

Moving Towards Effective Emergency Communication

A DISCUSSION OF BEST PRACTICES IN
COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS, PARENTS,
AND MEDIA IN AN EFFECTIVE MANNER.



My Experience

Crisis Team / Emergency Management

Title IX

Clery Compliance

Police Use of Force Instructor

Adjunct Faculty – Citizen self-defense

Communication is Key

- The way your organization responds to and recovers from a crisis will hinge on communication during the incident
- Strengths and weaknesses in your organization's routine communication may be magnified in an emergency

Emergency Communication

- Emergency Messaging
- Target Audience
- Everyday Communication
- Communication in Training
- Lessons Learned

Emergency Communication

- Shelter in Place
 - Lockdown
 - Run Hide Fight
 - ALICE
 - ALERT
 - LEWIS
- Evacuation
 - Campus Closure
 - Hazardous Materials
 - Bomb Threat
 - Fire

Layered Communication

- Are you using multiple means?
- Does your communication plan include options from lowest tech to highest tech?
- Does your communication carry over to social media?



U of I Police  @UIPD · Apr 25

We have not received any reports of battery incidents tonight on campus. We have officers patrolling the areas involved in the rumors that have been circulating, but officers have not observed any suspicious activity.

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Target Audience

- Can you reach multiple groups with the same messaging?
 - Initial message should be broad reaching
 - Follow-up messaging should be specific
- Does the language you are using reach everyone?
 - Language
 - Word Choice

Target Audience

- How much of your target audience is looking for information on
 - Your web-site
 - Your social media accounts
 - ✦ Department accounts
 - ✦ Institutional accounts
 - Retweet – repost
 - Original content



Target Audience

- Two way information
 - You may be receiving information through social media that is not coming in any other way.
 - In all our training we push calling our dispatch center.
 - ✦ Students especially will do what is easiest
 - ✦ Emergency messages over text? Messenger?



Target Audience



Hey Grace! We just want to let you know that we received your message, and will get back to you as soon as possible. If this is an emergency, or if you require immediate assistance, please call us directly at 312-329-HELP (4357)!

Hey wanted to let you guys know that this door on Chicago Ave is open.

There is no one monitoring it.



Target Audience

11/8/14, 12:46 AM

I tried to call and the call wouldn't go through. On the corner of Chicago and wells there was an escalated argument between a female and male. Both about mid twenties, Mexican. The male seemed like he was close to getting physical



They turned the corner and proceeded on chicago toward LaSalle...I lost sight after that

Dekota, thanks for the info. In the future, if it appears someone may be in danger, we encourage you to call 911.

Are you saying that you tried to call Public Safety and the call didn't go through? Do you know what number you tried, because we'd like to look into that.



1 (312) 329-4357 that's the number I tried I was given this at the beginning of school year



11/11/14, 8:38 AM

Are you able to try the number again? I really want to make sure this works for you in the future if needed. If it doesn't work, please give me the details about what's happening.



Target Audience



How do we sign up for the mass text alerts? I can't find any info on it anywhere! Thank you!

Andrew, the preferred way for students and employees to sign up for Moody alert is to email Public Safety @ public.safety@moody.edu. In the subject line type: Opt-in Moody Alert. The provide you full name, ID number, and contact information (cell phone, emails). Also indicate which buildings on campus you're interested in receiving messages for. If you have any additional questions don't hesitate to message us.
Chief Stoffer



Target Audience

- Pre-scripted messages
- Does your system allow you to store templates?
 - Do you have templates for a variety of situations?
 - Have they been updated in the last three years?

Routine Communications

- Does your organization communicate well on a daily basis? Great!
- What does the conversation look like regarding routine communication?
 - “We don’t have the resources to address everything”
 - “Let's just hope no one asks“
 - “How vague can we be?”
 - “If we put out a memo, won't we bring more attention to this matter?”
 - “If we put something in writing then are we bound to it?”

Routine Communications

- “You can never over-communicate”
 - In a crisis, I agree
 - Use caution to desensitize your audience
 - ✦ The Newsletter effect

Routine Communications

- How involved is your organization's Public Relations team/person in crafting emergency messaging?

Routine Communication

- Do not fear social media – Know it, Leverage it.
 - Are the internet trolls keeping you away?
- If information is missing, they will go to social media to fill in the gaps.

Routine Communication

- Departments have recently taken social media by storm.
 - Illinois State Police – Trooper Tracy
 - Building their audience



Training Emergency Communication

- Annual All Hazards Training
 - Is communications part of this? It should be an integral part
 - I have a fun exercise for you
 - ✦ Give them the answer, the initial message
 - ✦ Do some other training
 - ✦ Ask the question during a scenario or table top
 - At some point during the exercise, require that your group create an initial message

Training Emergency Communications

- Is your staff getting experience making public address announcements during annual evacuation drills?
- Are you testing your messaging capabilities during lockdown? Run Hide Fight
 - Initial message – Update message – All Clear

Training Emergency Communications

- September 2019 drill – excellent feedback from a student - “Right when I started to wonder how much longer this would last, I received your update message”

Lessons Learned

- Are you working isolated or are you learning from other organizations?
- Opportunities to hear from those involved
- Read FBI and after-action reports
 - Look for emergency communication successes and failures

Lessons Learns

- **Aurora Colorado Theatre Shooting**
 - Emergency Communications issues between police and fire
 - Poor relationships leading up to the incident
 - Assuming all your relationships are not perfect, can you identify areas that may create problems in an emergency?
- **Naval Yard**
 - Interagency communications issues
 - Navy released victim hospital locations – against local PD’s policy
 - ✦ Lack of unified command
 - ✦ If you have MOUs, does it involve communications?
- **Florida State University - Strozier Library**
 - Chief David Perry learned about the shooter when he received the emergency alert that everyone else received
 - Where does the authority lie in your organization to disseminate emergency messages?



Lessons Learned

- Northern Illinois Shooting
 - Treat the media as a partner
- Virginia Tech – Student survivor
 - Valuable perspective
- Sandy Hook Parent
 - Custodian walking the halls yelling “lock-down”
 - Low tech because high tech was not feasible
 - Admittedly, Sandy Hook had the high tech
 - The school district did not clarify the location

Lessons Learned

- High rise building fire at Moody
 - Aug 2010
 - Setup emergency telephone bank
 - Displaced residents, daily update meetings for weeks following the incident
 - Incident Command

Emergency Communications

Questions?

Thank you for your time
and attention!

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