

Crisis Communications Technology Toolbox

Current Capabilities Highlights

Web Alerts

Special Web alerts can be posted quickly following a noteworthy event. Sites include UW home page, UWIN, MyUW community alert, and UW Emergency Management alert. Individual units, including both UW Bothell and UW Tacoma, also have capabilities for posting special messages on their Web sites.

UW Information Hotline

Published telephone numbers 206-UWS-INFO (and toll free 1-866-897-4636) provide recorded information about UW scheduling changes due to emergencies and inclement weather. The information line often provides the same information posted in the Web alerts. These telephone numbers also can be configured to provide live call center interaction should conditions warrant.

Email Distribution to Mailing Lists

Several email distribution lists exist to send email quickly to targeted groups. Examples include deans, directors, and chairs; building coordinators; and UW suspended operations list. Student Life can also create ad hoc student lists based on building occupancy, residence halls, etc.

Bulk Email to UW Community

Email can be distributed to all current faculty, staff, and student accounts. Depending upon the urgency, distribution is regulated to avoid overwhelming the mail infrastructure. To reach the entire campus population, it can take up to an hour to process.

Verizon Notification Service

This Web-based multimodal communications service allows delivery of urgent messages via telephone, text, email, and fax. The initial system accommodates team notifications and mobilization for crisis events, including UW emergency operations center staff and Computing & Communications response teams.

Other Tools

A comprehensive set of communication tools is necessary to respond effectively to all hazards. Conference bridges, emergency communications system "red" phones, I'm Okay Registry, family information hotlines, media relationships, pagers, and two-way radios are other tools available. The UW is also equipped with federal programs such as Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS), Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP), and Wireless Priority Service (WPS) to ensure that our first responders have priority use of the public telecommunications network during crises.

New Capabilities for Autumn 2007

UW Alert

UW Alert has been developed to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of the UW or threaten the health or safety of members of the UW community.

UW Alert is offered on a voluntary self-subscription basis for current UW faculty, staff, and students at UW Bothell, UW Seattle, UW Tacoma, and UW Medicine. UW Alert delivers messages to subscribers on a "best effort" basis to email and to Short Message Service (SMS) text-capable wireless devices, such as many cellular telephones. Additional delivery options are planned in future phases of the UW Alert system.

Expanding Verizon Notification Service (VNS)

New VNS notification groups will be added to mobilize the newly formed crisis communications team, and disseminate information to building coordinators, deans, directors, and chairs.

Outdoor Public Address System - Code Blue

In early 2007, twelve Code Blue emergency telephones will be upgraded to incorporate a public address loudspeaker system. These units will support the eight UW Seattle mass assembly areas that are designated gathering areas following a major event requiring mass building evacuation. The new system will improve the ability to communicate quickly and effectively with these outdoor locations.