

Disaster response tech seeks funding to reach potential

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Wisconsin startup Safepro Technologies wants funding to bring its laser evacuation guide technology to schools and businesses to save lives during an active shooter, fire or other disaster emergency.

The sensor's message goes to a ceiling-mounted laser projector, which projects green arrows (safe) or red Xs (danger) on hallway walls to guide people toward the safest route away from the threat. In turn, it guides first responders to the threat to handle the situation.

Law enforcement veteran and Safepro founder Paul Eckert explained that this system essentially thinks for victims in real-time because the human brain does not think correctly in such a dramatic event. In a stressful environment, even law enforcement struggle with making the best, life-saving decisions, he said, reflecting on his active shooter response coaching.

"We can't get to the facility fast enough where a bad incident occurs. We only have this window of one to 10 minutes that we have to get better at separation and stop the killing," he said. "It's unfortunate that we even really need to talk about this. But it's where we live in the world today."

Eckert said active shooter response was his calling. He has more than 20 years of experience under his belt in law enforcement and public safety. Throughout his career, he's been a part of several specialty units and has instructed in several areas including active shooter response.

“I tried to figure out what we were missing in the active shooter world because we just weren’t doing enough and we weren’t getting to a level where we could be successful,” he said.

So he used his field experience to establish Safepro, which aims to implement new safety technology in all fields of public and private safety from fires to active shooters. In 2018, Safepro joined the UW-Whitewater Innovation Center, which provides coaching and programming for startups.

Safepro’s system received a U.S. patent in August.

In September, Safepro was accepted into gener8tor’s startup accelerator program.

“With me having a law enforcement background and not the business background, it was great that they accepted me into their program,” Eckert said. “They pushed me out of my comfort zone to move forward in the business part of things ... their doors were always open. ... I feel like I just evolved as an entrepreneur and businessman.”

Safepro’s active shooter prototype is installed at the Whitewater Innovation Center as a concept demonstration site for future customers. Once the technology is completed, Safepro will be able to tap into smoke alarms or hazardous material sensors.

“The only thing really holding us back right now is the funding stages to get this out there and we’re working on that,” Eckert said.



-By Stephanie Hoff

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