

# SECURITY

SOLUTIONS FOR ENABLING AND ASSURING BUSINESS

## 5 Minutes with Patrick Fiel on Security Practices during Coronavirus Outbreak



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*Security magazine* recently spoke with Patrick V. Fiel Sr., a security expert, on some of the best practices during this coronavirus crisis.

Fiel is a national security consultant with more than 40 years of experience in managing security and law enforcement organizations. He is retired from the United States Army Military Police Corps. He was the former Executive Director of School Security for the District of Columbia Public School System (DCPS) and was national Public Safety Advisor for ADT Security Services. Fiel regularly presents briefings and presentations on security trends, active shooter incidents, funding, risk assessments, emergency/crisis preparedness, workplace violence and current technology solutions.

He served on the Electronic Security Association (ESA) task force, which produced the ESA Electronic Security Guidelines for Schools, an aid for schools considering procurement of an electronic security system. In addition, he served on the International Association for Healthcare Security & Safety (IAHSS) task force, which created the IAHSS Security Design and Renovation Guidelines for Healthcare Facilities, and was a member of the 9/11 Washington DC Inter-Agency Domestic Preparedness Task Force.

**Security magazine:** What work do you do with schools, places of worship and businesses?

**Patrick Fiel:** I am a national security consultant, and I specialize in providing a holistic security approach that creates a solid foundation for establishing or improving security policies, practices and procedures.

**Security magazine:** How has the coronavirus impacted schools, places of worship and businesses?

**Patrick Fiel:** Every day the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is prompting businesses, schools, places of worship, to close, so they can protect their employees, staff, students, congregations and visitors. They are doing this as recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as other experts as they expect the number of U.S. cases of COVID-19 to rise sharply over the next several weeks or months as more testing detects new infections.

**Security magazine:** Have you ever had to shut down a school for any type of emergencies?

**Patrick Fiel:** Yes, our school district in Washington, D.C. shut down for two weeks in the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks. At the time, I was serving as its executive director of security. The board of education and the school superintendent decided to shut down our entire school district which consisted of 150 schools, 76,000 students and 10,000 employees for several weeks until it was determined safe to return.

**Security magazine:** How did the schools support the community during the 9/11 crisis?

**Patrick Fiel:** Even when our schools were closed, several selected schools remained open to serve as Red Cross shelters, food centers for our students and the community, as well as staging areas for the National Guard.

**Security magazine:** Were you prepared to close your school district during the 9/11 crisis?

**Patrick Fiel:** I have always emphasized the need to plan for an emergency before disaster strikes in cases such as this, and now is the time to implement such plans. We were fortunate enough to have access control, alarm monitoring, a robust camera system with remote view and security

patrolling to protect our school district during the crisis. It was a daunting task, but we were able to recover and get our schools back to normal.

**Security magazine:** What were some of your immediate security concerns?

**Patrick Fiel:** Maintaining operational readiness and protection of our billions of dollars of inventory while we were temporarily closed. We were very fortunate to avoid crimes such as burglaries, larcenies, thefts, arson and vandalism while our schools were closed.

**Security magazine:** Do you have any recommendations for future school closures? during the coronavirus?

**Patrick Fiel:** It is imperative to test the fire systems, alarm systems, access control, mass notification, PA systems, phones, radios, duress buttons and other devices. Cameras have proven to be a strong deterrent and very effective. A communication plan is a critical step in keeping everyone informed, but it's paramount that you be consistent in your messaging.

**Security magazine:** Any final recommendations for security personnel?

**Patrick Fiel:** Work with your local law enforcement and/or security companies to provide additional security support while they are temporarily closed. Throughout my career I have been very successful in working with thousands of schools, places of worship and businesses. I hope and pray that the coronavirus will eventually be controlled, and everyone to move forward, but we must stay vigilant during these turbulent times.

**Security magazine:** What do you like to do in your free time?

**Patrick Fiel:** In my spare time, I enjoy spending time with my beautiful wife and my family. We both enjoy the outdoors, working in our yard, freshwater fishing and metal detecting on the beach.

Patrick can be found on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/patrickfiel/>.

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