

ASK THE EXPERTS



Hidden Benefits of Blue-light Emergency Phones

Campus safety and security officials can improve operations by understanding the overarching value of blue-light emergency phones.

INTRODUCTION

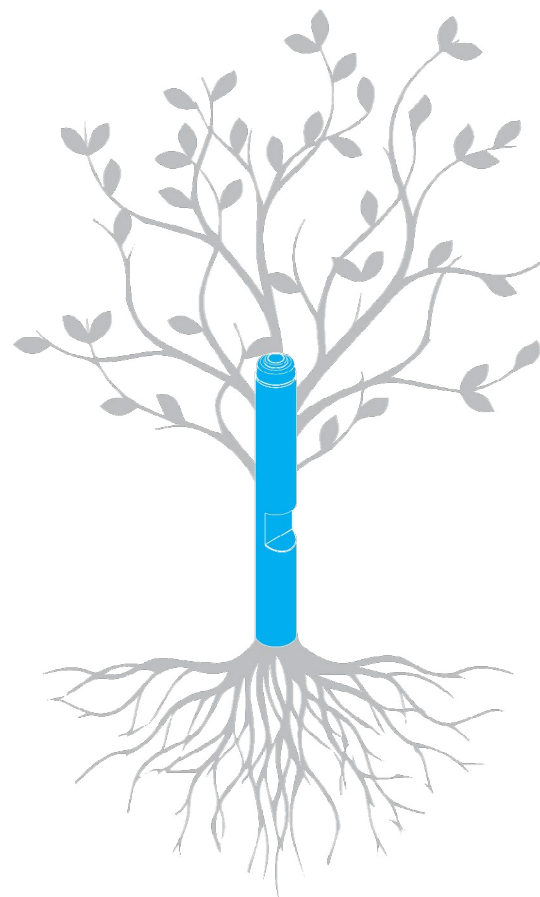
This Code Blue Ask The Experts article examines the hidden benefits of blue-light emergency phones on campus. A comprehensive “balance sheet” with values for hidden benefits can help leaders visualize and better understand a holistic picture.

IN THE BEGINNING¹

In 1989, the University of Illinois at Chicago and many other universities faced a renewed call to keep its students safe. Two years later, [the Clery Act](#), which requires that institutions make campus incident reports public, was signed into law after Jeanne Clery, a 19-year-old student at Lehigh University, was raped and murdered on campus.

Chicago University issued an open call to inventors: Create something extending our safety network past our walls, and we’ll buy it. In January 1990, the university received the first prototype from News-Time, which later became Code Blue Corporation. It’s now the lead manufacturer of emergency phones.

For over 30 years, many institutions have kept, maintained, and expanded their call boxes. Many experts and university officials say the light boxes give the campus the feeling of safety, a sentiment that is sometimes much more important than other considerations.



AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF CURE

According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), in 2021, over 2,270 for-profit and 1,892 public post-secondary institutions existed in the US. In most cases, outside of rare jurisdiction-based immunity laws or legal status as a Charitable Institution, victims of crime on campus can sue the institution for negligence related to security, where the result impacted any crime.

[Zayas Law Firm posted](#). When we think of college campuses, we envision bustling quads, libraries filled with studious scholars, and a sense of community that fosters growth and learning. Yet, beneath this idyllic facade lurks an often-overlooked threat – [negligent security](#). A rising concern in today’s increasingly complex society, negligent security claims are becoming all too common in our places of higher learning.

Several factors are considered when determining whether a school can be held liable for injuries due to inadequate security, including:

...solid practice that includes blue-light emergency phones can help weaken negligence lawsuits.

- **Foreseeability.** Was the crime or injury foreseeable? If similar incidents have occurred on the campus before, the school is responsible for taking preventive measures.
- **Security measures.** Were adequate security measures in place, such as sufficient lighting, security personnel, surveillance cameras, and properly maintained facilities?
- **Negligence.** Did the school fail to take reasonable steps to prevent the incident?
- **Causation.** Did the lack of adequate security directly lead to the injuries sustained?

Blue-light emergency phones are a de facto standard for campus safety and security, so these systems should be prominent in an overall security and safety operation.

The bottom line is that a solid practice that includes blue-light emergency phones can help weaken negligence lawsuits. The benefits (deterrence, better security, better lighting) will far outweigh the potential impact of a settlement—huge amounts of money, loss of brand equity, negative publicity, social protests, on-campus protests, or other undesired outcomes.

DETERRENCE²

Blue Light Phones Deter Crime – A study of 422 incarcerated burglars found that window and lawn signs indicative of security measures put in place are an effective way to deter burglary attempts. One of the most valuable aspects of a blue light phone is its ability to increase the awareness of on-campus security measurements.



Rice University in Houston, Texas, once had a stained history of criminal incidents, similar to Houston’s high crime rate. However, after Rice installed 80 blue light emergency phones in 2010, the following year, the school reported that the overall crime rate on campus decreased despite the city of Houston’s crime rate remaining high. Specifically, on-campus burglaries plummeted

by 67.74%. As the number of blue light phones increased, the perception and awareness of the campus' security also increased, deterring the number of on-campus burglaries from being attempted.

If 19 out of 20 colleges have emergency blue light phones, the one school that lacks emergency phones is immediately at a disadvantage regarding perceived security.”

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

In a Student Government Association meeting with [University of Maryland](#) Campus Police Chief David Mitchell, it was noted that student mental health is a major concern, and UMPD is training its officers to help students in crisis.

The mental health of university students is a nationally prevalent issue. Since students have returned to campus (post-pandemic), UMPD has been receiving almost one call a day from students struggling with serious mental health issues.

They play a pivotal role in whether or not students may attend one university over another

Mitchell said that some campuses are removing blue-light phones because most students have cell phones nowadays. However, the University of Maryland will keep the blue-light phones because cell phones can sometimes be unreliable.

BOOSTING ENROLLMENT³

Enrollment is declining, and competition is higher than in past years. Blue light emergency phones play a pivotal role in whether or not students may attend one university over another. In a study conducted by Noodle, a nationwide research database utilized by colleges, researchers sought to discover what parents of high schoolers and college students looked for in their children's higher educational institutions. Results determined that 75.4 percent of parents to high schoolers and college students believe the safety of that school's environment is the most critical factor when deciding what higher educational institution to attend.

BLUE-LIGHT PHONES USED FOR SAFETY ESCORT SERVICES

One of the students' concerns on campus is walking alone and related safety issues. However, many students, families, visitors, and faculty on campus need non-emergency assistance, such as escorts, to help them get from point A to point B.

[York University's goSAFE program](#) is a testament to how blue-light phones can be used systematically to improve customer experience on campus.



goSAFE is one of the largest student employers on campus. It allows students to give back to the York community while earning money for their education. goSAFE is staffed entirely by York

University students, who are easily identifiable in their red jackets or goSAFE and YorkU-branded polo shirts.

goSAFE teams accompany York community members to and from any on-campus location, such as the Village Shuttle pick-up hub, parking lots, bus stops, or residences. [The goSAFE team even created a demo video as a portion of a good communication process.](#)

LEADERSHIP MANAGING RISK & MITIGATION

[A proactive position from campus leadership](#)
- Vice President of Security & Public Safety Ron Sloan said, “At Liberty University, we are dedicated to exceeding the standard that all colleges and universities must meet, and that means focusing on preventing incidents before they happen,” Sloan said. “If we mitigate one incident, the devices (blue light emergency phones) have proven their value.

IN CLOSING

At Code Blue, we don't just provide safety solutions - we work to transform the narrative of community security. From advanced communication systems to customized safety strategies, we're making a difference, one innovative solution at a time.

Code Blue is always ready to help with any questions regarding our solutions. No one should feel like they are on an island. Together, we are a community dedicated to assisting public safety and saving lives!

We hope this article helped you better understand the issues and considerations for campus safety and blue-light emergency phones. Please consider contacting Code Blue for help (<https://codeblue.com/contact>) to make your Code Blue Solutions come to life!



Resources:

- 1 - [article](#) in *The Chronicle for Higher Education*.
- 2 - [article](#) published by *Campus Safety Magazine*.
- 3 - [article](#) developed by *The Greyhound*.