First Responder Mapping System in K-12 Schools

Legislative Auditor Conclusion: School districts and law enforcement see both advantages and limitations of the state school mapping system. WASPC can address many limitations by developing training strategies, using data, and coordinating with school safety centers.

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Study mandate: SSHB 1216 (2019)

**JLARC staff directed to identify:**

- Which school districts use the state mapping system or an alternative system.
- How districts and agencies are using the system(s).
- Costs incurred.
- Training provided/received.
- Opportunities for improvement.

**Methods:**

- Review of data in state mapping system (e.g., logins, uploaded files).
- Survey of 295 school districts.
- Survey of 272 local law enforcement agencies.
- Interviews.
- Document review.
Legislation to create system passed in 2003 to:

Provide information to emergency responders during incidents at K-12 schools
By law, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs is responsible for program management.

WASPC has 1.5 FTEs for program management.

Private vendor owns the software and technology.

- Rapid Responder
- Easy Alert (mobile app)

Responders and school officials can access it on a computer or mobile app.

Districts and schools enter information into Rapid Responder database.
The state currently pays for the school mapping system license and program management.

State has appropriated $24 million for the system since FY 2004.
- License and program management since FY 2016.

School districts cover the costs if they choose to update information or add sites.
- 54 districts report spending time or money to update information, add schools, or train staff.

Emergency response agencies can access the system at no cost.
Some log into the state system on a weekly or daily basis, but most log in less routinely.

**SCHOOL DISTRICTS: 253**
- Less than annually: 32
- At least monthly: 59
- At least weekly: 45
- At least daily: 7

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE AGENCIES: 271**
- At least daily: 1
- At least weekly: 3
- At least monthly: 25
- At least 3 times per year: 59
- At least once per year: 73
- Less than annually: 110

Source: JLARC analysis of data in the state mapping system, FY 2016-19.
It is unclear if the information in the system is current.

Law enforcement reports that mapping information is useful if it is kept current.

For most data, the system records only the date information was added.

- No routine verification that information is current.
At least 33 districts use alternative technology as allowed by law.

Most frequently cited alternative: ESD 105 School Safety Operations and Coordination Center

Districts that opt to use an alternative are responsible for the entire cost.
362 responses to JLARC surveys about mapping system

207 school districts
70% response rate

155 law enforcement agencies
57% response rate

80% of school district respondents report that they use the state mapping system.

70% of law enforcement respondents report that they use the state mapping system.

33%-53% of those who use the system intend to use it during an incident.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>School Districts</th>
<th>Law Enforcement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intruder</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent crime or threats</td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous materials</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural hazard or disaster</td>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: JLARC analysis of survey responses.
School district and law enforcement agency respondent’s opinions on mapping systems fell into three groups:

- **272** Fall in the middle – perceiving both advantages and limitations.
- **20** Neither need nor want a mapping system.
- **47** Like and need a mapping system.
ADVANTAGES

- Information contained in the system.
- Simultaneous use by multiple entities.
- Easy to use.
- Documentation capabilities.
LIMITATIONS

System issues.

Lack of training.

Cost (dollars and/or time).

Data reliability.
Some limitations are associated with WASPC’s approach to program management
Detailed training strategy needed to reach all districts and emergency response agencies

10% of potential users trained in last 3 years.

All trainings are done in person.

Training is provided upon request.
WASPC has not formally communicated with users about their needs or system updates

No process to identify user needs or problems.

Automated system notices do not reach users who are not regularly logging in.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Easy Alert mobile app has been available to law enforcement since 2018.</th>
<th>Law enforcement survey respondents:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 65% unaware of Easy Alert.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reported that lack of a mobile app was a limitation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Legislative Auditor Recommendation 1

WASPC should develop and implement detailed training and outreach strategies that have measurable goals and targets.

- Identify delivery methods and content.
- Identify opportunities to partner with other entities.
- Gather feedback on training and user needs to periodically update strategies.
WASPC does not use system data to manage and prioritize program activities

Technology standards not updated since 2005.

Data about how and when system is used could inform program management decisions.

Target training
Suggest review
WASPC should periodically **review technology standards**, **address user feedback** about technology issues, and **use system data** to inform its program management decisions.
Mapping is an element of school safety planning.

It should be coordinated with the work of the school safety centers.

Legislature established school safety centers.
- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).
- 9 Educational Service Districts (ESDs).
- Training and technical expertise for districts.

70% of districts reported it would help to have local ESD coordinate use of mapping system.
Report Summary

**Legislative Auditor Conclusion:**
School districts and law enforcement see both advantages and limitations of the state school mapping system. WASPC can address many limitations by developing training strategies, using data, and coordinating with school safety centers.

**Two Recommendations:**
1. WASPC should develop and implement detailed training and outreach strategies that have measurable goals and targets.
2. WASPC should periodically review technology standards, address user feedback about technology issues, and use system data to inform its program management decisions.
Interactive survey data available in the report

http://leg.wa.gov/jlarc/reports/2020/mapping/p_1/default.html#appendix-a

Next Steps

Proposed Final Report | April 2020