

KENWOOD NEXEDGE® Helps Assure Student Security on One of the Nation's Largest Campuses



Pope Elementary School – Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District, Harris County, TX

PROJECT OVERVIEW: Campus police departments must always strike a balance between keeping students and staff safe and causing undue stress or disruption that can adversely impact the learning environment. When Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District, one of America's largest school districts, had outgrown its analog radio system, the district and their local KENWOOD dealer, Northwest Communications worked together to devise a plan. With minimal disruption, the school district expanded their channels from 7 to 32 and deployed NEXEDGE NX-5000 Series mobiles and portables for improved coverage and access to advanced technology.

Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District (CFISD) in Harris County, near Houston, Texas had a communications problem. Named the nation's fastest growing school district by USA Today, their two-way radios were not keeping up. "As the school district grew, we had dead spots on campuses and were not able to communicate consistently with our campus police officers," according to Lt. Casey J. Davis, M. Ed., Emergency Management, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD Police Department.

Larger than the city of Denver, at 186 square miles, CFISD has 120 buildings, including 102 campuses and the 25,000 square foot, 8,000 seat Berry Event Center. With nearly 20,000 faculty and staff, plus 117,000 K-12 students, the CFISD police department relies heavily on their two-way radios to ensure safety and security. The radios are crucial to transportation requirements for the 1,100 buses operating out of five transportation centers and to administration, engineering and operations.

"Adequate radio communication is critical for safety during an emergency. An important question in any after action review is whether or not the lines of communication were open. Did the communication plan work or didn't it?"

– Lt. Casey J. Davis, M.Ed., Emergency Management, Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District (CFISD) Police Department

CFISD worked with their local KENWOOD dealer, Northwest Communications, on a plan to deploy new communications technology with minimal disruption, transitioning from conventional analog operation on seven UHF channels with a single 300-foot tower to NEXEDGE® digital technology and multiple tower sites.

“We developed the channel lineup based on how CFISD was going to use the radios. First, we established the district-wide emergency channel. After we constructed the first tower, we sat down with the transportation department to address what they needed and got them up and running before we constructed the three additional towers, which went up over the course of a year,” recalled Don Cameron, President, Northwest Communications. “Once the infrastructure was installed and the transportation department radios were up and running, we converted the NEXEDGE radios from analog to digital during summer when schools were closed. Once that was complete, we flipped the switch, and everyone moved to digital.”

To accommodate all talk groups, the district now operates on 32 channels. A benefit in going to digital, according to Cameron, is that CFISD public safety personnel no longer had to rely on industrial pool channels. The 32 channels on the towers are for district-wide communications on public safety frequencies in 450 MHz. “These are exclusive, FB8 channels,” said Cameron. “Now, no one can talk over the police department, so that’s an extra layer of security.”

“The high schools,” Cameron continued, “have repeaters installed in them using industrial business pool channels and are positioned down low in the school building. They are used for day-to-day communications like calling for a janitor or a coach. All that busy daily activity stays on

the school’s system and off the public safety channels. If a school has a critical incident they can switch the radio to the emergency channel to reach police dispatch and immediately go district wide.”

Although every radio has the emergency channel, only the base station at each school’s administration desk monitors that channel. That allows each school to decide how to respond to an incident elsewhere in the district.

“The emergency channel is our lifeline to the campuses. If we have a lockdown at a campus, surrounding campuses are notified immediately. If we have a disturbance inside or outside of the campus, school personnel can communicate directly to our dispatchers and explain the nature of the emergency”, emphasized Lt. Davis. “Before we had that reliability, we had lag time. Only a few minutes lag time could be serious for us as first responders and for the students and staff at that school.”

The KENWOOD NEXEDGE radios used at CFISD are the NX-5000 Series, mostly NX-5300 portables, with mobiles used in school buses.

“Now, I can reach campus administrators and officers consistently. This is very important.”

— Lt. Casey J. Davis, M.Ed., Emergency Management, Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District (CFISD) Police Department



Boundaries for the 186 square mile Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District in Harris County, TX



The 186 square mile CFISD campus has 120 buildings including the 25,000 square foot Berry Center where CFISD graduations and outside events are held.

“One of the key features of the 5300 Series are the Bluetooth earpieces and the teachers, in particular, are very happy with the ability to operate hands-free.” according to Danny Villareal, Project Manager, Northwest Communications. “One of the elementary school teachers told me that she particularly appreciates that the little kids no longer have an earpiece wire to yank on anymore.”

All the CFISD buses are equipped with KENWOOD NEXEDGE mobiles and dispatch for each transportation center is set up so that when a bus keys up their radio, it is automatically identified. “We particularly appreciate having the ability to immediately reroute buses if there is an emergency,” said Lt. Davis. “Those incidents do occur, and we need to be able to keep the kids safe on their way to and from school, no matter what happens.” The addition of Zonar Fleet Management further ensures accuracy in incident recording and response.

For those protecting CFISD students, access to reliable communications cannot end at the borders of their district. “Because CFISD runs NEXEDGE, they can access Northwest’s SMR system on Trip Channel for additional coverage when students leave the campus by bus, for example, when the cheer leading squad goes off campus for a game.” Cameron pointed out.

“The bus driver can flip to Trip Channel to access Northwest’s SMR network and significantly extend their range. Using the Northwest SMR system to expand coverage saved money on the infrastructure build-out for CFISD. We didn’t need to construct towers higher than 200 feet, because switching to Northwest’s system gives the bus drivers all the additional coverage they need for off campus trips.”

LOCAL DEALER PARTNER:



Northwest Communications
10818 Bareley Ln. Suite B
Houston, TX 77070
nwradio.us

CUSTOMER:



Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District
10300 Jones Road
Houston, Texas 77065
cfisd.net

JVCKENWOOD

JVCKENWOOD USA Corp.

1440 Corporate Drive
Irving, TX 75038
1-800-950-5005
www.kenwood.com/usa/com