

NUMBER: EM 1.00

SECTION: Emergency Management

SUBJECT: Emergency Notification System Policy

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Policy for: Columbia Campus

Procedure for: Columbia Campus

Authorized by: Senior Vice President for Administration and Chief Operating Officer

Issued by: Emergency Management

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## I. Purpose

Per the Higher Education Opportunity Act, the University of South Carolina will “immediately notify the campus community upon confirmation of an emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or employees occurring on campus.”

Some examples of emergencies or dangerous situations may include:

- Outbreak of meningitis, norovirus or other serious illness
- Approaching tornado, hurricane or other extreme weather conditions
- Earthquake
- Terrorist incident
- Gas leak
- Armed intruder
- Detected explosive device
- Civil unrest or rioting
- Explosion
- Chemical or hazardous waste spill

In addition, each institution shall, “Make timely reports to the campus community on crimes considered to be a threat to other students and employees...that are reported to campus security or local law enforcement agencies.” Such reports shall be provided to students and employees in a manner that is timely and that will aid in the prevention of similar occurrences.

## II. Policy

This document establishes the policy that governs emergency notifications and timely warnings for the University of South Carolina Columbia.

A. Activation Authority (Life Safety)

It is the responsibility of the following authorized persons to confirm an emergency, determine the appropriate segment(s) of the campus community to receive a notification, determine the content of the message, and initiate the selected communication media within the Carolina Alert emergency notification system.

These personnel will, without delay and taking into account the safety of the community, activate the notification system, unless issuing a notification will, in the professional judgment of responsible authorities, compromise efforts to assist a victim or to contain, respond to or otherwise mitigate the emergency.

1. If a significant emergency or dangerous situation exists on campus, one of the following individuals should be notified to initiate the Carolina Alert system.
  - a. On-Duty Supervisor, University of South Carolina Division of Law Enforcement and Safety (DLES)
  - b. Emergency Management Coordinator, DLES
  - c. Officer with the rank of Lieutenant or above, DLES
  - d. Deputy Chief of Police, DLES
  - e. Chief of Police, DLES
  - f. Chairperson, Executive Policy Group
2. **As practical without jeopardizing life safety**, the authorized individuals (or their designees) shall consult the next person on the list prior to emergency message dissemination. However if an individual is unavailable, or time does not allow for a delayed warning, subsequent approval is not necessary.
3. All DLES personnel may be contacted 24/7 via the telecommunications center at (803) 777-4215.

B. Confirmation of an Emergency

1. If the person(s) authorized to send a message has not confirmed the emergency first-hand they will contact the University of South Carolina Division of Law Enforcement and Safety on-duty shift supervisor to receive an update regarding the current situation. If applicable, they also may choose to contact the surrounding city or county law enforcement or emergency response agencies for information.

2. If sending a notification of a confirmed emergency or dangerous situation compromises the efforts to: assist a victim, contain the emergency, respond to the emergency, or otherwise mitigate the emergency, a notification is not required to be sent.

C. Determine the Appropriate Segment of Campus to Receive a Notification

1. The entire campus community may be notified when there is at least the potential that a very large segment of the community will be affected by the situation, or when the situation threatens the operation of the campus as a whole.
2. If an emergency condition exists, but is isolated to a specific part of the campus, notifications may be made to that specific area instead of notifying the entire campus community.
3. As the incident progresses, personnel will continually assess the situation and additional segments of the campus community may be notified if a situation warrants such action.

D. Available Communication Media

The following is a list of communication media the University may have at its disposal for the timely dissemination of emergency notification.

1. [www.sc.edu/CarolinaAlert](http://www.sc.edu/CarolinaAlert) Website
2. RSS Feed
  - a. Click <http://www.sc.edu/portal2/rssfeeds/alertblog.xml> to sign up to receive automatic updates from the Carolina Alert website via RSS.
3. Facebook™
  - a. Facebook users can join the Carolina Alert Facebook page by visiting [www.facebook.com/carolinaalert](http://www.facebook.com/carolinaalert) and clicking the "Like" button.
4. Twitter™
  - a. Twitter users can follow Carolina Alert tweets by visiting [www.twitter.com/carolinaalert](http://www.twitter.com/carolinaalert) and clicking the "Follow" button.
5. [www.sc.edu](http://www.sc.edu) Website
6. Outdoor Warning Sirens

- a. Tone Alert Radios
- 7. Voice Over Fire Alarms
- 8. Digital Signage
- 9. Alert FM
- 10. Text Messages
  - a. To register to receive text messages, University students can log into [my.sc.edu](http://my.sc.edu). They will be presented with a series of screens to update their contact information.
  - b. To register to receive text messages, University faculty and staff can log into [VIP \(vip.sc.edu\)](http://vip.vip.sc.edu). They will be presented with a series of screens to update their contact information.
- 11. E-mail
- 12. Send Word Now
- 13. Conference Call
- 14. Television Message Crawler
- 15. 90.5 WUSC Radio
- 16. Blackboard Announcement
- 17. Fire Alarm
- 18. Vehicle Public Address Speakers
- 19. Bullhorns
- 20. Media Advisory

This list does not imply that all media will be used for every notification. Every incident is unique; therefore different communication media will be activated based on their reach, effectiveness and location. The following circumstances are outlined to provide guidance to authorized personnel when selecting communication media, and to provide the community an understanding as to which forms of communication may be used in various scenarios.

**Requires Action:** If a situation exists that poses an immediate risk to life safety and requires persons to change their behavior (i.e. seek shelter, evacuate, etc.), information

may be pushed using disruptive media (i.e. sirens, AlertFM, text messages, TV message crawler, etc.).

**Public Notification:** If a situation exists where persons should be notified about an incident that is not immediately life threatening (i.e. crime bulletins, situations that have already been contained, etc.), media such as the Carolina Alert website, social media, or select others may be used to communicate the information.

E. Determine the Message Content

1. The persons authorized to send a message have a number of pre-scripted, pre-approved messages from which to choose. However, if there is no pre-approved script for an incident, **as practical without jeopardizing life safety**, the person authorizing the activation should consult the Office of Communications and Public Affairs for content consideration.

F. Initiate the Notification System

1. Once the authorized person has confirmed the emergency, selected the areas of campus that need to be notified, chosen the appropriate communication media to use, and determined the content of the message, they will call the personnel responsible for physically activating each individual communication medium.
2. Each communication medium listed in Section II.D has a department responsible for physically activating the system. These responsible departments are listed below.
  - a. Division of Law Enforcement and Safety: On-duty dispatch
    - i. Outdoor warning sirens
    - ii. Tone alert radios
    - iii. Voice over fire alarm
    - iv. Fire alarm
    - v. Vehicle public address system
    - vi. Bullhorns
  - b. Division of Law Enforcement and Safety: Emergency Management Coordinator
    - i. Carolina Alert website ([www.sc.edu/carolinaalert](http://www.sc.edu/carolinaalert))
    - ii. RSS Feed
    - iii. Facebook
    - iv. Twitter
    - v. AlertFM
    - vi. Text messages
    - vii. Email
  - c. University Technology Services: On-call technician
    - i. Digital signage

- ii. Television message crawler
- iii. Blackboard announcement

- d. Office of Communications and Public Affairs: Public Information Officer
  - i. University of South Carolina home page ([www.sc.edu](http://www.sc.edu))
  - ii. Media advisory
  - iii. [www.sc.edu](http://www.sc.edu) Homepage and Internal Banners
- e. Student Media: Director
  - i. 90.5 WUSC Radio

#### G. Disseminating Information to the Larger Community

- 1. If a dangerous situation exists on campus that has the potential to affect the surrounding Columbia community, the person who authorized the alert will notify DLES dispatch to call Columbia –Richland 9-1-1 Communications Center, or the appropriate authority dependent on the nature and type of emergency, to make the determination to initiate its community notification process.

#### H. Follow-Up Communication

- 1. Once a mass notification is issued, the person who authorized the notification should contact the Office of Communications and Public Affairs, and the EMT Executive Policy Group as soon as possible.
- 2. The initial notification should be followed by a subsequent message(s) that provides greater detail of the incident and/or protective action recommendations. If the incident requires an extended response time, subsequent information releases should be done so at the discretion of the University Public Information Officer or designee.

#### I. Reporting an Emergency

To report a crime, emergency or suspicious activity on campus:

- 1. Call 911 (in an emergency)
- 2. Call 777-4215 (non-emergency)
- 3. Activate one of the emergency call boxes around campus
- 4. To remain anonymous, use Crime Stoppers. Call 1-800- CRIME-SC or text TIPSC & your message to CRIMES (274637).
  - a. The Division of Law Enforcement and Safety may not investigate an issue based solely upon anonymous reports.

5. To remain anonymous, utilize the Rave Guardian app, downloadable to any smartphone or tablet through [les.sc.edu/crime-prevention-and-safety-resources/mobile-safety-app/](http://les.sc.edu/crime-prevention-and-safety-resources/mobile-safety-app/).
  - a. The Division of Law Enforcement and Safety may not investigate an issue based solely upon anonymous reports.

J. Emergency Notification Tests

1. The Carolina Alert System should be tested at least once a year to ensure the system is operational and to introduce members of the Carolina community to the methods in which they can receive notifications during an emergency.
2. A summary of the University's emergency response and evacuation procedures should be distributed in conjunction with at least one calendar test per year.
3. After each test or activation of the Carolina Alert system, a brief after action report should be written to evaluate the event against measurable goals. This document should include: purpose, date / time, whether the test was announced or unannounced, participants, description, successes, shortcomings and corrective action recommendations.

K. Timely Warning (Crime Bulletin)

1. The University of South Carolina will, "Make timely reports to the campus community on crimes considered to be a threat to other students and employees...that are reported to campus security or local law police agencies," when it may aid in the prevention of similar occurrences.
  - a. This includes:
    1. Murder and non-negligent manslaughter
    2. Negligent manslaughter
    3. Sex offenses (forcible & non-forcible)
    4. Robbery
    5. Aggravated assault
    6. Burglary
    7. Motor vehicle theft
    8. Arson
  - a. The University is not required to provide a notification for non-Clery crimes; however warnings (crime bulletins) may be sent for other safety issues at its discretion.
  - b. The University is not required to issue a notification for crimes reported to pastoral or professional counselors.

2. When issuing a timely notification (crime bulletins), the University will consider the following factors surrounding the crime:
  - a. The nature of the crime
  - b. The continuing danger to the campus community
  - c. The possible risk of compromising law enforcement efforts.
3. When determining the content of the message, the University should include as many available details as possible, including:
  - a. Type of alert
  - b. Location
  - c. Suspect(s) description
  - d. Incident summary
  - e. Any information that promotes safety and aids in the prevention of similar crimes.
4. Personally identifiable information is generally precluded from disclosure. However, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) does not preclude the University's compliance with the timely warning provision.
  - a. FERPA recognizes that information can, in case of emergency, be released without consent when needed to protect the health and safety of others.
  - b. In addition, if the University utilizes information from the records of a campus law enforcement unit to issue a timely warning, FERPA is not implicated as those are not records protected by FERPA.
5. The University may send timely warnings (crime bulletins) by various communication media including: posting information on the Division of Law Enforcement and Safety website, Carolina Alert website, Carolina Alert RSS feed, Carolina Alert social media or by sending the message via University email.
6. The Chief of Police or his/her designee will be the person responsible for authorizing and issuing timely notifications on behalf of the University.

### III. Related Policies

See also:  
UNIV 3.00 Emergency Management Team



IV. Reason for Revision

To update titles and methods of reporting an emergency.