INTRODUCTION

The Marshall University Crisis Communication Plan provides a management framework for responding to major emergencies that may threaten the health and safety of the university community, or disrupt its programs and operations.

Some crises can be predicted and possibly prevented, and those that cannot be avoided can be minimized if handled properly. Aside from tangible damage, a crisis can also destroy an institution’s reputation. The longer a crisis goes on, the more damage it can do to public support, employee and student morale, enrollment and fundraising. Therefore, it is necessary to handle crises in a swift and organized manner.

Emergency response actions are guided by Marshall University’s overriding emergency goals, which are to:

1. Protect life safety;
2. Secure critical infrastructures and facilities;
3. Resume the teaching and research program.

Although inclement weather situations may not be considered crises, many of the same goals will apply and some of the same procedures will be followed. Appendix A contains further information.

PURPOSES

- To outline the roles, responsibilities and protocols that will guide the university in sharing information with all of Marshall’s audiences during an emergency crisis.

- To communicate facts as quickly as possible, updating information regularly as circumstances change, to ensure the safety of the Marshall University community and the continued operation of essential services. Honesty and speed are important as we strive to avoid lasting damage to the university and widespread second-guessing by the public, which expects immediate access to accurate information. At the same time, people expect us to know more than we may actually know. That makes it important to speak with accuracy about what we know and not to speculate about details we do not have.
**SCOPE**

This plan covers the procedures that university personnel will follow in order to notify key university constituencies (primarily students, faculty, staff and news media) about events that affect them. It is mainly concerned with the university’s Huntington campus. Other locations, such as the South Charleston campus, the School of Medicine, and other educational centers have their own plans, although many at these locations will receive these communications.

This plan is a supplement to the university’s overall Emergency Management Plan, and provides more specific detail regarding the communication procedures.

**PROCEDURES**

Given the urgency of rapid communications, we likely will need to take action quickly. And, given the requirements of the Clery Act, the action must be prompt. We must quickly determine the level of the event, then take action.

The primary role of the Marshall University Communications office in the event of a crisis at or near the campus is to gather the facts, assemble them into a coherent message and deliver that message to the campus community and, when necessary, the community and region at large.

**First response**

When a crisis, situation or event occurs, it is the responsibility of each member of the campus community to report the event to 911 immediately.

In a life-threatening or other serious situation where time is of the essence, the Marshall University Police Department has the right and responsibility to use the MU Alert system to report the situation to the university community. (Note: This will probably be a rare occurrence. Not all of the members of MUPD
have access to the system. If the officers on duty need to make a call, it should go directly to the Senior Vice President for Communications and Marketing.)

If time permits, MUPD should contact the Senior Vice President for Communications and Marketing (SVPCM), who will invoke the crisis communication procedures and serve as chief spokesperson for the university. Similarly, if the circumstances of the situation dictate that action be taken at once, the SVPCM may take action before convening the warning/public information group.

Next steps

At the earliest possible time, the SVPCM will consult with the rest of the Warning/Public Information Group, as described in the Emergency Management Plan.

All facts about the event should be directed to the University Communications staff so that a single, coherent message will be given out. It should be reported as soon as possible, but all efforts must be made to ensure the message is factual.

If the event is a situation covered by the Clery Act, a “timely warning” must be sent at the earliest opportunity. The Clery Act requires situations that pose a serious or ongoing threat to students and employees be reported. A list of these possible situations is contained in Appendix B; the Executive Group, as defined in the Emergency Management Plan, will decide if a Clery notification needs to be made.

The information about the event should be given to the local news media outlets, which include, radio, TV and newspapers. Also, it should be posted on any university-sponsored social media outlets. (Note: a detailed set of steps for University Communications personnel is contained in Appendix B.) In all situations it is important to get as much factual information to the public as quickly as possible; this will help dispel rumors from spreading and causing panic.

If the situation is ongoing, a central communications location will be established as a place when facts can be reported and regular news briefings will be conducted. First choice of such a location would be in the Memorial Student Center (possibly the Don Morris Room). If the location needs to be moved off campus, the RCBI location in downtown Huntington (1050 Fourth Avenue) may be used as an alternate.

For ongoing situations, a toll-free phone line should be established so students, parents and the general public can receive updates to the situation. Again, this will help dispel rumors and will get the facts of the situation to the public quickly.

**POST-CRISIS EVENT EVALUATION (LEVELS 2 AND 3)**

Following the resolution of the crisis, the Senior Vice President for Communications and Marketing will convene the University Communications team in a timely manner to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the response. A survey of Emergency team members, field operations centers and
other campus constituents may be conducted to aid in the evaluation. A report will be prepared and submitted to the appropriate person(s) as soon as possible after the termination of the crisis phase. The report should assess the university’s handling of the situation, make recommendations to streamline and improve its procedures, and evaluate communication tools. The report should include:

- Overall combined efforts of all involved agencies and departments
- Any deficiencies observed
- Recommended actions that should be taken to improve effectiveness
- Evaluate effort and report; consider updates/changes to crisis plan
- Report findings and observations, evaluate media coverage and any follow-up activities as needed.
- Conduct debriefing of involved persons within 3-4 days after the resolution of the crisis
- Assess the situation to determine the need for post-crisis interventions for staff, students and families
- Debrief information technology, Web and social media staff and made fixes/improvements as recommended.
- Create a transcript, log of events and a timeline of the events.
Procedures for Inclement Weather

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON WEATHER (ACOW) COMMITTEE

- President
- Provost
- Chief of Staff/SVP for Operations
- SVP for Communications and Marketing
- Chief of Police
- Director of South Charleston Operations

5 a.m. – Begin review of road conditions
5:30 a.m. - Conference Call (convened by Chief of Staff)

ORDER OF NOTIFICATION

1. Put notice on front of website.

2. Blackboard Connect
   a. Text
   b. Email
   c. Phone
   d. Twitter (check to ensure feed works)
   e. Facebook (check to ensure feed works)

3. Facebook account update with message
4. Twitter account update with message
5. Media notifications
APPENDIX B

Statistics for the following types of crimes must be kept, according to the Clery Act. In addition, events in these categories must be reported in a timely manner to the university community if a continued threat is determined to exist.

1. Criminal Homicide.
   a. Murder & Nonnegligent manslaughter
   b. Negligent manslaughter
2. Sex Offenses
   a. Forcible
   b. Non-Forcible
3. Robbery
4. Aggravated Assault
5. Burglary, where:
   a. There is evidence of unlawful entry (trespass), which may be either forcible or not involve force.
   b. Unlawful entry must be of a structure - having four walls, a roof, and a door.
   c. There is evidence that the entry was made in order to commit a felony or theft.
6. Motor Vehicle Theft
7. Arson

Schools are also required to report statistics for the following categories of arrests or referrals for campus disciplinary action (if an arrest was not made):

1. Liquor Law Violations
2. Drug Law Violations
3. Illegal Weapons Possession

Hate crimes must be reported by category of prejudice, including race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and disability. Statistics are also required for four additional crime categories if the crime committed is classified as a hate crime:

1. Larceny/Theft
2. Simple Assault
3. Intimidation
4. Destruction/Damage/Vandalism of Property

Source: Clery Center website (http://clerycenter.org/summary-jeanne-clery-act)
APPENDIX C

Emergency/Closing Notifications: Detailed Instructions

- **MU Alert**
  Log on at [www.blackboardconnect.com](http://www.blackboardconnect.com)
  Click on “Message Center,” then the box for “Emergency”
  Select template (Emergency Message MARSHALL UNIVERSITY is for all methods; there is also a template for email and text only)

For the template for all methods:

- Select Emergency Message MARSHALL UNIVERSITY (make sure it is not the one for the med school)
- Enter a new title (instead of Campus Closing or Similar Situation)
- Click on the box labeled “To”
- In the box labeled “Select by:” choose “Destinations”
- Check the boxes for Facebook (Marshall University) and Twitter (marshallu)
- Click “Done” in the lower right hand corner of the page. This will take you back to the message in progress; you’ll note that it will now show Recipients, Facebook, and Twitter in the “To” box.
- First, you’ll enter the phone message. Scroll down to Text to Speech. Type the body of the message. (Note: if you want to refer to MU, be sure to type it with a space so the system doesn’t say “Moo.”)
- Next, click on the email icon under Delivery Modes. Enter the subject line and the body of the message.
- Next, click on the SMS (text) icon. Enter the text (limit of 140 characters; the system will tell you when you have exceeded this).
- In a similar manner, click on the Facebook and Twitter icons in turn and enter the message. The SMS message will probably work for these as well.
- When all of the messages have been entered, check the time zone and check “Now” under “When.”
- It’s probably a good idea to save it as a draft; then click “Next.”
- Depending on the time, you may get a message asking you to confirm that you want to send at an early or late hour. You’ll also be asked to confirm that you wish to send to the entire list (more than 75%). Check the appropriate boxes and click “Send.”

For the template for e-mail and text only (recommended for late-night or early-morning messaging):

- Select e-mail and text only MARSHALL UNIVERSITY (make sure it is not the one for the med school)
- Enter a new title (instead of Campus Closing or Similar Situation)
Click on the box labeled “To”
To add Twitter and Facebook, in the box labeled “Select by:” choose “Destinations”
  o Check the boxes for Facebook (Marshall University) and Twitter (marshallu), if desired.
  o Click “Done” in the lower right hand corner of the page. This will take you back to the message in progress; you’ll note that it will now show Recipients, Facebook, and Twitter in the “To” box if you have selected those.
Do not enter a phone message. Click on the email icon under Delivery Modes. Enter the subject line and the body of the message.
Next, click on the SMS (text) icon. Enter the text (limit of 140 characters; the system will tell you when you have exceeded this).
In a similar manner, click on the Facebook and Twitter icons in turn if you are sending to them and enter the message. The SMS message will probably work for these as well.
When all of the messages have been entered, check the time zone and check “Now” under “When.”
It’s probably a good idea to save it as a draft; then click “Next.”
Depending on the time, you may get a message asking you to confirm that you want to send at an early or late hour. You’ll also be asked to confirm that you wish to send to the entire list (more than 75%). Check the appropriate boxes and click “Send.”

Main Marshall web page
Enter a new release and force it to the front page.

Log in to www.marshall.edu/pressrelease (with your regular MU ID and password)
In the left column, click on “Add a new Press Release.” The screen defaults to today’s date and Dave Wellman’s contact information, but can be changed as necessary.
Add text for the headline, an excerpt (which will appear on the front page), and the full release content.
Add an expiration date for the release.
Select “Yes” for “Force this item to stay active on the frontpage?”
Click on Add Press Release.
Be sure to click on “Flush News Cache” under “Front Page Tasks” on the menu at the left.

Also, add a front page alert if needed:

In the left column, click on “Front Page Alert.”
In the next screen, click on “Add an alert to the front page.”
Enter the text and click “Add Alert.”
• **Send press release to media (if needed)**
  
  • Prepare release in a new e-mail.
  • E-mail to marshall-news-list@lists.marshall.edu

• **If needed, send a student and/or All Exchange Users e-mail message:**

  • Prepare text in a new e-mail.
  • Add the following footer to the message, replacing the dummy text with the message requester’s information. In the case of emergency messages, the President’s Office is often listed as the requester, with no contact information.

    Unauthorized mass e-mail is a violation of the [University Acceptable Use Policy](#).
    This e-mail has been forwarded at the request of Some One, 304-696-xxxx.

  • Change the “From” text to ucomm-noreply@marshall.edu (Note: if you don’t do this, you may get an error indicating that you can’t send to the list in the step below.)
  • Under the options, click on “Direct Replies To” and under Delivery Options, change your name to “University Communications Announcements”
  • Click on “Close.”
  • In the “To” box, enter either “IDM-ALL_REGISTERED_STUDENTS”, “AllExchangeUsers,” or both.
  • Send the message.

• **To Do Late in the Day of (after 9 p.m.)**

  Remove news release from front Web page as well as front page alert, if applicable.