

New phone system helps schools with emergencies

Communication improves through new services

By **ROBERT ALLEN**

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The Summit School District's cutting-edge telephone system has helped to improve emergency response and communication among 11 schools and offices.

When 911 is dialed from any classroom, alerts are sent to the school's office, the central office, the superintendent and public information officer through both computer and telephone.

"We've had a couple medical situations already this year where those 911 calls have been placed," said district spokeswoman Julie McCluskie, adding that a "big red box" popped up on her computer with audio.

The voice-over-Internet-protocol system — installed when the semester began — connects the phones through the web; it also provides district-wide intercom services.

Technical difficulties during the conversion the first week of school affected incoming calls at elementary schools. However, the system is now performing well, McCluskie said.

Summit Middle School administration secretary Kathy Campeau said the new services are "pretty slick."

"They're fabulous, actually," she said. "We had a fairly archaic system before."

Campeau said the previous phone system had been in place since before she began with the district 11 years ago.

"A lot of the intercoms weren't working anymore," she said. "And that's a safety issue as well — I mean, if something is going awry — so it's critical that we have all that working."

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KATHY CAMPEAU

SMS administration secretary

She said the district's phone system no longer drops calls and can even transfer calls through the computers.

"The intercom system is really smooth in classrooms," Campeau said.

McCluskie said phones don't ring in classrooms — so "teachers can focus on teaching" — but the intercoms allow for direct communication in urgent situations.

"Whether (an) emergency or not, just being able to connect people quicker" is an advantage, she said.

The system was purchased with finances from a mill levy approved in 2007 for facility improvements, full-day kindergarten and transportation costs.

Teleco of the Rockies, a company in the Front Range, installed the system.

"They're a very progressive group of people that quickly understood the role of technology and its importance in serving the community," Teleco business development vice president Jeff O'Neill said of the district in a press release.

Campeau said even building-to-building calls have been made simpler with quick, four-digit extensions.

"This phone system seems to be making things much easier for everyone," she said.

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