



Little Falls Community Schools

Building a Culture of Readiness Where Seconds Matter



Little Falls Community Schools
Little Falls, Minnesota
Number of Students: 2,283

A Rural District with a Relentless Commitment to Safety

In the heart of central Minnesota sits Little Falls Community Schools, a rural district that serves approximately 2,200 students across grades K-12, along with 150 early childhood learners and nearly 100 children in its district-operated daycare program. It is a tight-knit community where schools are not simply institutions – they are gathering places, anchors, and symbols of trust.

Overseeing operations for the district is Mark Diehl, Executive Director of Operations. Mark has dedicated 18 years to Little Falls, including the last three in his current leadership role. His responsibilities extend far beyond facilities and logistics. At the core of his work is a singular priority: ensuring that every student and every staff member is safe.

Since 2022, Little Falls Community Schools has implemented CrisisGo districtwide. What began as a strategic safety investment has grown into a foundational pillar of how the district prepares, communicates, and responds in critical moments.

Inviting Outside Perspective to Get Better

Before adopting CrisisGo, Little Falls had already developed strong partnerships with local law enforcement and emergency responders. They trained. They planned. They believed they were doing many things right. But Mark understood an important truth about school safety: confidence should never replace verification.

“It’s easy for us as a school district to say, yeah, we’re doing everything really well. But sometimes you need to have an outside perspective to help you see the gaps.”

Through CrisisGo’s safety assessment process, the district took a hard look at its procedures. The goal was not validation – it was improvement. Where were the blind spots? Where could communication break down? Where might accountability lag in a real emergency? The process provided clarity. It highlighted strengths and surfaced opportunities. Most importantly, it reinforced a mindset: safety is not static. It must evolve.

Under Five Minutes: A Defining Moment for Accountability

The most powerful demonstration of CrisisGo’s impact came during a full-scale evacuation drill at the high school. This was not a routine fire drill. The district simulated a real fire scenario, brought in the fire department, and moved students to a designated rally point. Communication flowed simultaneously through the PA system and through the CrisisGo platform.

Then came the critical test: accountability. Approximately 1,000 students and staff members needed to be located and verified. Using CrisisGo’s roster functionality, staff accounted for every individual in under five minutes. They repeated the process three separate times during the exercise – and each time, the results were the same.

Mark still recalls the moment vividly:

“The first time I was blown away, and then the next two were like, wow, we can replicate this. This is a really good thing.”



The speed was remarkable. But what made it transformational was the consistency. It was not dependent on paper rosters, manual headcounts, or radio relays. It was immediate. Visible. Confirmed in real time.

“We were blown away at how quickly we were able to account for all of those students and staff with CrisisGo. I can’t imagine how long that would have taken with a sheet of paper and pencil.”

In crisis response, five minutes is not simply efficient. It is critical. It provides leadership with clarity. It gives first responders actionable information. It reduces uncertainty at the exact moment when uncertainty can be most dangerous. That drill did more than validate a tool. It strengthened trust in the district’s preparedness.

Practicing the Entire Plan

Little Falls took the drill even further. After students reached the rally point, they were transported to the district’s official reunification site.

“We were blown away at how quickly we were able to account for all of those students and staff”
Mark Diehl
Executive Director of Operations

Bus companies were notified to be ready, but they were not given the details. They had to respond as they would during an actual emergency. The exercise became a full-community test: district leadership, transportation partners, emergency responders, and the reunification site personnel all participating in coordinated action.

Mark believes exercises like this reveal truths that planning alone cannot.

“You can plan till you’re blue in the face, but until the actual event happens or a simulated event happens, you don’t really know where the holes are that you need to try to plug.”

The drill surfaced insights. It strengthened partnerships. It allowed every stakeholder to see how the system functioned in motion. And because CrisisGo unified communication and accountability, the district could execute the plan with confidence rather than chaos.



Building Muscle Memory Across the District

Implementing CrisisGo was not just about activating alerts. It required building habits. Teaching staff how to receive messages through the app was straightforward.

“Teaching staff to understand how to use the CrisisGo app from an alert standpoint... that was the easy part.”

The greater challenge was embedding roster events into routine practice so they became instinctive. Some teachers adapted quickly. Others required additional support. With annual staff turnover, training is ongoing.

To ensure readiness, every drill – fire, lockdown, or evacuation – is run through CrisisGo. Each includes a roster event. Over time, repetition builds confidence. The district also enhances drills by making them scenario-based. If simulating a fire, they specify the fire’s location and close certain exits. Messaging flows through the app in real time, requiring staff to think critically and adjust.

A Region Takes Notice

When Little Falls conducted its large-scale evacuation drill, representatives from Sourcewell, local law enforcement, fire departments, county emergency management, neighboring counties, and other school districts attended .

What caught their attention was not simply the scale of the drill. It was the speed and clarity of communication.

“CrisisGo helps us to help teachers be able to think on their feet really quickly in an emergency situation.”

Mark Diehl
Executive Director of Operations

Observers followed Mark, watching messages move instantly from administrators to staff. They saw freshmen teachers receive specific instructions directing students to designated pickup zones. They witnessed accountability happening in real time.

The response was immediate: “Tell us more about this CrisisGo solution.”



Looking Ahead: Integration and Speed

Safety remains front of mind for Mark and his team. "Student safety has got to be our number one priority, because if students don't feel safe, they're not going to learn."

The district is now focused on expanding its use of CrisisGo Connect to further integrate with law enforcement, building maps, and camera systems with the goal of accelerating response.

Mark's perspective is clear:

"When you're dealing with an emergency situation, seconds matter. It's not minutes that matter or hours that matter. It's seconds that matter."

The faster responders access critical information, the better the outcome. CrisisGo, in his view, directly supports that mission. "I firmly believe that CrisisGo helps us get better. It helps us to communicate well. It helps us to be accountable well. And it helps us to respond well."

Trust Earned Through Preparation

Parents entrust Little Falls Community Schools with their children every day. That trust must be earned through preparation, transparency, and action. The district's journey with CrisisGo has not been about checking compliance boxes. It has been about building a culture of readiness – one where drills are meaningful, communication is unified, accountability is immediate, and improvement never stops.

For districts asking where to begin, Mark offers this advice:

"You need to find the tools that can help you assess where you're at in terms of your security and your safety. And then you need to find tools that can help you get better." In Little Falls, getting better is not a one-time initiative. It is an ongoing commitment. And when the moment comes, whether simulated or real, they are ready.



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