

NWACC DISASTER RECOVERY/BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

Annex B

Emergency Response Communication Plan

July 2009

I. Purpose

An Emergency Response Communication Plan provides policies and procedures for the coordination of communications within the College, and between the College, the media and the public in the event of an emergency or controversial issue. Emergencies may include fires, bomb threats, natural disasters, or major crimes. Controversial issues may include police investigations or other situations that demand a public response.

THIS PLAN IS NOT INTENDED TO CHANGE THE WAY EMERGENCIES ARE INITIALLY REPORTED. ALL EMERGENCIES ON CAMPUS SHOULD BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY TO CAMPUS POLICE (619-4229) and 911.

This plan addresses media relations and communications issues. It is designed to be an appendix to the Business Continuity Plan.

It is the goal of this Emergency Response Communication Plan to establish guidelines for dealing with a variety of situations, and to ensure that campus officials and communicators are familiar with those procedures and their roles in the event of a crisis. The plan is designed to be used in conjunction with the Business Continuity Plan, Emergency Response Plans and the normal decision-making processes of the College.

II. Objectives of the Plan

1. In case of an emergency, to factually assess the situation and determine whether a communications response is warranted.
2. In case of an emergency to provide policies, procedures and guidelines for the **Office of the President**, working closely with the Emergency Management Team and under the direction of the College President or designee as Incident Commander, to implement immediately action to:
 - Identify constituencies that should be informed about the situation.
 - Communicate facts about the emergency.
 - Minimize rumors.
 - Restore order and/or confidence.

III. Procedures

Assessment -- The Public Safety Department, Department of Risk Management, other College department or individual that encounters a potential crisis should gather accurate information from the appropriate sources as quickly as possible and forward this information to the College Public Safety Department at 619-4229. The Director of Public Safety should then consult with the Vice President of Finance and Administration and together they should determine whether an immediate response is necessary and, if so, they should notify the College President as Incident Commander or her/his designee.

The College President or designee, as Incident Commander, shall determine whether to convene the Emergency Management Team.

IV. Procedures

Response --The College President or designee, as Incident Commander, working with the Emergency Management Team if it is convened, shall assess the nature and scope of the situation and develop a plan of action including some, or all, of the following measures or others as deemed necessary:

1. Designate a spokesperson(s): The President or designee is the lead person in conveying the administration's response to the crisis, showing that the College has control of the situation, calming public concern and setting an example for the entire campus.

Public information spokespersons (those dealing most directly with day-to-day media inquiries) may also include the Vice Presidents and Deans from specific areas and the **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication**.

2. Draft a fact sheet. The fact sheet prepared by the **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** in consultation with the President or designee and the Emergency Management Team should contain a summary statement of the situation. This summary should include all known details to be released to the media. This information should be made available to (and approved by) the College President or designee. This fact sheet should be fully evaluated with respect to the public's right to know and concerns for privacy and security in consultation, if necessary, with the College Attorney. (See sample release later in the document.)

3. Notify key constituencies. As time permits, the College President or designee shall determine key constituents to be informed of the crisis. These can include:

- Law enforcement agencies
- Administration, faculty and staff
- Trustees
- Students
- General public
- Mass media
- Foundation
- Accreditation organizations
- Community and State Officials

4. Methods of communication. The **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** under the direction of the College President or designee shall communicate the facts of the situation (contained in the fact sheet) and the College's intended response. Methods of communication may vary depending on the group to be contacted and may include:

- *Law enforcement agencies* – The **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** should coordinate this communication, working with the College Public Safety Department, using appropriate means- fax, email, cell phones and radio.
- *College administrators, faculty, and staff* – Information to administrators other than those on the Emergency Management Team and to faculty and staff should be provided via the NWACC home page, through local media outlets, by fax, **blog**, by email, and text messaging, through campus broadcast messaging systems including **BRG Mass Notification message marquee and audio player**, and/or

through meetings. The **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** should coordinate this activity.

- *Students* – Notices to students can be sent to local media outlets, posted on NWACC My Education Connection, **blog**, sent by email and text messaging, posted on bulletin boards in all NWACC facilities, through campus **BRG** broadcast systems and through meetings if needed. A voice mail broadcast to all faculty and posted on the College's main telephone number can refer students to the Student Information Line (619-4377). Fliers may be distributed on site. The Vice President for Student Learning should coordinate this.
- *Trustees* – May be reached via telephone, fax or text messaging systems. The Executive Assistant to the President and Board should coordinate communication with this group.
- *Local community* – If the situation has an impact on local residents, fliers listing the Student Information and Faculty/Staff hot line numbers can be distributed. If appropriate, meetings can be arranged with leaders of the communities. Local media can be contacted to assist the College. The **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** shall coordinate this activity.
- *Mass media* – The **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** may prepare news releases for distribution. All media inquiries should be directed to this office.
- *Government Agencies* – If government entities (Mayor's, Governor's offices) need to be informed, this should be handled only by the College President, as Incident Commander, or his/her designee.

Alerting the Media- The College must determine whether a news conference and or news release is an appropriate means of conveying information to faculty, staff, students, the news media and the public. The **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** in consultation with the President or designee, as Incident Commander, will determine logistics of the news conference. This includes when, where and how the media will be contacted, which media will be contacted, who will supervise the news conference, who will appear, etc. (See news conference guidelines later in this document.)

5. Establish Emergency Operations Center. The College President or designee shall determine whether the magnitude of the crisis merits establishing an Emergency Operations Center (for public safety and College officials) and/or a Media Briefing Center (for larger gatherings of the media for briefings or press conferences). See a list of campus briefing rooms later in this document.

6. Photography. The **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** shall decide the need to assign videographers and photographers to take pictures of the scene. This may prove helpful in responding to media inquiries, to possible later litigation, as well as documenting events. He or she shall determine whether it is safe and appropriate to allow location shooting by TV and newspaper photographers. Determine when, where and who will accompany the media.

7. Other spokespersons. The College President or designee, as Incident Commander, shall identify any other individuals who may serve as spokespersons or who might be

made available to the news media and counsel individuals in terms of appropriate ways to deal with the media. (See media relations reminders later in this document.)

8. Internal communications. The College President or designee, as Incident Commander, working with the Emergency Management Team shall determine strategy of internal communications to be used if the crisis affects college students and employees (Refer to point 4). The College President or designee working with the Emergency Response Team shall discuss alternative or additional means of conveying information including letters to students or selected constituencies of the College.

10. Notifying Various College Locations. The College President or designee shall notify or designate members of the Emergency Management Team to provide at the following locations key facts of the crisis (a fact sheet) and where to refer calls pertaining to the crisis:

- Bentonville Campus Student Information Center _____
- Adult Education Center _____
- Shewmaker Building _____
- Physical Plant _____
- Washington County Center _____
- College at the Crossings _____
- Regional Technology Center _____
- Corporate Learning Fayetteville _____

11. Rumor control. The **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** should consider establishing a rumor-control hotline and/or a dedicated call-in line (i.e., the Student Information Line 619-4377 or the Faculty/Staff Information Line 619-4343) for media use. These dedicated lines can be used for taped telephone updates.

Clery Act Timely Warning Policy and Procedure

Policy: In compliance with the U. S. Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990 currently known as the Clery Act, it is the policy of NWACC to inform the campus community about safety and security issues on an ongoing basis. NWACC shall alert the campus community of certain crimes in a manner that is timely and will aid in the prevention of similar crimes.

These crimes shall include all Clery Act crimes that are: reported to campus security authorities or local police agencies; and are considered by the institution to represent a serious or continuing threat to students and employees. The Clery Act mandates timely warnings only for Clery Act crimes but nothing in the act prohibits timely warnings for other crimes that may pose a serious or continuing threat to the campus community. Timely warnings may be issued for threats to property as well as for threats to persons. It is irrelevant whether the victims or perpetrators are members of the College community.

The warning should be issued as soon as pertinent information is available because of the intent of a timely warning is to alert the campus community of continuing

threats especially concerning safety, thereby enabling community members to protect themselves.

A combination of dissemination may be used. Timely warnings may not be issued in such a manner that requires the campus community to search for them. The responsibility for the warning rests solely with the institution.

The Clery Act regulations do not specify what information should be included in a timely warning. However, because the intent of the warning is to enable members of the campus community to protect themselves, the warning should include all information that would promote safety.

Procedure: The issuing of a timely warning shall be decided on a case by case basis in light of all the facts surrounding the crime, including facts such as the nature of the crime, the continuing danger to the campus community and the possible risk of compromising law enforcement efforts.

Upon notification of a criminal act or the potential for criminal activity, Department of Public Safety personnel shall immediately notify the Director of Public Safety or his/her designee who shall then notify the Vice President for Administration and Finance or designee of all available information. If the recommendation for a timely warning is approved by the Vice President for Administration and Finance or designee, the Director of Public Safety shall draft such warning and notify the **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** or designee and request immediate distribution of the warning. Should the **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** or designee not be available the Director will request permission from the Vice President for Administration and Finance or designee to proceed with dissemination of information based on the need for safety and security for the campus community.

A continuous update of information will be compiled and furnished to the campus community as necessary.

Local law enforcement agencies may also be notified of timely warning information as deemed necessary by the Director of Public Safety.

Once a resolution to the incident initiating the timely warning notification has been achieved a notification cancelling the warning shall be issued.

Ongoing Procedures During An Emergency

The **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** shall:

1. Give high priority to immediately scanning daily newspapers and video reports for stories related to the situation. Deliver copies of these clips or reports as appropriate to the President, Vice Presidents and Deans.

2. Set up information files on the emergency to reside in office of the **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** or other center. Material related to the emergency, including clippings, statements, letters, memos and any other documents,

should be forwarded to the office of the **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** and filed in chronological order.

3. Monitor the situation at least daily, and frequently update staff and appropriate administrators.

4. Take notes during emergency to be reviewed and used to improve future crisis response.

Aftermath Component

Communications

- a) Whenever possible, a public forum should be scheduled and coordinated by the President with appropriate members of the Emergency Management Team to communicate details of the incident and events to all interested members of the College. The timeliness of this meeting is critical and every effort should be made to see that it occurs within two-to-three working days from the close of the emergency. Selected Cabinet and Emergency Management Team members should attend and be prepared to answer questions and share pertinent information. Specific departments and/or individuals also may be requested to attend and participate depending upon the nature of the emergency.
- b) It is not unreasonable to expect that rumors would follow an emergency, further creating an atmosphere of anxiety. One means of combating rumors would be to take full advantage of electronic mail, text messaging, **BRG Mass Notification message marquee and audio player**, rumor-control hotlines, etc. and report facts as appropriate. Voice mail and email broadcasts to faculty/staff, students and others with voice/email accounts can be arranged.
- c) Depending upon the nature of the emergency, services and assistance may have been rendered by agencies, companies and/or individuals from outside the College. The **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** should ensure that applicable follow-up information, as well as thank-you letters, is forwarded to appropriate persons

Logistical Details

Emergency Operations Center Sites -- Sites to be equipped with emergency radios, cellular and land telephone lines are as follows:

- Physical Plant Office
- Shewmaker Building Main Office
- Adult Education Center Office
- Washington County Center Office
- Burns Hall Public Safety Office
- Student Center First Floor Conference Room

Campus Meeting Rooms -- Areas available for meetings/news briefings/conferences

- **Student Center Multipurpose Room 108**
 - Burns Hall White Auditorium
 - Burns Hall President's Office
 - Physical Plant Facility Conference Room
 - Shewmaker Building Wal-Mart Auditorium
 - Student Center Multi-Purpose Room

Transportation Parking

Physical Plant will have the responsibility for coordinating emergency transportation arrangements with the College. For parking arrangements for press conferences of larger gatherings, contact the department.

News Conference Guidelines

1. When the **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** notifies media of news conferences or officials available for comment (availabilities), be sure to define what kind of event you are having. News conferences are held to announce something for the first time. Press "availabilities" is held simply to make individuals available to answer questions or demonstrate something.
2. As a general rule, if holding a news conference, try to tell media in advance some details of what you will be announcing.
3. Whenever practical, gauge the size of your crowd carefully when reserving a room; better to have too much than too little space. Make sure microphones, chairs, and water are in place at least 30 minutes prior to the event.
4. Decide format in advance -- who will introduce speakers, who decides when question/answer period ends, and other details.
5. Decide in advance whether handouts are needed. If speaker is giving a talk for which there is a text, you may want to wait and hand out material after the talk so media will stay and listen. However, it's advisable to tell the media you will provide a text of the speech so they are not irritated by having to take unnecessary notes.
6. The College President or designee, as Incident Commander, will maintain control at the news conference; the **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** will decide where cameras are set up, who sits where, etc.
7. Try to plan the length of the news conference, but be flexible.
8. Consider the time of the news conference. If you want to make the noon, 5 p.m., 6 p.m. or 10 p.m. TV news, you need to allow time for crews to travel and edit tape.

9. If you are going to set restrictions on an event such as limited photo access, try to put the restrictions in writing and communicate to the media at least 24 hours in advance.

Media Relations Reminders

1. Always, always return media calls. The more cooperative you appear, the better.
2. Communicate with the media – talk to them as well as listen to them. During an emergency time, you may learn a great deal from the media that can be useful to you in further dealing with the emergency.
3. Avoid antagonizing the media. A short tone at a press conference, during a phone call, or elsewhere can affect your future relationship with an individual or other media who may hear the conversation.
4. The **Senior Director for Public Relations & Communication** will advise media of the status of Student Information Line (619-4377) and Faculty Staff Information Line (619-4343). Public information on news conferences, rumor control information, newly acquired information, can be updated. This is particularly useful when regular phone lines are tied up with calls.
5. Consider how information you release to media may affect other agencies, businesses or individuals. If you say things that may result in media calling other agencies, call those agencies first to warn them of impending calls.
6. When talking to the media, be sure to give credit to other agencies, groups or individuals working on the crisis, including your own staff.
7. Try to be pro-active with new information. Even those things may be frantic; if you acquire new information regarding the crisis, reach out to the media.

Sample News Release

Contact: _____

Date

Headline

BENTONVILLE – A _____ at _____
involving _____ occurred today at NorthWest Arkansas Community
College. The incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming.

A (what happened) at (location) involving (who) occurred today at (time). The
incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming.

Additional Materials

Information brochures or fact sheets about the College or the area in which the crisis has occurred are helpful in informing reporters or anyone else seeking information.

In some cases it might be necessary to create materials that explain technical systems or in-house procedures. If we explain how a technical system or in-house procedure works and point out where a breakdown occurred, there is less chance of a reporter interpreting the situation erroneously.

If one is not already in place, a generic fact sheet about the College should be created and made available.

Always do what you can to make a complicated issue as simple as you can for reporters. If the crisis was caused by a piece of equipment consider bringing in a similar

piece of equipment to show reporters. At the very least provide a schematic or drawing. If you give them a visual that may keep them from seeking one out themselves. Try not to use the actual piece of equipment that failed.