

MYTHS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Metal Detectors In K-12 Schools

MYTH: *Metal detectors create long lines*

When a proper site assessment is conducted in conjunction with appropriate training, the operation, placement, configuration, and number of detectors can be optimized to mitigate or even eliminate lines. For decades now, metal detectors have effectively and efficiently screened millions of guests at concerts, sporting events, airports, amusement parks, and government buildings around the world.

MYTH: *Metal detectors are too expensive*

A high-quality Garrett walkthrough with a companion hand-held metal detector will cost approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000 (depending upon model selection). As an example, a Texas high school with approximately 1,500 students was recently configured with nine walk-through detectors located at three security checkpoint entrances for less than \$45,000.

MYTH: *Metal detectors will not work in old school buildings not designed for them*

Old facilities can present a challenge for modern security programs, but even old buildings can be retrofitted with metal detectors, often with little or no modification to the facility. Metal detectors are very versatile. They are waterproof and thus can operate outside.



They are mobile when installed with casters, and can be moved in and out of entrances. They can also operate on battery power for up to ten hours, allowing them to operate in areas where power is not readily available.

MYTH: *Metal detectors frequently miss weapons*

This claim, which often originates with misleading news reports, is usually referring to X-ray machines, not metal detectors. X-ray machines rely on a human operator to visually identify weapons based on images. Metal detectors rely on physics, not human judgment, to detect metal objects, which mitigates human errors. Detector sensitivity can be adjusted to reliably identify metal objects as small as one-half of a razor blade.

MYTH: *Metal detectors require lots of additional personnel to operate them*

First, teachers, coaches, administrators, and other staff can be trained to operate the metal detectors and screen students, which reduces the need for additional staff. Second, an important goal of the site assessment is to minimize the number of entrances that are open and staffed. In the morning, students arrive at just a few secure entrances where they are screened (typically in less than an hour). Once the morning rush is complete, only a single checkpoint entrance remains open, reducing the need for staffing for the rest of the day. Garrett does recommend that a campus police officer or some other trained security professional be stationed at each checkpoint.

MYTH: *Metal detectors need frequent maintenance*

A high-quality Garrett walkthrough metal detector typically operates for ten years or more with minimal maintenance. The metal detectors are solid-state with no moving parts to wear out, so very little maintenance is required.



GARRETT
METAL DETECTORS

MYTH: *Metal detectors require significant manpower to check backpacks*

Garrett recommends the “ideal backpack™” method of screening to minimize manual inspections. With this method, standard, commonly available, low-metal-content school supplies and backpacks are used. The students are trained to remove any high-metal content items, like three-ring binders or cell-phones, and place them into a bin that is evaluated by a screener. The students then continue through the metal detector with their backpacks, which contain only low-metal items. In this way, only the high-metal items need to be manually screened. This method increases the throughput of the checkpoint, reduces the manpower required to perform backpack/bag checks, and also mitigates the potential for human error associated with manual backpack/bag checks.

MYTH: *Metal detectors will make my school feel like a prison*

The perception of metal detectors continues to evolve as people gain greater exposure to them at airports, sporting events, concert venues, amusement parks, and other places. For much of society, the question has moved from, “Why have checkpoints and metal detectors?” to, “Why do we not have them?” At Garrett, we are now receiving calls and visits from concerned parents who are requesting them at their children’s schools. We also hear from students who attend schools with metal detectors who say that they feel safer with them there.

