

# West Virginia University Emergency Alert System Use and Protocols

2/10/2015

## 1. Purpose

The WVU Alert System comprises several components intended to improve emergency communications between the University's Emergency Services/Administration and our students, staff, faculty and visitors. This document will establish the protocols that are to be taken in order to promote the safety of everyone on campus. The Alert System includes:

- Text / electronic messaging
- UPD and WVU social media accounts (e.g. Twitter@WVUToday and @WVUPD; Facebook, WestVirginiaU) and other technologies as may be deployed in the future.
- WVUToday (University news site)
- E-News (faculty and staff)
- MIX (student email system)
- Info stations (Campus digital signs)
- LiveSafe Mobile Application
- Campus & local television and radio
- Mobile public address systems (UPD vehicles)
- Phone trees in buildings
- Parents Club, if appropriate

## 2. Agencies and Responsibilities

DECISION TO ACTIVATE- WVU Alert System - University Police Department shall make the decision to activate the Alert System. This decision to activate the alert system will be based on factual information at the time the decision is made and will be based on imminent threat to the campus community.

Imminent threat is evidence that an incident is likely to impact the campus versus a potential risk to the campus. Potential risks are incident that present no immediate threat to campus, but might in the future. Potential risks will be reviewed and monitored. If deemed appropriate they will be communicated via other communication vehicles and should they become imminent threats, an alert message can be sent. The location of the specific incident is not the trigger, but rather the threat to campus. The system will be activated when incidents are confirmed to include holidays and other breaks. It will also be the responsibility of UPD to conduct drills at different times of day and different

days of the week including weekends (see section 5 below). As necessary, after review of the drills, UPD shall hold quality improvement meetings with appropriate campus departments and agencies.

### **3. Acceptable Use of the Emergency Alert System**

The University Alert System may be activated within the acceptable use criteria listed below based on the imminent peril to our campus and facts known at the time.

Warnings and instructions related to emergency conditions:

- Bomb Threat – There is intelligence to indicate the threat is credible (e.g. credible information or a potential device has been located).
- Shots Fired or Active Shooter suspects are at large and present an imminent threat. May include BOLO – Be on the Look Out messages with descriptions.
- Civil Disturbance – A demonstration by a large group that is disrupting normal activities and/or showing signs of aggressive behavior.
- Fire – Any fire that is potentially placing lives in danger.
- Hazardous Material Release – A dangerous material (i.e. chemical, biological, or radiological) that is spreading from a contained area and/or potentially causing lives to be placed in danger.
- Medical Emergency – Confirmed contagious disease constituting a campus wide threat (i.e. pandemic)
- Physical Assault – Weapons used, significant violence, perpetrator(s) at large and presents an imminent threat (e.g. stabbings, robbery, hostage situation)
- Utility Failure – A major disruption of utilities and or possible damage (i.e. gas, electrical, water, etc.)
- Environmental Disaster/Severe Weather – Any severe weather that has the potential to cause injury to lives or property (i.e. flooding, thunderstorm, wind, tornado, snow/ice/cold, etc.)
- Missing Person – If activation of the system has the potential to assist in locating the missing person. Alert for this type of incident shall be limited to the communication devices most appropriate for disseminating information.
- Other Life Threatening – Any other condition where lives are in imminent threat.

- “All Clear” and/or additional follow-up messages pertaining to end-of-event. For example: When an alert has been issued due to a potentially severe storm in the area, an “All Clear” message could be sent when the danger has passed.
- General notifications of a non-emergency nature shall NOT be sent via the Alert System.

For off-campus incidents, in the city and county, the system may be utilized for shooting and robbery incidents where the suspect is still at large and an imminent threat exists to the campus community. This will include incidents reported to the UPD through the local 911 center. Other alerts will be on a case-by-case basis as determined by the UPD, such as sexual assaults or burglaries, if an imminent threat is determined to exist.

Other incidents may be released through the UPD social media sites as information is provided by local police agencies.

Timely warnings for Clery Act Crimes will be distributed through the University Relations - News.

#### **4. Activation of the Alert System**

In order to activate the Alert System the following procedures shall take place:

- Emergency situations
- When a dangerous situation that represents an imminent threat to campus is identified by any member of the campus community, University Police must be immediately notified by calling 9-911 (from a campus phone) or 304-293-2677.
- Upon receiving notification of an imminent threat situation requiring the use of the Alert System, UPD Communication Center, in addition to following standard dispatch policies, shall immediately notify a member of the UPD Command Staff (i.e. Chief or an Assistant Chief). If the situation dictates, send the message and then inform.
- The chief shall be informed of the situation and the possible need to activate the Alert System when time permits. If the situation dictates, send the message and then inform.
- Any member of the UPD Command Staff shall be authorized to initiate the Alert System
- The UPD Command Staff member may seek input from any necessary and credible source to gather information in order to help in making the decision to activate the system. Likely

sources of information include, but are not limited to, University senior administration, Facility Departments,, Environmental Health & Safety, Student Life, Human Resources, University Relations, and local agencies, Office of Emergency Services (OES), etc.

- Upon determining the need to activate the Emergency Alert System, the UPD Command Staff member shall instruct the Communication Center officer to send the appropriate message from pre-approved templates.
- When practical and reasonable, all Emergency Alert System devices shall be activated together or within minutes of each other, if deemed necessary.
- For off-campus incidents, the UPD is dependent on notification from the 911 Center or other local agencies and shall confirm the incident prior to sending the alert.
- UPD vehicles– The use of vehicle PA systems will be deployed only when other methods have failed.

## 5. Drills

- Drills shall be conducted as often as UPD administration finds appropriate in order to ensure that the system is effective and operational. The drills shall serve as a functional test of the systems, as well as an educational tool for the University community. There are two types of tests, an administrative test and a functional test that may be done together or separately.
- Administrative test — will test how much time it takes to get emergency information from the communication officer or senior ranking police officer to the UPD administration (Command Staff) and from them, back to the communications officer. These tests may be announce or unannounced.
- Functional test — will test the Alert System by activating WVU alert message system and notifying students, staff, and faculty of the test and providing information regarding what to do if this had been an actual emergency.
- Following the administrative and functional test the UPD administration will meet and review the process and protocols.

## 6. Registration

- Currently, WVU automatically enrolls students into the text messaging system and employees may sign up for free.

## **7. Education**

- New students and families will be educated about the Alert System during New Student Orientation. A representative from UPD will present information regarding the Alert System program and explain the importance of this system to the new incoming students and their families.
- Information will be shared with families at New Student Orientation, the parent handbook, newsletter, parent electronic news messages, the website and via social media.
- In order to educate the existing students, faculty, and staff, various departments shall use all appropriate methods to communication with the staff and faculty.