcement officials through enhanced communication goes a long way toward making emergency preparedness plans work.

Regroup Mass Notification makes communicating across departments simple and effective. The comprehensive platform makes reaching dispersed students, faculty, staff, campuses and remote team members easy.

**Some ways Regroup enhances information sharing include the following:**

-  **Two-way communication to easily communicate with multiple departments, facilities or select recipients.**
-  **Allows non-technical users to send notifications via a user-friendly interface, including a mobile app.**
-  **Automate processes with quick message templates to save time and retain the continuity of daily operations.**
-  **Send timely message alerts to groups inside or outside a specific area with Geofence messaging.**



# 5 Create an active shooter emergency action plan

If you're in the middle of an **active shooter incident**, you'll need to assess the situation and follow a plan of action quickly. The best way to do this is to plan ahead and update it regularly. Each emergency operation plan (EOP) should cover each phase of an emergency, including prevention, preparation, response and recovery.

Collaborate your school's emergency action plan with local police and emergency responders in your area, who can be an excellent resource for learning more about potential active shooter situations in your area and how to secure your facility. With their help, you can create a plan of action that suits your specific needs.

**An active shooter emergency action plan should include the following key components:**

- 📶 Preferred methods for reporting active shooters and other emergencies (e.g., dial 911, launch emergency notifications, pull alarms)**
- 📶 An emergency notification system to alert people to the incident, including:**
  - Personnel and visitors, including those located at remote locations within the premises
  - Local law enforcement
  - Area hospitals
- 📶 Evacuation policies and procedures**
- 📶 Emergency escape procedures and routes**
- 📶 Lockdown procedures for individual locations**
- 📶 Accountability procedures and protocols**
- 📶 Contact information for and the responsibilities of all persons to be notified**
- 📶 Detailed information about area response agencies and hospitals (e.g., name, telephone number, distance from your location)**

For more resources, strategies and templates aimed at helping the academic community address vulnerabilities and risks, please see the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's **Campus Resilience (CR) Program Resource Library**.



# 6 Establish prevention mechanisms

While it is important to acknowledge that no prevention strategies for active shooter incidents can guarantee a 100 percent success rate, some approaches are valuable to mitigating damage and preventing active shooters from accessing campus buildings.

**For higher education institutions, consider the following prevention measures:**

- 📶 **Institute access controls (e.g., keys, passcodes)**
- 📶 **Have all staff members wear/display approved ID badges**
- 📶 **Ensure the physical security of the building(s)**
- 📶 **Conduct effective employee screening and background checks**
- 📶 **Train staff to recognize indicators of potential violence**
- 📶 **Create a system for reporting signs of potentially violent behavior**
- 📶 **Encourage employees to report people who appear lost or unfamiliar with their surroundings to security or other designated personnel**
- 📶 **Make counseling services available to employees**
- 📶 **Implement a system for monitoring social media**



# 7 Conduct mock training exercises

You'll want to practice and run drills of your campus-wide EOP and the communication methods people need to stay in touch during an active shooter incident. While it's very important to communicate during an active shooter incident, it's also essential to do so in as calm and accurate a manner as possible.

**Some ideas to consider during these practice drills include the following:**

- 📶 **Involving local law enforcement and other appropriate first responders in the exercise. For more information on what to do once local law enforcement arrives, see [https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active\\_shooter\\_booklet.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf).**
- 📶 **Utilizing the emergency notification system as if there is an actual active shooter (i.e., emergency alerts are sent to mobiles, PA systems, digital signage, etc.).**
- 📶 **Having stakeholders practice reacting to the sound of gunshots by:**
  - Evacuating the area
  - Hiding
  - Taking action against the shooter
- 📶 **Having the designated staff member call 911.**
- 📶 **Placing removable floor plans near entrances/exits for emergency responders.**
- 📶 **Having stakeholders practice the appropriate way to respond when law enforcement arrives (e.g., raise hands, remain calm, don't scream or yell).**



## 8 Evaluate existing technology

Unfortunately, colleges and universities must dedicate more of their budget to security and prevention methods for active shooter incidents. Fortunately, new technologies are available to help prevent active shooters and fill the gaps and vulnerabilities of existing campus security technology.

**Regroup Mass Notification** integrates with existing school security cameras, access controls, alarm systems, digital signage, help point towers and more. Integration with existing technology can help automate emergency response and communication procedures, providing a quicker response time during an emergency.

In addition, Regroup seamlessly integrates with existing educational software and technology, which empowers educators and administrators to communicate using applications they are familiar with. This helps eliminate learning curves and improves communication between instructors, staff and students.

### Alert people – not devices

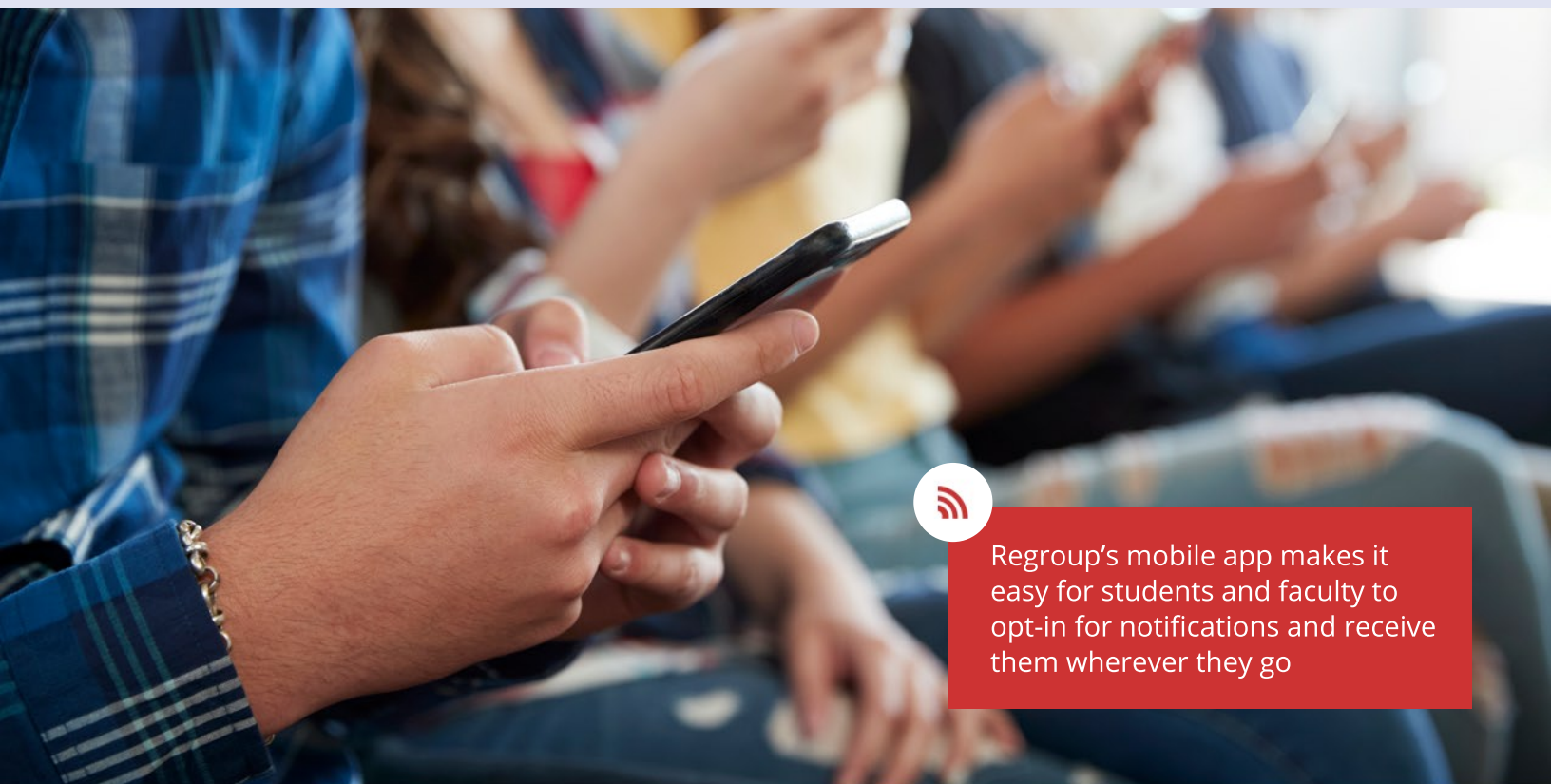
Since different people have different preferences, Regroup enables colleges and universities to reach out in limitless ways. Regroup provides the ability to quickly communicate within a school's network via:

- 📶 **Multiple user email accounts, cell phones and landlines**
- 📶 **Social media networks and websites**
- 📶 **Public address and outdoor siren systems**
- 📶 **Digital signage, desktop alerts and beacons**
- 📶 **Security and fire alarm systems**
- 📶 **RSS feeds and cable television**
- 📶 **Private or public message boards and forums**
- 📶 **IPAWS (Integrated Public Alert and Warning System)**



Other ways Regroup Mass Notification can help reduce damage during an active shooter incident through using technology include:

- 📶 **Send Panic Alerts quickly and reliably from any location or device.**
- 📶 **A mobile app that makes it easy for students and faculty to opt-in for notifications and receive them wherever they go.**
- 📶 **GeoFence technology allows you to alert a specific location and even notify people outside the area to stay away.**
- 📶 **Two-way communication allows witnesses and first responders to send important information and updates from the scene to improve response time.**
- 📶 **Multiple fail-safe features to ensure alerts can always be launched.**
- 📶 **Real-time analytics alert you to delivery failures of critical alerts, allowing you to take another course of action to reach all recipients.**
- 📶 **Multi-channel polling and surveys to facilitate greater information sharing and increase situational intelligence.**
- 📶 **Integrate systems and streamline emergency response procedures with open API Capabilities.**



Regroup's mobile app makes it easy for students and faculty to opt-in for notifications and receive them wherever they go



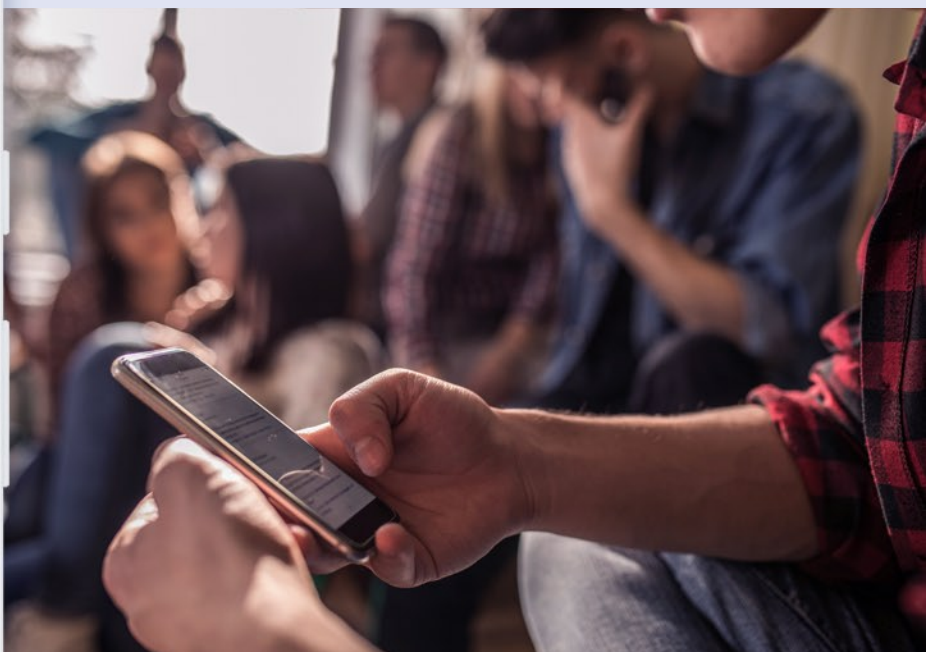
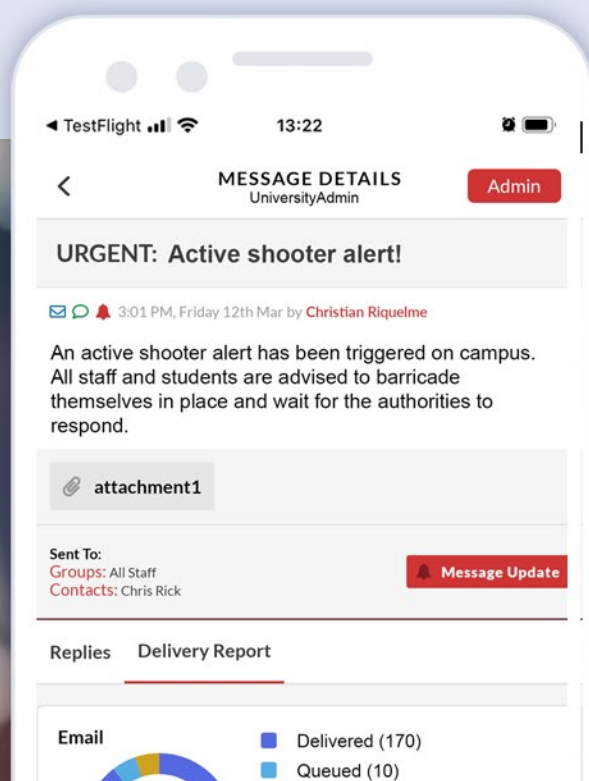
## 9 Ensure fast, relevant and reliable communication

Active shooter scenarios quickly create high levels of fear, stress and panic. In crowded environments, a panicked response can lead to increased danger. Timely communication during a crisis reduces fear and misunderstandings. It allows schools to expedite the response time and keep campuses running during an unfortunate event.

In addition, when a college or university delays responding or does not communicate information during a crisis, it creates uncertainty and possibly anger, which lessens the trust and value it has among its community.

Communicating while under pressure during an active shooter scenario is key for reducing injuries and fatalities. By using software that has everyone's contact information loaded and ready to distribute along with easy-to-compose messages ready to send from anywhere, the better.

Regroup provides one intuitive interface so alerts can launch simultaneously to all communication channels and devices a school leverages during emergencies. Simply select the applicable contact paths, compose your message or use an event-specific template and send.



## Reliable communication when you need it most

When adverse conditions lead to power outages, overloaded communication infrastructure or impassable roads, Regroup provides a fail-safe tool that ensures responders can communicate and deal with the crisis. Regroup provides your team the ability to:

- 📶 **Text in from a mobile device**
- 📶 **Email in from external email accounts**
- 📶 **Use landlines to call our 24/7 emergency support team**
- 📶 **Leverage Regroup's messaging API**
- 📶 **Launch alerts via any web-enabled device**
- 📶 **Use CAP message**

When every second counts, the Regroup mass notification system allows one trusted source to quickly send out critical information across multiple channels. Regroup provides a fast, robust message throughput of up to 80,000 text/SMS messages per minute, which exceeds our competitors' messaging capabilities.



**REACH ANYONE ANYWHERE WITH OUR  
AWARD-WINNING CLOUD BASED PLATFORM**

**80,000**

SMS messages  
per minute

**120,000**

emails  
per minute

**30,000**

voice calls  
per minute

**540,000**

push notifications  
per minute





# 10 Enable global messaging capabilities

The diverse population of enrolled students on college campuses and online courses can not be overlooked when creating an emergency operating plan. Including students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds highlights the importance of addressing potential language barriers in crisis preparation. Regrettably, many emergency plans fail to consider this aspect, leaving a critical gap in communication that can have severe consequences, including loss of lives or delays in conveying urgent information.

Language barriers can hinder timely dissemination of crucial instructions, emergency alerts, evacuation procedures or other critical information during a crisis. This can result in confusion, panic and the potential for misunderstandings that may compromise the overall response and effectiveness of emergency protocols.

To bridge this communication gap, it is imperative for colleges and universities to implement strategies that cater to linguistic diversity. This includes developing multilingual communication plans, providing translation services or interpreters, utilizing language specific emergency notifications and ensuring the availability of resources in various languages.

Regroup is a global communications system that automatically **translates communications** into over 80 languages based on their recipient's preferred settings. This ensures everyone in the organization can understand the message and emergency alerts when they receive them.



## We can help

As the threat of active shooters persists, colleges and universities must continue to prioritize implementing comprehensive strategies, techniques and technology to prevent, respond to and recover from these tragic events. By remaining vigilant, investing in advanced security measures and engaging in ongoing dialogue with students and staff, educational institutions can create safer environments where the pursuit of knowledge can flourish without the shadow of violence.

During an active shooter incident, you'll want to be able to **communicate with others quickly and accurately**. You'll want to ensure you have the proper equipment to make this possible and a reliable platform you can count on, such as **Regroup**.

**Regroup can assist your school in developing a comprehensive emergency communications plan to help mitigate risks and keep students and staff safe.**

**LEARN MORE**

[www.regroup.com](http://www.regroup.com)

**CONTACT US**

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**Regroup** 



## Sources

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