Emergency Notification, Response and Evacuation

Policy Type: Board of Visitors
Responsible Office: Virginia Commonwealth University Police Department
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Policy Statement and Purpose

It is the responsibility of the Vice President for Finance and Administration and the VCU Police Department, in consultation with the Vice President, Division of University Relations to provide the University community, without delay, emergency notification and response upon confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or employees occurring on the VCU campuses.

To outline a process for prompt emergency notification, response and potential evacuation upon confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or employees occurring on the VCU campuses.

Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

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Who Should Know This Policy

VCU Students, Faculty and Staff

Definitions

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act)
This Act is a federal statute codified at 20 U.S.C. § 1092(f), with implementing regulations in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations at 34 C.F.R. 668.46.

The Clery Act requires all colleges and universities that participate in federal financial aid programs to keep and disclose information about crime on and near their respective campuses. Compliance is monitored by the United States Department of Education, which can impose civil penalties, up to $35,000 per violation, against institutions for each infraction and can suspend institutions from participating in federal student financial aid programs. Additionally, the Clery Act requires timely notification to campus members in response to a significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or employees occurring on campus.

Contacts

The Vice President for Finance and Administration, the Chief of the VCU Police Department, and the Vice President, Division of University Relations officially interpret this policy. The Vice President for Finance and Administration, the Chief of the VCU Police Department, and the Vice President, Division of University Relations are responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by the policy Creating and Maintaining Policies and Procedures through the appropriate governance structures. Please direct policy questions to VCU Police Department.

Procedures

Emergency notification, response and evacuation

In accordance with the University’s Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), University officials will coordinate the emergency notification, response and evacuation of the community, as needed, in the event of an emergency. The activation and use of the Incident Coordination Team (ICT) will be based on the facts and circumstances present and known by senior leadership. These officials will also test the emergency response and evacuation procedures annually and publicize them throughout the community. Individuals who are responsible for carrying out these procedures include, but are not limited to the:
• Vice President for Finance and Administration (Incident Commander under the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan)
• Chief of Police and the VCU Police Department
• Associate Vice President for Facilities Management

Activation of the emergency notification system will occur immediately upon confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation occurring on VCU’s campuses involving an immediate threat to the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff, so that they may take reasonable precautions for their safety. The decision is made by the Chief of Police.

In situations where the Chief of Police is not available, or where any delay to brief these officials would significantly increase the risk to the VCU community, the on-duty Police supervisor is authorized to develop a message and activate the components of the emergency notification system (with exception of the email and website components).

Notification and response processes

Since an emergency may be sudden and without warning, these procedures are designed to be flexible in order to accommodate facts, institutional needs and other contingencies of various types and magnitudes and to allow a response in a manner designed to protect the VCU community. The VCU Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan addresses several types of potential emergencies with respective Response Plans and Unit Plans.

1. The VCU Police Department is responsible for responding to incidents and confirming that a significant emergency or dangerous situation is occurring or is imminent on VCU’s campuses which constitute an immediate threat to the health and safety of students, faculty, staff and visitors.
2. The decision to activate the emergency notification system will be made by the Chief of Police.
3. Each emergency notification will include:
   a. Specific information about the nature of the incident/threat;
   b. Directions about how faculty, staff, students and visitors should respond to the threat;
   c. Details on what to do to get additional information.
4. In situations where the Chief of Police is unavailable, or where any delay would significantly increase the risk to the VCU community, the on-duty Police supervisor is authorized to develop a message and activate the text message system.
5. As soon as practicable, the on-duty Police supervisor will notify the Chief of Police, who will brief the Vice President for Finance and Administration.
6. After reviewing the emergency situation, the Vice President for Finance and Administration (acting as Incident Commander) will decide whether to declare an emergency and activate VCU’s Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. A determination will be made regarding the level of the emergency declared.
7. Officials from VCU Police and/or University Relations will provide regular follow-up information to the community, as needed.

VCU emergency notification system
VCU’s emergency notification system includes the multiple, redundant communications channels. Full tests of the system are conducted at the beginning of each semester to orient campus personnel to the siren system. Communications channels include:

- **Outdoor Siren System** - Ten sirens are located strategically on the Monroe Park Campus and MCV Campus. Tests of the sirens are performed monthly.
- **VCU Alert Website** at [alert.vc.edu](http://alert.vc.edu) is updated regularly with information and instructions about how to respond in an emergency situation. This link can also be accessed from the University’s website homepage.
- **ALERTUS** devices are in all classrooms that house more than 20 students and high volume areas transmit audio and visual alerts, as well as 80-character messages.
- **Text messaging**, which provides personal communication to all cell phone users who register for the service. In addition to emergency communications, text messages will be used to announce closings, and delays for inclement weather. Students, faculty, staff and parents can sign up for text messaging at [http://alert.vc.edu/signup/index.php](http://alert.vc.edu/signup/index.php).
- **Digital screens** in major academic buildings, the Commons, and all residential housing facilities on both campuses will be used to provide visual and audio alerts similar to those displayed on the VCU Alert Web site.
- **E-mail** will be used to send more detailed information involving the incident.
- **Social Media** will be used to send notices.
- **Fire Alarm System** may be used for evacuation of a specific segment of the community.

**Emergency Evacuation Procedures**

The VCU Police shall be responsible for the safe evacuation of all persons utilizing VCU and VCU Health System facilities in the event of fire, bomb threat, power outage, other natural disasters, civil disturbances, and active or imminent threats. The level of necessity will determine the response by the VCU Police. If large-scale events occur that are beyond the resource capabilities of the VCU Police and the University, the Chief of Police will request assistance from outside agencies such as the City of Richmond Police and Fire Departments, State Police, and Richmond and State Departments of Emergency Management.

**Testing and Exercise Procedures**

VCU conducts various announced and unannounced exercises and drills each year. In accordance with the VCU Continuity Plan, VCU will utilize these procedures for testing Emergency Notification, Response and Evacuation.

**Training, Testing and Exercises**

To maintain the University’s emergency management capability, an all-hazard COOP training, testing, and exercise program was established in 2004. VCU annually certifies completion of plans updates and execution of tests on COOP plans in the event of natural or man-made disasters, including terrorist attacks. University emergency response and facility evacuation procedures are both publicized and tested at least annually.
After Action Review/Improvement Plan

After Action Reviews (AAR) will be conducted following each emergency event or exercise on a Planning Scenario. The formal AAR should be completed on emergency events and exercises within sixty days. Improvement Plans will be included or recommended in formal AAR documents. COOP modifications surfaced by the AAR process will be responsively made to applicable Response Plans.

Forms

There are no forms associated with this policy and procedures.

Related Documents


Revision History

This policy supersedes the following archived policies:

12/01/2011 Emergency Notification, Response and Evacuation

FAQs

There are no FAQs associated with this policy and procedures.