

EDUCATION

## Tips for boosting security at high school sporting events

Incidents from the past few weeks have proven that security plans at high schools likely need a comprehensive review by district administrators to ensure sporting events remain safe and secure for everyone.

Patrick V. Fiel, Sr.

It's game night at the local high schools. Hundreds or even thousands of spectators fill the stadiums eager to enjoy the big games.

The presence of throngs of enthusiastic fans alone can create a variety of security challenges -- but factor in drugs, alcohol, weapons and potentially gangs at the stadium and you could be looking at a recipe for disaster.

Incidents from the past few weeks have proven that security plans at high schools likely need a comprehensive review by district administrators to ensure sporting events remain safe and secure for everyone.

Here's a recap of what's happened in the past month across the U.S.:

**Aug. 18:** Florida police said a shooter opened fire on a crowd exiting the football game between Ribault and First Coast high schools in Duval County after the match was shut down early due to fighting. A 15-year-old student was arrested for firing a gun on school property and carrying a concealed weapon.

**Aug. 25:** A 16-year-old **Oklahoma** teen died after being gunned down at a football match between Del City and Choctaw high schools. Police said they found two guns and eight rounds of ammunition at the scene. A 15-year-old boy has been arrested in the shooting.

**Aug. 25:** At a Friday night game between Abington and Cheltenham high schools in Pennsylvania, a parent reported to police that they'd seen a teen with a weapon inside the stadium. A 17-year-old was found to have a loaded handgun with an extended magazine protruding from his waist. Police also said the teen was in possession of a second loaded magazine. The teen was taken into custody. No injuries were reported but the game was suspended at halftime out of an abundance of caution.

**September 1:** Gunfire broke out during halftime of the football game between Brusly and Port Allen high schools in Louisiana, killing a 16-year-old student and wounding a woman in the arm. No arrest has been made. The game was suspended.

Unfortunately, high schools across the country report incidents of vandalism, theft, fighting, shootings and even deaths every year. In the past few years, it has become so bad that school administrators have moved games to daytime hours, moved them to neutral sites, played them without spectators or simply canceled them altogether.

While these actions are intended to protect students and adults, they deprive an entire community of enjoying sports traditions and new rivalries being played with a sense of good sportsmanship.

Rather than take such extreme actions, it would be better for administrators to create security plans and incorporate security technology that make it more difficult for a few troublemakers to ruin the enjoyment for the vast majority.

## **A Layered Approach**

Effective security measures can be achieved by using a combination of technology, policies, procedures and personnel.

The process begins with a thorough all-hazards assessment conducted by a security consultant, which should include the entire inside and outside of the stadium -- especially the parking lots.

The day of the game, school administrators should lock all stadium entries except those required for direct access to the stadium. Use fencing to seal off other areas of the stadium that have nothing to do with the game. Signage will help keep visitors moving in the right direction.

District landscapers need to trim trees and foliage around the stadium to reduce potential hiding places for weapons, contraband, and people.

Bright lighting on dark winter afternoons or at night can function as a deterrent to criminals and assist security staff and first responders in monitoring situations. Also, schools need to be sure to light all areas of the parking lots, streets and walkways.

Security personnel should regularly patrol the entire stadium area before, during and immediately after the game. Be sure to work closely with local law enforcement and request that extra officers be made available at the event, and to patrol the parking lots and immediate areas surrounding the stadium.

Security personnel can watch for loitering individuals and suspicious vehicles. Additionally, gathering and socializing in the parking lot or sitting in cars before or after the game should be prohibited.

Schools should train staff to recognize the signs of spectators under the influence of drugs or alcohol and have those spectators removed from the game.

Events should have a policy that requires attendees to remain in the stands unless they are entering or exiting the stadium, in line for concessions or using the restroom. It's also important to enforce a no re-entry policy.

### **Evaluating Technology Tools**

In addition, schools need to incorporate the necessary technology to prevent and mitigate security incidents on their campus.

**Metal Detectors:** Both handheld wands and walkthrough devices should be used to check spectators as they enter an event. However, personnel need to be properly trained in their use for the devices to work properly and without undue delays. Have a list of items that are prohibited in the stadium, such as all weapons, drugs, alcohol, backpacks or large bags and any other objects that may compromise public safety.

**Security Cameras:** Both indoor and outdoor security cameras should focus on the field of play, spectator seating areas, stadium entries and perimeters, as well as the ticket office, snack bar and parking lots.

During events, make sure security personnel or law enforcement officials are monitoring live video. If they see an area of concern, they can immediately respond and resolve the issue before it becomes a serious incident. If a crime is committed, the recorded video can help identify suspects and prosecute offenders.

These are a few of the solutions that are available to help reduce security threats. The key to having a safe football game is prior planning with a comprehensive plan in place for all types of incidents and hazards.

*Patrick V. Fiel Sr. is a national security consultant specializes in providing schools with a holistic security approach. He has over 40 years of experience in law enforcement and security, he was the Executive Director of Security for the Washington, D.C. 163 Public Schools, the Public Safety Advisor for ADT Security Services and has worked with thousands of schools providing security services and solutions. Patrick is retired from the U.S. Army Military Police Corps. Contact him to schedule a time to discuss how he can assist your school district or school. Patrick can be reached at (910) 789-4265 or [pvfiel@gmail.com](mailto:pvfiel@gmail.com).*



---

**Source URL:** <https://www.securityinfowatch.com/education/article/53071326/tips-for-boosting-security-at-high-school-sporting-events>