Many employees in UH Hilo departments of facilities planning, auxiliary services, health and safety, security, and campus technology have collectively worked together on projects targeted to improve the safety and security of students, staff, and the public who frequent campus and the properties owned by the University. Perhaps the most observable improvement is the new traffic light on Kawili Street at the main entrance to the University. The installation of the light involved widening Kawili Street to accommodate the turning lanes into the University from both directions.

“The new traffic light has vastly increased the safety of motor vehicle drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians,” noted Dr. Debra Fitzsimons, vice chancellor of administrative affairs. “The extra lanes provide avenues of formal ingress and egress that alleviate traffic backup on campus, as well as from both directions on Kawili.”

Fire alarm upgrades began in October 2008 and were completed in August 2009. These new systems are monitored by Campus Security via radio signals that are transmitted to the monitors in the event an alarm is triggered. Ken Ikeda, UH Hilo’s environmental health and safety officer, said that “based on the requirements of the NFPA fire code, we were not required to make these improvements; rather, we did this to offer an additional level of safety and bring all of our buildings up to the standard that we were using on the newest buildings that had existing systems.” Ikeda was also instrumental in the acquisition of seven AED (automated external defibrillator) machines, six of which are installed at various locations around campus, and one designated to the Campus Security emergency response vehicle.

At the same time the new fire alarm systems were being installed, Lo-Li Chih, director of facilities, planning and construction, was managing a major exterior light improvement project.

“Thirty-two new night and curfew lights have been installed in previously dark areas and parking lots, making the campus much safer at night,” said Chih. Burned out bulbs were replaced, and building and area lights were assessed to ensure ample lighting coverage.

Kolin Kettleson, director of auxiliary services, explained that “the lighting system is now connected to a central computer, which allows authorized personnel to go online during the night to see the current status of the lights and to easily make adjustments to the length of time lights will be lit.” The University staff thanks Wesley Tanoue of the Office of Technology for his work in configuring the program and electronics that make the computerized light system an efficient success.

There are currently 14 existing Emergency Call Boxes installed at strategic locations throughout campus, 10 of which are configured with blue lights and the remaining four will have blue lights by the end of this year. Warren Ferreira, UH Hilo’s first director of security, assessed security measures in place on campus and successfully secured allocations to purchase 14 additional blue light emergency Call Box stations, as well as additional security cameras to enhance the existing CCTV system.

“The CCTV Planning Group is in the process of evaluating the entire system and will be making a determination of what we want to keep, what we might need to change, and what needs to be added to make the system more effective and comprehensive with the goals of safety and security in mind,” Ferreira said.

“We are proud of the safety and security improvements being made on campus, but we have more work to do such as upgrading our older buildings, ensuring our parking lots are well lit at night, knowing we can handle emergencies responsibly, and providing high quality security services,” Fitzsimons explained. “Despite limited resources from the legislature, we are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for our students, faculty, staff and guests through wise resource management.”

(Editor’s note: Debi Brockman is communication and administrative support specialist.)