

## Safety Before Tragedy

For more than four decades, I've worked in two worlds: live events and school safety. My journey began after the 1979 Cincinnati tragedy where 11 fans died, and it was reinforced years later by the Pearl Jam tragedy at Roskilde where 9 fans lost their lives. Those experiences shaped my belief that prevention, communication and coordination must come before crisis. This series explores how Live Event Security and School Security can learn from one another.



# SAFETY BEFORE TRAGEDY

EVENT SAFETY VS. SCHOOL SAFETY

50 YEARS OF  
PREVENTION, RESPONSE  
AND RECOVERY



# Lives Protected

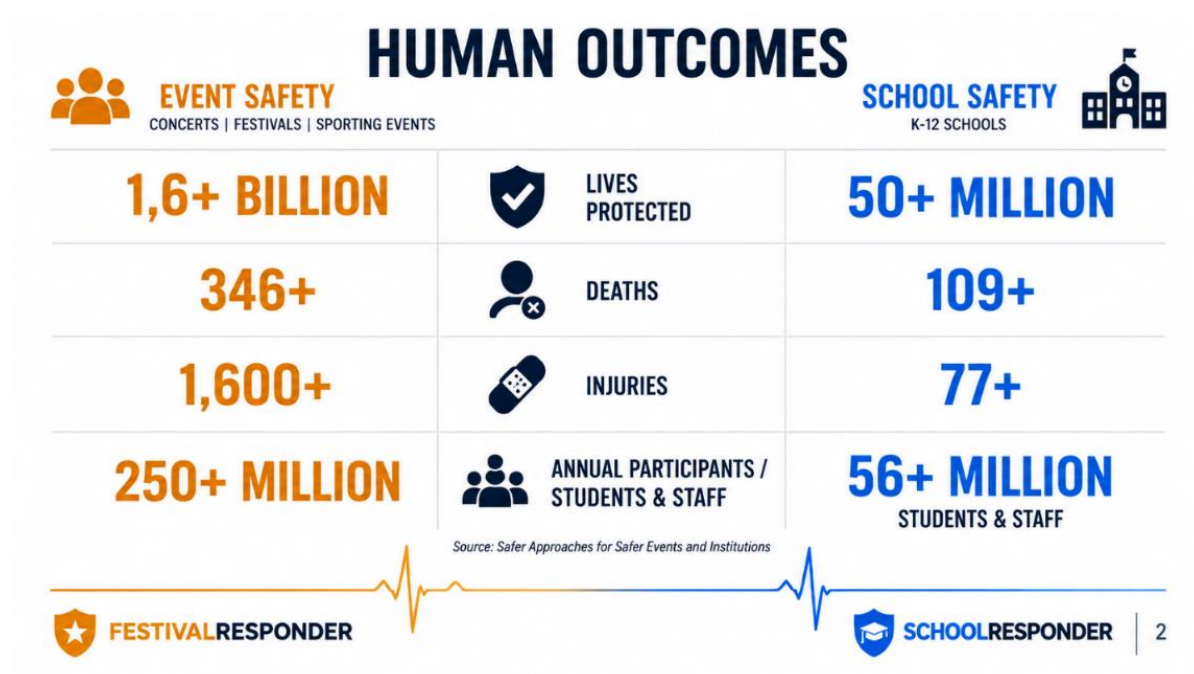
We often measure safety by counting tragedies.

Perhaps we should also measure it by the millions of people who safely attend schools, concerts, festivals, sporting events, and other public gatherings every year.

Safety is not defined only by what goes wrong. It is also reflected in everything that goes right—the planning, communication, awareness, and response systems working quietly in the background.

**Success should be measured first by the lives protected, and then by the lessons learned when protection fails.**

That is how we build safer systems for the future.



# **Fifty Years of Lessons - What if we stopped waiting for tragedy to tell us what needs to change?**

The timelines are different.

Major live-event disasters span decades, while the era of modern school shootings emerged much later. But both histories reveal a troubling pattern:

**We often make meaningful changes only after something terrible happens.**

We study the incident.

We identify the gaps.

We change the policies.

We improve the systems.

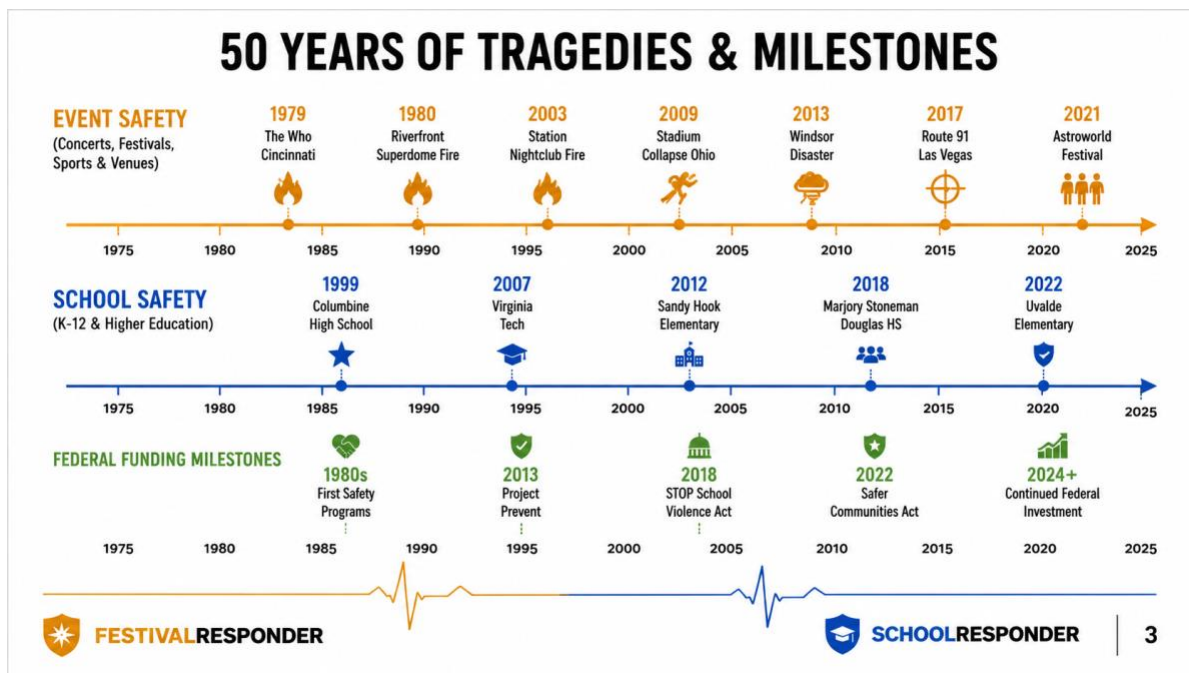
But by then, the cost has already been paid.

The real measure of safety leadership isn't how well we respond after a tragedy.

**It is what we do with what we already know—before the next one happens.**

We have an opportunity to move from reactive preparedness to proactive prevention by recognizing patterns, addressing vulnerabilities, and building systems designed to identify and respond to concerns earlier.

**The goal should not be to become better at responding to the next tragedy.** The goal should be to prevent the next tragedy whenever we can. Live events and schools face different threats, but the operational requirements are remarkably similar: prevention, detection, secure communications, coordination, response and recovery. Strong operations save lives regardless of venue.



## Different Venues. Different Threats. Similar Operational Demands.

Live events and schools may face very different risks, but the fundamentals of effective safety operations are remarkably similar:

**Prevention. Detection. Secure communications. Coordination. Response. Recovery.**

Whether the setting is a school filled with students or a stadium filled with thousands of people, the ability to recognize a concern early, communicate securely, coordinate the right resources, and respond effectively can make all the difference.

Safety isn't simply about having a plan on paper.

**It's about having the systems, people, and communication capabilities to put that plan into action when it matters most.**

Strong operations don't just improve preparedness.

**They save lives—regardless of the venue.**

# DIFFERENT HAZARDS. SAME OPERATIONAL NEEDS.



## Different Funding Models. Same Responsibility.

School safety is funded largely through public budgets, grants, and community resources.

Live event safety operates differently—often involving venues, promoters, leagues, contractors, insurers, and public safety agencies, each playing a role in protecting those in attendance.

The funding structures may be different. The stakeholders may be different. The environments certainly are different.

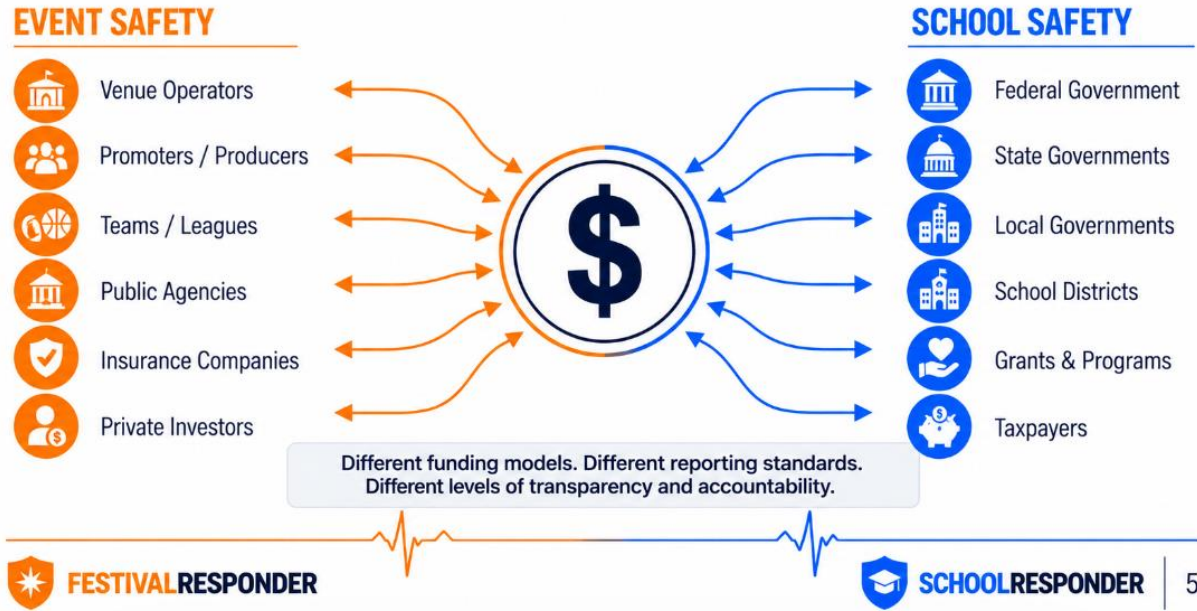
But the responsibility is the same.

**Protect people. Prepare before something happens. Communicate when it does. Coordinate the response.**

Because ultimately, safety isn't defined by who funds it.

**It's defined by whether the systems are in place to protect people when it matters most.**

# WHERE SAFETY DOLLARS COME FROM



## Connecting the Pieces

Technology alone does not create safer environments.

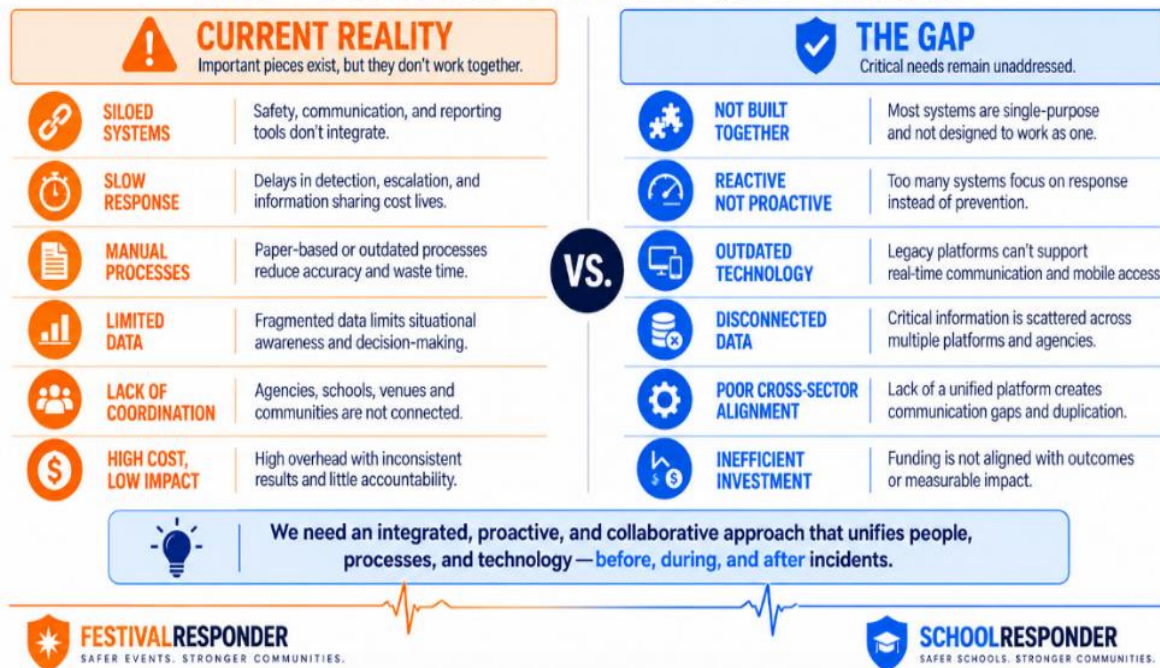
Its value comes from how well it connects **people, information, and decision-makers** when it matters most.

When the right information reaches the right people at the right time, risks can be recognized earlier, communication becomes clearer, and responses can be coordinated faster.

The goal isn't simply better technology. It is **better awareness, better decisions, and better outcomes.**

Because ultimately, safety isn't about the technology we deploy. It's about the people that technology helps us protect.

# WHY CURRENT SYSTEMS FALL SHORT



## Before. During. After.

Every major tragedy deserves a serious review.

- ⚠️ **What preparation existed before?**
- ⚠️ **What happened during the incident?**
- ⚠️ **What changed afterward?**

These three questions provide a simple but powerful framework for improving safety.

⚠️ **Before:** Are the right people connected? Can concerns be identified early? Are communication and response processes already in place?

⚠️ **During:** Can information move quickly and securely? Can teams coordinate resources, escalate concerns, and respond in real time?

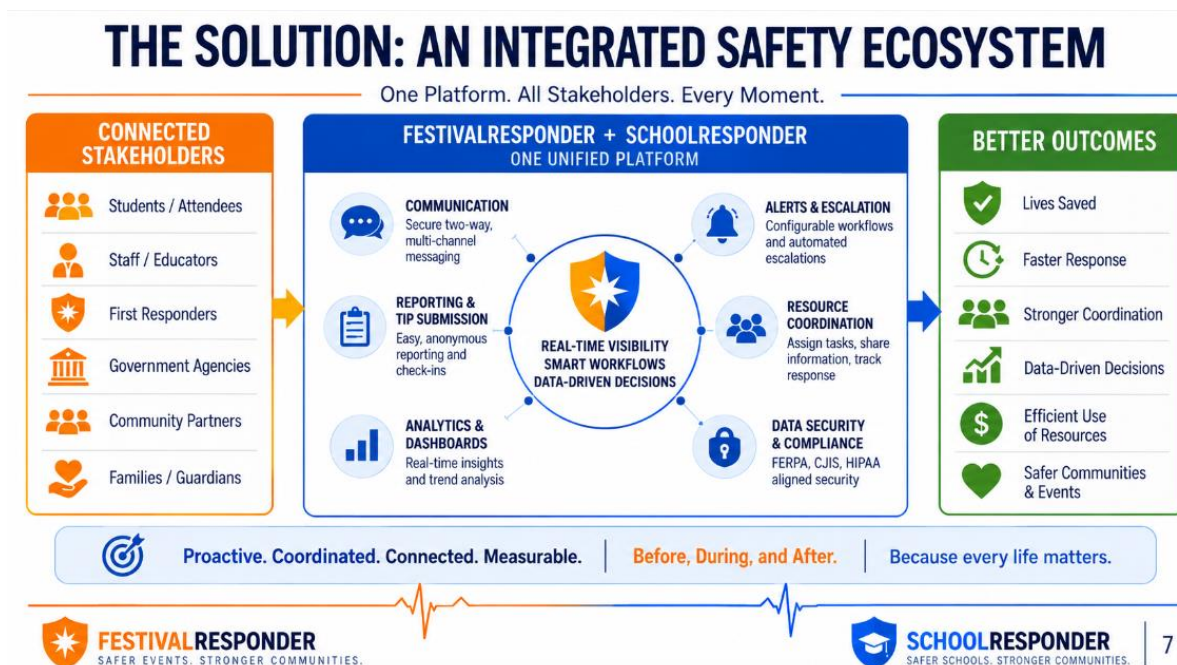
⚠️ **After:** Can organizations review what happened, measure the response, identify gaps, and use what they learned to improve?

The goal isn't simply to respond better to the next incident.

It's to use what we learn to reduce the likelihood—and impact—of the next one.

Safety should be a continuous process of preparation, response, learning, and improvement.

**Before. During. After.**



## Built for the Moment That Matters Most

Throughout my career in ticketing, event operations, and now school safety, one lesson has remained constant:

**Information must move quickly to the people who need it.**

But speed alone isn't always enough. Information must be secure, actionable, and connected to the people responsible for making decisions and taking action.

That requires more than another piece of technology.

It requires an operational system that can **detect, alert, coordinate, respond, analyze, and improve**—while keeping everyone working from the same information.

Whether you're protecting thousands of people at a live event or students and staff in a school, communication is the infrastructure that connects people, processes, and response.

**The technology should be purpose-built. The system should be integrated. And when the moment comes, it should already be ready.**

Because the moment that matters most is not the time to figure out how everyone communicates.

## BUILT FOR THE MOMENT THAT MATTERS MOST

Purpose-built. Integrated. Always Ready.



## Lessons Written in Lives

Every tragedy leaves lessons behind.

Policies change. Training evolves. Technology improves. Procedures are rewritten.

But too often, those lessons are **written in lives**.

The objective of a mature safety culture should be to learn before another tragedy forces us to—to connect people, information, and decision-makers

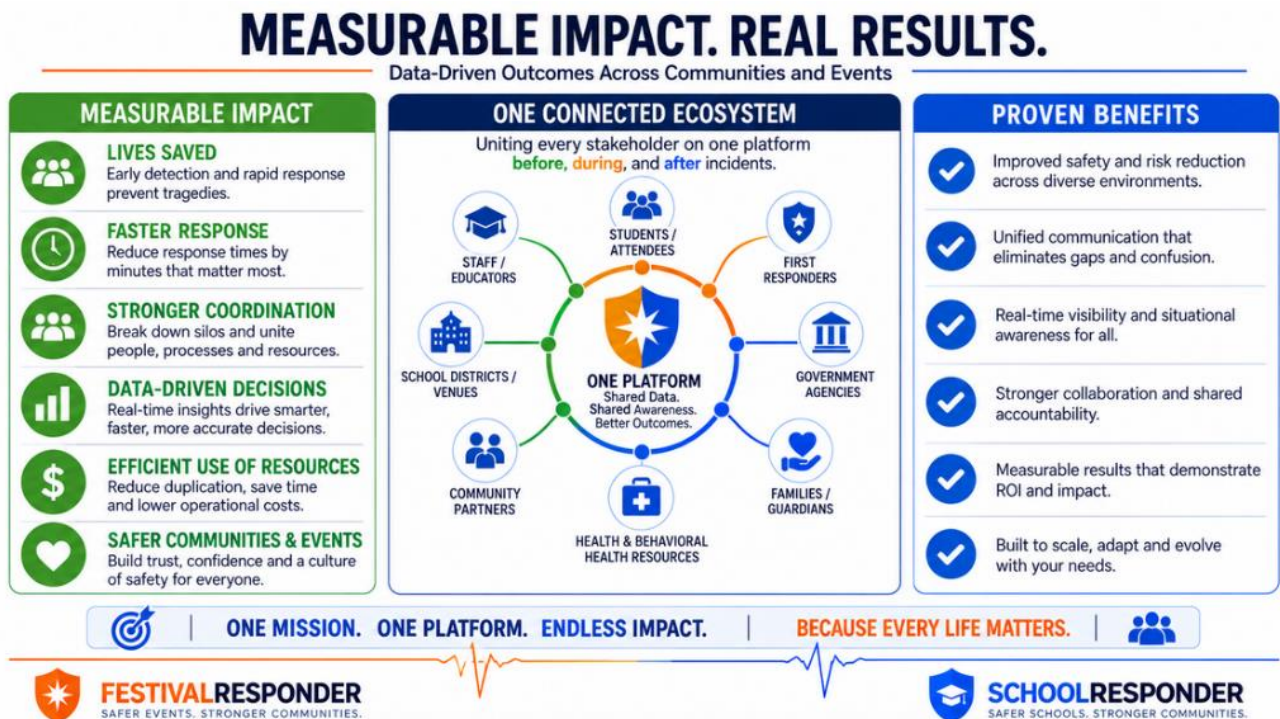
so we can recognize patterns, measure outcomes, and continuously improve.

Better data leads to better decisions. Better coordination leads to faster response. And lessons learned across schools, events, agencies, and communities should strengthen the entire safety ecosystem.

**Continuous improvement shouldn't begin after tragedy. It should be part of how we protect people every day.**

Because the most meaningful measure of progress isn't what we changed after lives were lost.

**It's what we changed in time to protect them.**



## Safety Before Tragedy

My goal in sharing this series is simple: to encourage conversations that can help reduce deaths and injuries across both live events and education.

Too often, improvements in safety come **after** tragedy. We study what happened, identify what failed, and make changes so it's not repeated.

But the greater opportunity is what we do **before** tragedy occurs.

**Before:** Plan, prepare, identify concerns, and connect the right people.

**During:** Communicate, coordinate, and get the right information to the right people at the right time.

**After:** Follow up, analyze what happened, learn, and improve.

Better planning. Better communication. Better coordination. These aren't simply responses to emergencies. They are the foundation for preventing incidents where possible and improving outcomes when they occur.

We cannot prevent every tragedy. But we can build systems that are ready **before, during, and after** the moments that matter most.

**That is what I mean by Safety Before Tragedy.**

Because safety shouldn't begin with tragedy.

