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SCORMAP Gets High Marks

The beep-beep of an emergency broadcast sounds on the radio . . . a funnel cloud has been spotted. Pleasant Valley Elementary School, in Calhoun County, Alabama, at once implements its severe weather plan. Administrators turn to a nearby computer and access vital information stored in the school's SCORMAP program—information about student attendance, emergency exits, and utility shutoffs.

Although this scenario remains hypothetical, Pleasant Valley Elementary and other schools in Calhoun County have become the Nation's test bed for SCORMAP, a mapping software program that uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Computer Assisted Drawing (CAD) technologies to put detailed information at school administrators' fingertips. Its objective is not only to promote school safety but to help administrators, school resource officers, and local law enforcement in emergencies.

SCORMAP is based on CORMAP, an application for correctional facilities developed in 1999 by the National Institute of Justice's National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC)—Southeast and the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River Technology Center (SRTC). Until recently, a major hurdle to mapping multistory buildings such as prisons or schools was the duplicate, room-above-room construction, which GIS could not map alone. In cooperation with SRTC, NLECTC—Southeast overcame this problem by integrating CAD and GIS technologies. Now, multilevel areas can be displayed in a three-dimensional layout. Each room (or cell) on each floor becomes a separate, identifiable unit that can be displayed on a computer screen.

According to Lisa Russell, information technology director for Calhoun County Schools, school mapping began early last fall, but it will take several years to map every school in the county. With almost 20 schools in the system, Pleasant Valley Elementary School was chosen as the starting point because this small new school already had some of the necessary information digitized.

Rob Donlin, project manager for corrections and school safety at NLECTC—Southeast, says SCORMAP has

the capability to store any information school administrators think they may need. "We map physical aspects, but we also track student characteristics," Donlin says. "If a child turns up missing, the system can help track him down by showing, for example, that he didn't get on the bus to go home."

Information stored in SCORMAP includes fire evacuation routes, severe weather holding areas, water and electrical shutoffs, air conditioning and heating shutoffs, breaker boxes, and fire extinguishers. Russell says that she knows access to this information in an emergency could prove vital to Calhoun County's school resource officers and local law enforcement.

Calhoun County Sheriff Larry Amerson got the SCORMAP project rolling by introducing Russell to Donlin. "Sheriff Amerson knew about CORMAP because Rob Donlin helped him map the local jail. He knew we were forward thinking, and he put us together," Russell explains. Donlin met with Russell and Calhoun County's Safety and Security Director Mike Fincher in fall 2002. They agreed to start when the next school year began.

"Because the school system's funds for this type of project are limited, we were very glad to receive technology assistance from NLECTC—Southeast," Russell says. "All in all, this is a good partnership. Rob Donlin and his team have been helpful as a general school safety resource in addition to helping with the mapping." NLECTC—Southeast helped Fincher attend a national conference on campus safety, and he came back with more ideas for improving safety in Calhoun County schools.

"This kind of partnership bleeds over into a lot of other opportunities," Russell says. "Even though it will take several years to put [SCORMAP] completely into place, we couldn't have done it on our own, because we don't have the resources."

Donlin says CORMAP required a few modifications to morph into SCORMAP, for the most part adding passwords so that only authorized personnel could access such student-specific information as medical records.

Also, although CORMAP used inmates' assigned beds as their "location address," SCORMAP uses desks for elementary school students and lockers for secondary school students.

For more information on SCORMAP and CORMAP projects, contact Rob Donlin at the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center–Southeast, 800–292–4385 or donlin@nlectc-se.org. For information on Calhoun County Schools' experience with SCORMAP, contact Lisa Russell, 256–741–7475 or lrussell@calhoun.k12.al.us.

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