Schools system gets visitor management system

Starting Monday, Jan. 31, Madison City Schools will be one step closer to a safer environment.

Monday, Jan. 31 will mark the first official day that Lobby Guard, a visitor management system that tracks who comes and goes, will become mandatory for all 10 city schools.

Once the driver's license is inserted into LobbyGuard, a quick scan over the national sex offender list is conducted within seconds. If everything clears, the visitor will have access to the school, if not, the information shows up on a web-based, secure server that sends a message to school administrators and resource officers. It will also present a red flag if that person is attempting to visit the student against a court order.

Dennis James, school safety coordinator, said people with common names may see a false hit in the system, but administration would quickly compare the two names and remove the match, and those people can go through and will never be stopped again.

"We absolutely want to make sure anyone with legit business in the school is able to get in," James said. "It never says anything at the Kiosk and bells and whistles won't go off if someone gets a hit. What it will do is notify us that there is a someone at the school we need to check."

The Kiosk system won't tell why access to the school was denied, only administrators will have that information.

"We are not trying to collect any sensitive information about any individual," he said. "We don't want to know their Social Security Number or driver's license number… we don't even have access to that. All the system gives us is a name and partial date of birth."

The system has been phased into schools over the past 10 weeks. Daphne Jah, principal at West Madison said the system is great for security purposes.

"I think it's a very good system," Jah said. "We've been using it here since Tuesday. Parents think it's user-friendly. I think it's a great for our safety because you have an immediate alert if there's a problem."

The system comes as one of the 32 safety recommendations made by the schools Safety Task Force.

"What we want to focus on is the positive aspects of this," James said. "Let's say we have visitors going in and tornado hits school, we have an electronic database of everyone in the school. For the security of our children, we have a right to know who's in school and what the business is."

James stresses the importance of having some form of identification before attempting to check in. He said the system also takes military I.D., green cards and government issued I.D.'s.

"If you don't have proper identification, you can go no further than front office," he said.