# Emergency Communication Infrastructure That Works When It Matters Most

A practical guide to evaluating emergency communication systems for K-12 schools and organizations responsible for keeping people safe.

When evaluating emergency communication solutions, the deciding factor shouldn't be "what features does it have?" but rather, "will it work when we need it most?"

This guide helps safety leaders, administrators, and decision-makers cut through noise and focus on what truly matters: infrastructure that continues functioning when networks fail, power goes out, or conditions degrade.

The questions below aren't about checking boxes. They're about understanding how systems are designed, what happens under real-world stress, and whether you'll be able to prove due diligence when stakeholders ask why you chose this solution.

Use this guide to evaluate any emergency communication platform, including Punch Rescue. We've been honest about where capabilities overlap with competitors and where our infrastructure-first approach creates meaningful differences.

| Ask About | PUNCH RESCUE | Others | Why This Matters |
|---|---|---|---|
| Infrastructure-First Design | Yes | Varies | While software-only solutions depend on functioning networks, Punch Rescue combines hardware, software, and indoor mapping as unified infrastructure designed to work when conditions degrade—including network congestion, power outages, or Wi-Fi failures. |
| Network Independence for Emergency Alerts | Yes | Limited | Rescue Cards use LoRa technology to send emergency alerts without relying on Wi-Fi or cellular networks. While Wi-Fi may be used when available for additional features, emergency reporting doesn't depend on it—critical when networks become congested during actual emergencies. |
| Battery Backup in Devices | Yes (1-year replaceable batteries) | Varies | Rescue Cards feature user-replaceable batteries with approximately 1-year lifespan. No daily or weekly charging required—devices remain accessible when needed, not sitting on a charger. |
| Over-the-Air (OTA) Updates to all Devices including Cards | Yes | Limited | Firmware and software updates deploy remotely without physical device collection or manual flashing—reducing IT burden and ensuring systems stay current without operational disruption. Base Stations and Repeaters updated from Cloud and Cards updated via Rescue Mobile app. |
| Room-Level Location Accuracy | Yes | Varies | Strategic Repeater placements across your campus provide precise indoor location tracking. Responders receive exact room locations, not approximate GPS coordinates or building-level information. |

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| Building-Wide Coverage | **Yes** (via Repeater Mesh network) | **Limited** | Repeaters extend signal coverage throughout complex facilities—classrooms, hallways, stairwells, gymnasiums. Coverage doesn't depend on cellular signal strength or Wi-Fi access point density. |
| Hardwiring Required | **No** | **Varies** | Rescue infrastructure deploys without hardwiring, additional outlets, or facility modifications. Repeaters and Alert Stations operate independently, enabling faster deployment without construction delays. |
| Power Resilience | **Yes** (battery backup in all devices) | **Varies** | When facility power fails, Rescue Cards, Repeaters, and Alert Stations continue operating on battery backup—ensuring communication remains possible during the degraded conditions when you need it most. |
| Multiple Alert Levels | **Yes** (Test, Level 1, Level 2) | **Varies** | Level 1 notifies internal responders for situations requiring discrete response. Level 2 alerts all staff, activates strobe lights, and triggers 911+ Concierge—providing appropriate escalation for different emergency types. |
| Visual Alert Indicators | **Yes** (optional Repeater strobes) | **Limited** | Repeater strobe attachments provide building-wide, customizable visual alerts—ensuring notification reaches everyone including those who may not hear audible alerts or have their phones readily accessible. |
| Cellular Backup for Alert Station | **Yes** | **Varies** | Alert Stations include cellular connectivity as redundant communication pathway—ensuring emergency alerts reach responders even if building internet or network infrastructure fails. |
| Indoor Mapping Integration | **Yes** (real-time card awareness) | **Limited** | MappedIn integration provides 3D facility visualization with real-time card location awareness—responders see precise incident location, building layout, and nearby safety assets on dynamic maps, not static floor plans. |
| Self-Service Testing | **Yes** (single-press validation) | **Varies** | Staff can validate their card functionality with single button press without putting entire system into test mode—encouraging regular testing that builds familiarity and ensures device reliability. |
| Real-time Device Monitoring | **Yes** | **Varies** | Management dashboard shows online/offline status for every card and repeater in real-time—enabling proactive maintenance rather than discovering device failures during emergencies or drills. |
| Outdoor Use Capability | **Yes** | **Limited** | Rescue Cards function outdoors for playground supervision, athletic fields, parking areas, and campus grounds—not limited to indoor coverage areas where Wi-Fi or cellular signal may be weak. |
| Wearable Form Factor | **Yes** (lightweight card design) | **Varies** | Designed to be worn on lanyards or belt clips—always accessible without unlocking phones, opening apps, or navigating interfaces under stress. Physical presence ensures availability when seconds matter. |
| Integration with Emergency Operations Platform | **Yes** (STOPit Notify by Lightspeed) | **Limited** | Optional integration with STOPit Notify creates unified emergency communication ecosystem—hardware provides reliable infrastructure while software manages broader incident coordination and mass notification. |

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| Everyday Operational Value | Yes | Limited | Platform supports daily operations including drills, training exercises, and preparedness activities—building procedural memory and familiarity so the system is trusted and understood when crisis occurs, not just emergency-only technology. |
| Documentation & Compliance Support | Yes | Varies | System provides testing logs, training records, drill participation data, and after-action reports—the documentation that proves due diligence when questioned by boards, regulators, or media. |
| Simplicity Under Stress | Designed for it | Varies | Single-button activation eliminates navigation complexity when cognitive capacity is compromised by stress. Human factors science shows simple interfaces succeed when complex reasoning fails—our design reflects this reality. |
| Configurability | Yes | Limited | Actions, Colors, Sounds, Volume, Lights, Categories, Escalation level, 911, are some of the easily configurable components of the entire platform. |
| Emergency App | Yes | Varies | Rescue Mobile on IOS & Android supports Notifications, Basic 2-way Chat, 911 Status Updates, and Resolution. Or choose the STOPit Notify integration which enables more advanced emergency management including mass notifications, photos, videos, audio, attendance, status updates, and more. |
| Rescue 911 Alert | Yes | Varies | Leverages RapidSoS to send detailed real-time location information for everyone on property to 911. Human monitoring places a call to ensure that the 911 operator is reviewing all data provided by the school during the incident including the Category of incident. Staff on scene receive updates as 911 receives and responds. |
| Self-Managed Platform | Yes | No | Rescue is the only self-managed platform not relying on a partner to manage the system for you. Easily place all assets on the map including Cards, Repeaters, and other important assets like AEDs, fire extinguishers, etc. |
| Multi-purpose Devices | Yes | No | Repeaters act as BLE location triangulators, Wi-Fi gateway, LORA emergency mesh network creators, and Strobe lights. Base Stations act as an Ethernet and Cellular gateway, LORA emergency receivers, and customizable audible and visual alert stations. |
| Cards that Last | Yes | No | Rescue Cards have replaceable batteries that power the device for approximately one year at a time. When new firmware is available, simply update the Card in seconds from the Rescue mobile companion application. And no need to recharge or replace the device when the batteries die, simply swap out the two CR2032 batteries. |

**Want to continue the conversation?** Contact us to learn how Punch Rescue can work in your environment, or reach out using the information below.