

NEWS RELEASE

# Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For More Information, contact:

Joy Patterson (334) 242-7491

Claire Haynes (334) 242-7351

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## AG STRANGE PROVIDES BEST SAFETY PRACTICES TO SCHOOLS

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange has compiled a set of best practices for safe schools, which he today shared with school officials throughout Alabama. This list resulted from the Alabama Safe Schools Initiative, which the Attorney General reinstated last year with a special emphasis on the use of technology in school safety. The information was sent electronically to all public school principals and superintendents and to the Alabama Independent School Association.

Each school that submitted an application in 2013 was reviewed by a panel of judges with representatives from the Attorney General's Office, the Alabama State Department of Education, the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center, the Alabama Department of Public Safety, the Alabama Department of Insurance and the Alabama Association of School Resource Officers. Through this initiative, one school from each of the eight state school board districts was recognized for its efforts with an Attorney General's Safe School Award of Excellence.

Based upon the judges' findings, the Attorney General's Office devised a set of suggestions called the 2013 Safe Schools Initiative Best Practices. Some of the suggested practices require funding, while others are just a simple, common sense approach to safety.

"Keeping our children safe in their schools is one of the most important things we can do for Alabama's families and for our state's future," said Attorney General Strange. "From the very best school safety programs, we gathered the most valuable and effective practices to share with all our schools. No matter what systems for safety a school may use, our common goal is to take the guesswork out of providing a safe environment and work with parents, teachers and local law enforcement to provide the safest schools possible."

The Attorney General highlighted the following programs as Best Practices:

**The Quick Access Program** was created by the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center to help schools keep track of visitors and alert school administrators to potential threats. Using the visitor's driver's license, the school has access to immediate information about whether the person is a sex offender, if there are child custody restrictions, and other concerns.

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501 Washington Avenue • Montgomery, AL 36104 • (334) 242-7300  
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**The Virtual Alabama School Safety System** is an online system provided by the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, making school safety plans, emergency contacts, maps, evacuation routes and other material easily accessible for first responders, school officials, and others involved in implementing a safety plan. Approximately 1,200 K-12 public schools, seven K-12 private schools, seven community colleges and three universities currently participate in this program.

**Panic buttons** for all teachers and school staff let them instantly alert school officials and local authorities when an emergency occurs. This program is a practice of the Orange Beach Elementary School, winner of the 2013 Alabama Safe Schools Initiative for District 1.

**The School Connect Application** used by Leeds High School operates on tablets, smart phones and personal computers to provide immediate communication between school administrators, teachers, school staff, parents and students during emergency situations. Leeds High School received the 2013 Alabama Safe Schools Initiative for District 7.

**Safety plan flip books** may be placed in every classroom, providing a detailed protocol and points of contact for all foreseeable emergencies. This is a practice of Challenger Middle School, the District 8 winner.

**Safety bags** of essential safety supplies may be provided to each classroom and teacher, with items such as two-way radios, safety plan flip books, first aid kits and flashlights. Redland Elementary School was recognized for this as winner in District 3.

For more information about these best practices and how they may be implemented, visit <http://www.ago.alabama.gov/Page-AL-Safe-Schools-Initiative-Best-Practices-2013>.

Below is a list of the eight recipients of a 2013 Attorney General's Safe School Initiative Award of Excellence for each State School Board district:

- District 1, Orange Beach Elementary, Orange Beach
- District 2, Pleasant Home School, Andalusia
- District 3, Redland Elementary School, Wetumpka
- District 4, Homewood High School, Homewood
- District 5, Blountsville Elementary School, Blount County
- District 6, Eastwood Elementary School, Decatur
- District 7, Leeds High School - Jefferson County
- District 8, Challenger Middle School, Madison

"We commend all of these fine schools and others that are committed to provide a safe learning environment for the children of Alabama," said Attorney General Strange. "I urge all school leaders and local law enforcement officials to review these practices and implement the best safety plans possible."