

High School Administrators Catch Sneak Smokers 'Red-handed'

Tobacco smoke and flame detection system extinguishes problem



Statistics indicate that a significant number – 29 percent – of U.S. high school students smoke. Many U.S. schools face the problem of teenage smoking on school grounds. According to a recent survey by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 8 percent to 10 percent of teenagers smoke on school grounds, creating a serious challenge for school administrators and staff.

Of all areas, student smokers often choose to light up in school restrooms because they are one of the few places on campus where they can hide from adults. This regular occurrence of students "sneak smoking" in New Miami High School (Hamilton, Ohio) restrooms prompted the school's Assistant Principal Sid Imhoff to take action.

"We didn't want people smoking in the building and some of our non-smoking students stepped forward and said they didn't want smoking occurring in restrooms," Mr. Imhoff said.

"It was difficult to monitor restrooms for smokers so we thought we should investigate solutions. We heard about Radal Technology's tobacco smoke detection system and had to see if the system could help us eliminate student smoking on campus."

After seeing a hands-on demonstration, school administrators installed Radal Technology's Cig-Arrête tobacco smoke detection and alarm system in September 2005. The system includes an integral Cig-Arrête detector and voice sounder module, which provides a voice message when a flame or tobacco smoke is detected. The voice sounder relays a message, such as "This is a no-smoking area. Please extinguish your cigarette. A staff member has been contacted."

"The system has definitely helped scare smokers," Mr. Imhoff said. "The alarm is loud and the students don't know if the system is hooked up to send an alarm to my office or somewhere else."

Imhoff added that the system acts as a monitor for restrooms because teachers and staff are not available to check restrooms during classroom hours and class changes. Even if a teacher suspects someone has been smoking, it is very challenging to actually prove it.

"It is difficult for teachers to catch smokers during class time unless they stop instruction and leave the classroom," Mr. Imhoff said. "Unless we see them smoking, we have nothing to go on. The Cig-Arrête system actually helps us to catch smokers red-handed."

Since the installation, some students have tried to beat the system by opening the window. However, the Cig-Arrête system is designed for the detection of unauthorized smoking in areas subject to high winds, rapid ventilation, smoke and gas. The unit detects a 22-millimeter cigarette lighter flame from about 20 feet away within one second.

Mr. Imhoff said he is considering installing additional detection units in the school.

"We are very pleased with the alarm's performance and results," he said. "I absolutely recommend the Cig-Arrête system. We are very happy to say that we now have welcoming, smoke-free restrooms as a result of using this system."



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