

# Free app alerts nearby officers of active school shootings

Whether on or off duty, LEOs can now receive immediate “active shooter” notifications on their iPhone or Android smartphones

By Rebecca Phillips, Director of Communications & Member Relations, Illinois Fraternal Order of Police

A new smartphone app—HERO911—has been created exclusively for federal, state and local law enforcement officers (LEOs).

Developed by the Social Protection Network Foundation—Hero Network™—the app has the potential to dramatically reduce response time and increase the available pool of police officers who can respond to a school shooting.

In the past 12 months, there have been 18 incidents of gun violence in U.S. schools, including the December 2012 attack at Sandy Hook Elementary that killed 20 children and six adults, as well as the most recent fatal shooting in Sparks, Nevada on October 21, 2013 (Wikipedia, 2013).

According to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, who spoke to an annual conference of police chiefs just hours after the shooting in Nevada, the average number of mass shootings per year has tripled in recent years. Over the past four years, the number of people killed in these types of incidents has risen nearly 150 percent (Lee, 2013).

Holder indicated that more than 60,000 front-line officers, on-scene commanders and agency heads have been trained on response tactics over the past 10 years, but additional strategies are necessary.



*HERO911 is a new smartphone app that alerts law enforcement officers of a nearby active school shooting. LEOs can download the free app from iTunes\* and Google Play stores.*

*\*Will be available on iTunes in early-November.*

The Hero Network™ adopted the phrase “When Seconds Saves Lives” in the creation of the HERO911 app, resulting in a means to send an immediate notification to officers within a 10 to 15 mile radius (dependent on demographics/geography) of an active school shooting. Simultaneously, an alert is sent to 911.

The smart phone technology displays a mapped location of the initial alert, the number of

uniformed and non-uniformed officers who acknowledged the alert, along with a continuous timer that displays minutes and seconds since the emergency activation. The app works nationwide, so LEOs will be alerted of an active school shooter incident even while traveling.

The app is only available to sworn law enforcement officers and qualified retired law enforcement officers (as defined by Title 18 USC § 926C). While anyone can download the app, it will only be activated for those who can show law enforcement credentials – once downloaded, the smartphone’s camera feature will open and the user will be prompted to take and send a photo of his or her law enforcement identification.

The Hero Network™ works in tandem with SchoolGuard™ – a teacher’s panic button app that can only be activated on school grounds by school staff. SchoolGuard™ was developed by Guard911, LLC and is currently being implemented in schools across the nation. There is a fee to set up the application throughout the school, as well as a monthly service fee.

“SchoolGuard™ puts into place innovative and strategic applications to the technology that we have all become familiar: the ‘app,’” said Susanne Buxbaum, a

childs’ rights advocate and former teacher from central California. “The educators and administrators I work with most often consider themselves to be optimists. We like to think of all schools as being safe environments, but unfortunately this is no longer always so.”

Buxbaum, who visits no less than 10 schools each week, explains that educators and administrators at every school in which she works, without fail, are looking for something to make them feel more safe. She believes SchoolGuard™ is that solution.

With the help and input from police, Guard911 developed this school shooting panic button app that simultaneously calls 911, notifies every teacher’s smart phone within the school, and activates the Hero Network™ of police officers who have voluntarily downloaded the free app. In order to limit the Hero Network™ response to school shootings only, the teacher’s panic button app also provides a separate “911 Only” button and a separate “Teacher Assist” button for intra school, non-shooting emergencies. See smart phone display image in the upper right corner.

“I am so enthusiastic about this product that I invited representatives from Guard911 to

meet with the district superintendents of the 12 public schools I serve in my five-county region in southeastern Illinois, said Monte Newlin,” Regional Superintendent of Schools in Illinois. “The response from those present was every bit as enthusiastic as mine.”

“We may never be able to prevent these extreme acts of violence, but we have found a way to reduce police response time for when they do occur,” said retired Illinois State Police Colonel Michael Snyders, president of the Social Protection Network Foundation.

According to Snyders, a team of police officers and technology experts have spent months developing and fine tuning both applications that are now ready to go.

“Our challenge now will be to make sure that every officer and every school in the nation know that they are available,” said Snyders.

All law enforcement officers are encouraged to download the free HERO911 app from Apple iTunes or Google Play. Additionally, encourage your colleagues to join the Hero Network™ and invite the schools in your communities to consider implementing SchoolGuard™.



For additional information, please visit [www.HERO911.org](http://www.HERO911.org) and [www.SchoolGuard.com](http://www.SchoolGuard.com).

### References

Lee, T. (2013, October 21). As mass shootings rise, Eric Holder calls for better police training. MSNBC [webpage]. Retrieved October 22, 2013 from [www.msnbc.com/msnbc/holder-urges-new-protocols-mass-shootings](http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/holder-urges-new-protocols-mass-shootings).

List of school shootings in the United States. 2013. Wikipedia [online]. Retrieved October 24, 2013 from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_school\\_shootings\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_school_shootings_in_the_United_States).



## The Hero Network™ app—HERO911

- Alert all federal state and local law enforcement officers, on duty or off duty, who are within close proximity to an active school shooting emergency.
- Provide the school name and address of where the active shooter alert originated.
- Display a timer showing how much time has expired since the initial alert.
- Generate a Google map displaying the location of the initial alert for situational awareness.
- Give a continuous count of how many uniformed and non-uniformed officers have received the alert.

Visit [www.hero911.org](http://www.hero911.org) for more information.