

# Can a Smartphone App Really Increase Security?

The Titan HST has potential to revolutionize safety measures and protect students nationwide starting with NMUSD.



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Since Sandy Hook and other school shooting tragedies parents, students and administrators throughout the nation are forced to think about themselves within emergency situations

This is where Corona Del Mar graduate and Titan Health & Security Technologies founder, Vic Merjanian received his inspiration for Titan. This smartphone app allows for alerts and communication to be sent to school administration from students, staff and parents in the case of an emergency. Administration has numerous responsibilities and they cannot be everywhere at once. This app allows for the improved safety of a higher number of students especially in the event of tragedy such as school shooting.

If it is put into trial successfully, NMUSD should implement it district wide in coming years in the interest of student safety.

The app is very simple. Students select and send out an alert based on categories. Administration then can access the emergency, track GPS location, and administration can also then transmit information back

to students, teachers and parents enrolled within the program. If the application passes review and is implemented it will start as a pilot using 125 trusted students, 30 administrators, and several parents in order to gauge its effectiveness.

From a student's perspective there are several obvious benefits to the application setup.

Newport Harbor already has a similar program, Text-a-Tip, which allows students to anonymously text in about anything they feel administration needs to know. While this has brought needed communication improvements, it is limited by how often it is checked. In an emergency situation it may prove to be slow. Titan HST takes this a step further. Two emergency alerts in five minutes automatically trigger police. The added GPS locator also helps pinpoint students in the event of a true emergency. The ability to transmit audio and pictures also gives a more well-rounded description of the situation. Whole school alerts can also be sent out in the case of an intruder or other emergency.

Anonymity means students might be more likely to report on activities they might otherwise be afraid to because of retaliation. This includes serious wrongdoings such as bullying, and drug activity. Fights can also be broken up faster which leads to less injury and conflict overall.

Knowing there are eyes on them everywhere

might make students behave better. The ability for any student to report something anytime increases the likelihood of activities being stopped and reported. Students who are held accountable are more likely to behave knowing that they could be caught at any time.

There are downfalls however. Critics often point to student ability to falsely accuse other students or send out false alerts. Cost is another factor. If the District does decide to fund the app in coming years, it will cost them \$3.99 a student. The current average expenditure for a NMUSD student is already \$11,402. While \$3.99 might not seem like much in comparison, when you spread that over 21,800 students enrolled this adds up to about \$87,000.

While arguably not every student has a phone, it is unclear how charges will be determined or where the app will be used within the district. This also does not include teachers and administration. Ideally each staff member within the district would have access to this app regardless of whether students at that school don't regardless of age or otherwise. Students need to feel safe in their learning environment. With advancing technology, NMUSD should be taking full advantage of maximizing student safety and wellbeing. Cost and the immaturity of a few students should not be at the expense of ensuring student safety.