

Critical conversations

Information from UW Emergency Management,
presented by *University Week*.



UW Assistant Police Chief Ray Wittmier speaks with reporters the morning of April 2, 2007, after the murder of staff member Rebecca Griego in Gould Hall.

Growing toolbox for communication during an emergency

Events last spring at the UW and nationwide have put the spotlight of public attention on how university campuses react to emergency situations, be they natural disasters, accidents or acts of violence.

The UW has long had a written plan for emergency response (you can read it online at <http://www.washington.edu/emergency>). The plan divides emergencies into three categories of increasing severity, and indicates whether the UW Emergency Operations Center (soon to be moved to the new UW Tower) should be activated.

Briefly put, Level 1 is a situation that normal UW emergency responses can handle without need of the EOC. This is also considered the “stand-by” mode. Level 2 is an emergency incident that causes damage or interruption to UW operations, where partial or full ac-

tivation of the EOC is needed and the UW may be the only affected entity. Level 3 means widespread disaster conditions requiring that the UW be self-sufficient for hours or days and the EOC is fully activated.

The purpose of the plan is to protect and save lives, protect property, manage immediate communications and information regarding University response

operations and campus safety, provide for essential services and operations, provide information to support decision-making, and to manage University resources effectively during an emergency.

But the murder of Rebecca Griego at the UW and the shootings at Virginia Tech in April added a new sense of urgency to the questions of when and how the UW’s emergency plan should be used.

As Norm Arkans, UW executive director of media relations and communications, told building coordinators and other emergency responders in a July 25 meeting, the UW needs better ways to communicate broadly and rapidly to the whole campus. “We are much more attuned to the need to be fast,” Arkans said. Scott Mah, assistant vice president for Computing & Communications Service

Delivery & Support, noted, “Each event teaches us something.”

The question, then, is: How should the campus community — a virtual city of 60,000 souls — be informed of an emergency situation, a catastrophic event or a growing danger? There is no one simple answer, and new questions arise even as the discussion continues.

Crisis communications at the UW are a work in progress, using new technologies as they emerge for levels of response appropriate to various situations. A Crisis Communications Committee chaired by Arkans and Mah has been hard at work over the summer crafting a new crisis communications plan for the UW that provides guidelines for communication within the University and to media and the public in the event of an emergency.

PLEASE SEE TOOLBOX ON PAGE 4

Three steps if you see an emergency situation:

1. Call 911. 2. Call your supervisor.
3. Call UW News & Information, 206-543-2580.

Stay informed — sign up for disaster, crisis alerts:

<http://www.washington.edu/emergency>

Safe at home / safe at work

Some strategies for personal preparedness

Getting ready for the next disaster is a bit like tying your shoelaces: If you don't, you'll probably trip. And a fall could be serious.

UW Emergency Management has a number of preparedness and response plans grouped at its Emergency Management Web site: <http://www.washington.edu/emergency>. They include plans for physical disasters such as earthquakes as well as other types such as pandemic flu.

The unit's staff members were on duty last December 14 when a serious wind storm — the worst this decade — left large parts of the Puget Sound region without power, some for as many as 11 days. More than 3 million people in Washington, Oregon and British Columbia lost electrical power, and 15 people died.

Steve Charvat, director of UW Emergency Management, strongly advises people to prepare for disasters both at work and home.

Here are some basic preparation ideas:

Know terms used in weather forecasts. The National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration maintains a comprehensive Web site that includes a glossary: <http://www.noaa.gov/wx.html>.

The National Weather Service maintains a Web site listing state-by-state weather watches, warnings and advisories. Here's the one for Washington state: <http://www.weather.gov/alerts/wa.html>.

Address potential hazards. Bolt bookcases to the wall, secure picture frames with closed screws instead of traditional picture hangers and secure your water heater to structural parts of the building, such as wall studs within a load-bearing wall.

Create a disaster plan. Identify a safe place in each room of your

house or workplace, practice leaving the building quickly and decide where your group will meet outside. (In case of earthquake, however, don't run outside. Drop to the floor, under a table or against an interior wall. Cover your head and neck.)

Create disaster supply kits. Purchase a battery-powered NOAA weather radio and extra batteries. Such radios are available at many stores starting at about \$20.

Stock flashlights and extra batteries for home, work and car. Skip candles; they're considered fire hazards. A Coleman lantern might come in handy for either the kitchen table or the bathroom. Collect a pair of old sneakers plus rain gear, at least one blanket, three to seven days' worth of non-perishable food and a pair of rainboots.

In your car, put a small shovel, sand or cat litter, flares, a windshield scraper/brush, and booster cables.

Put some extra cash plus insurance cards, medical records, bank account numbers and Social Security numbers in a waterproof, easily carried container.

Consider purchasing a small generator, but never use it or a barbecue grill indoors, as they produce carbon monoxide, which is poisonous. If you have a fireplace, make sure the chimney is clean and firewood dry. Maintain proper ventilation to avoid build-up of toxic fumes.

Make sure gutters on your roof and street are clear of debris. If the storm sewer outside your house clogs, don't wait for city sanitation. Clear the drain with a rake or similar tool; otherwise, you could face flooding.

At work, store an emergency support unit. Available at the HUB



This table of products for emergency preparedness was at the 2006 QuakeFest event sponsored by UW Emergency Management. The red kits at the top are the same as those sold at the HUB.

ticket office, each red nylon, zippered bag contains a dozen basics including water, energy bars, a first-aid kit and an emergency blanket (\$21 for students, \$23 for faculty and staff).

Know your department or unit's disaster response plan, including where you'll meet if you have to leave your building.

For a health disaster, specifically pandemic flu, the University has drafted a four-level, 45-page plan. If a case of human avian flu is

confirmed in the U.S., Mexico or Canada, the UW's response would include:

- Basic hygiene measures such as vaccinations and covering one's mouth while coughing.
- Possible suspension of classes or at least public activities such as sporting events.
- Possibly sending students home if it appears public health authorities will restrict travel.
- Monitoring of employees or students returning from an area

affected by pandemic flu.

• Additional infection controls at University medical centers and gathering places such as cafeterias and residence halls.

To read the UW plan for communicable disease management, go to: <http://www.washington.edu/emergency/pandemic/>.

Additional information about emergency planning can be found at the UW Emergency Management Web site: <http://www.washington.edu/emergency/prepare>.

Business continuity: People first, then systems

Scott Preston and his colleagues at UW Emergency Management help departments and units plan responses to disasters such as fires, earthquakes, pandemics and plain old human error.

But first and foremost, they plan how to keep people safe.

"You cannot protect anything unless you have protected people," Preston said. "They're the linchpins."



Scott Preston

UW President Mark Emmert and his advisors have identified business continuity planning as a top priority, and all UW units are required to plan for business emergencies. Since last winter, Preston has worked with six units,

most recently, Student Financial Services and the Office of the Vice Provost for Student Life.

Basically, says Preston, decide what records or operations you can afford to lose, and how to protect what you can't.

The Business Continuity Pilot Project, which Preston manages, has developed a planning checklist. "The more homework units do, the less they have to figure on the fly," he said.

Here are some key points:

- Devise an employee safety plan. It's most important in business continuity.
- Decide which assets and operations are crucial. How will you protect them?
- Choose an alternative work site, either on or off campus.
- Protect your data with backups and off-site storage. Test to make sure they function properly.
- Protect your supply chain.

Obtain memorandums of agreement both inside and outside the local area. Consider plans that

would allow your unit to share resources with similar ones. Stockpile your most basic supplies.

• Decide how you'll communicate during an emergency. If phone and Internet services aren't available, how will you communicate with employees and those you serve?

• Test the emergency plan regularly and revise as necessary.

This past year, a \$100,000 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency initially funded the Business Continuity Pilot Project. It included planners from four campus units: Payroll, Human Resources, the Evans School of Public Affairs and Comparative Medicine.

In three-hour simulations this past winter and spring, each unit responded to a major earthquake which knocked out or compromised all bridges in the Puget Sound region.

The work revealed problems: Some managers, for example, got people out of buildings and ac-

counted for them once outside, but hadn't considered who would remain on campus and who'd get home — or how they'd get home.

As part of planning basic business continuity, Preston reminded planners about such things as alternative storage. UW Records Management Services stores inactive but necessary records in a 15,000 square-foot warehouse at the former Sand Point Naval Station. The building has multiple alarms, motion detectors and a buzz-in entry system. Earthquake mitigation measures include bungee-like cords holding some 28,000 boxes in place.

"Hundreds of departments still need business continuity planning, but there's also need for overall university planning," Preston said. If, for instance, there were a pandemic and students were sent home, would tuition be refunded? If federal officials closed U.S. borders because of a pandemic, what obligations would the UW have to faculty and students

abroad? If an earthquake disrupted University operations for weeks on end, could administrators justify paychecks? State law requires work before paychecks.

Business continuity plans also require multiple scenarios: If an earthquake damages or destroys a data center, there ought to be back-up systems, but what if a pandemic prevents people from working at a center? Not everyone can work at home, and network providers such as Comcast would likely be swamped.

"You could have a cascading series of disasters," Preston said.

For a fuller explanation of the Business Continuity Management Project, including a more detailed checklist, go to <http://www.washington.edu/emergency/bcm>.

Preston and his colleagues also welcome inquiries and can arrange planning sessions. For additional information, contact UW Emergency Management, 206-897-8000 or e-mail disaster@u.washington.edu.

Learn much more about disaster preparedness at the UW Emergency Management Web site: <http://www.washington.edu/emergency/prepare>

To prepare and protect

UW Emergency Management at work

It was about 8 a.m. on the morning of April 24, 2007 — a normal school day — when news of the accident came in. A tanker truck carrying hazardous chemicals had overturned near the corner of NE 45th Street and Brooklyn Ave.

The spill's plume, or area of impact, was spreading toward the UW, placing the campus community in danger, remembered Steve Charvat, director of UW Emergency Management. "The leak continued and got larger, and the plume went from immediately around the 'Ave.' to up to a mile downwind — which included major parts of the campus."

You don't remember this major new story? Don't worry, it didn't really happen. It was the annual campus emergency exercise, coordinated by Emergency Management, a sort of expanded tabletop simulation this year given the ominous title "Operation Dark Cloud."

Within about a half hour of the pre-advertised beginning to the exercise, nearly 80 key campus decisionmakers — managers and administrators called Emergency Responders for this scenario — had reported to the Emergency Operations Center located in the Bryant Building, near Lake Union, to share information and address the concern.

And so for about four hours that morning, these campus representatives acted as if the danger were imminent — a scenario made more realistic by phone calls, faxes, e-mails and runners all arriving at the center demanding information and guidance. In such situations, UW emergency responders must decide whether to advise the campus community to evacuate or to "shelter in place" — to hunker down and wait for help, taking advantage of emergency preparedness packages created for just such a purpose. As chemical spills tend to dissipate over time, sheltering in place was the right advice for that day's simulation.

After the morning's hustle, the exercise was evaluated and its strengths and weaknesses noted for a detailed follow-up report.

This was the fourth such simulation to be held at the UW. The first, in 2004, was called Operation Jumpstart and imagined a major earthquake. Operation Detour in 2005 imagined a regionwide blackout, and in 2006 a flu pandemic was simulated.

The simulations in 2004 and this year were the only ones to make use of the Emergency Operations Center, which will move in early 2008 from the Bryant Building to the UW Tower, the building the UW has purchased from Safeco.

This year's "Dark Cloud" exercise was the first to make use of Web EOC, an online information-sharing system now used by the City of Seattle and all 39 counties of the State of Washington. Web EOC provides wide access and real-



PHOTO BY MARY LEVIN

Trainees for the UW Campus Emergency Response Team (CERT) attend to a victim during a simulated disaster held in August. From left, they are trainees Eric Ryan and Collen Marquist, "victim" Michele Schoenecke and Tamlyn Thomas, UWMC emergency management coordinator.

time information-sharing to help managers make informed public safety decisions quickly. "It's sort of like an online chat, but it's much more powerful," Charvat said. "You could be in South Africa and you can get into the system and find out what's happening."

Overseeing such simulations is just part of the work done by UW Emergency Management. Charvat, its director, said the office's overall message is not unique to their office but is reflected by all those who work in emergency management: "Emergencies and disasters are everyone's business."

He said Emergency Management is designed to assist the campus community in four basic functions: Emergency preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. The four functions create a sort of cycle, he said, with no beginning and no end.

• **Preparedness:** Those things that a person, a group, an organization or a government can do before a disaster or an incident occurs. Charvat said the office is ready to provide emergency preparedness presentations to any member of the campus community.

• **Response:** "Response is sort of the sexy part of emergency management," said Charvat. The UW is served by the City of Seattle for fire and disaster protection, but history has shown that in major disasters, it can take several

days, or longer, for help to arrive. That's why the UW has created its own Campus Emergency Response Teams (CERT), to act as first responders in the case of an emergency.

• **Recovery:** When the earth has settled, the fires have been extinguished or the flood waters have receded, this is the process of putting the institution back to where it was before the event. "We are the coordinating body to make sure the UW is working with the city, the county, the state and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)," said Charvat. The UW is eligible to receive 90 percent of all costs for recovery, he said, but it can take years to come in. For example, the Nisqually earthquake happened on Feb. 28, 2001, but the UW received its last reimbursement check for fixing damages this April. "And we met the national average," Charvat said.

• **Mitigation:** Preparedness is getting ready for an event you know will happen, while mitigation aims energies toward lessening that inevitable damage. "It's what can we do right now to get rid of the threat, or modify the threat so that it doesn't impact us as much." Charvat cited the example of the ongoing "Restore the Core" project, renovating and upgrading campus buildings for safety.

UW Emergency Management also oversees grant applications — and in many cases acts as principal investigator — for campus colleges, offices and units, for both disaster preparation and recovery after the fact. Charvat said the office "has been designated by UW administration to be one-stop shopping for searching out and applying for emergency, disaster, preparedness and Homeland Security grants."

Since 2004, Emergency Management has had a hand in bringing more than \$2 million in grant money to the UW, with another \$1.5 million in grants pending. The money, which is passed through to other campus entities, has been used to support disaster preparedness campuswide, paying for, among other things, improved security systems, the new bomb-sniffing police dog Kali, the CERT program and its training, equipment such as chemical decontamination suits, communications systems, and outreach events such as QuakeFest, a Universitywide disaster preparedness event held last fall.

Since 2004, UW Emergency Management also has overseen distribution of an annual, competitive grant for disaster preparedness and response open to all UW offices and units. These are one-time grants designed to encourage the campus community to address key

vulnerabilities in their facilities or operations. Generally speaking, successful grants have addressed one or more of the following principles:

- Improving the sharing of needed information campuswide.
- Training or equipping campus emergency responders.
- Assessing and protecting University assets and infrastructure.
- Providing for continuity of business before, during and after large-scale disasters.
- Informing the University community and visitors how to prepare for and operate in an emergency environment.

The projects must be able to be completed within six to nine months of the notice of award, and are best when they benefit more than one campus unit. Over the past three years, the internal UW grant has funded 16 projects designed to enhance campus crisis communications.

The simulated chemical spill imagined that morning in April was determined to have been relatively successful. But preparedness is an ongoing process, and so the exercises and simulations will continue. The next one will be a regionwide event held throughout the Seattle area on March 5, 2008.

What disaster will occur? Take a guess from the name of the coming exercise: "Sound Shake '08."

TOOLBOX

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The plan states that after an emergency situation has been identified, the following procedures begin to take place:

- **Assessment:** "People who become aware of a potential crisis or emergency must contact the Office of Media Relations and Communications." The Executive Director or his designee will decide whether to invoke this plan and convene a Crisis Communications Team.

- **The Crisis Communications Team:** The team may include Media Relations and Communications, University Police, Computing & Communications, Human Resources, Student Life, the Attorney General's office, the Office of the President, and the affected unit(s). The Crisis Communications Team will designate a spokesperson — usually the highest-ranking person with direct knowledge of the events, or the executive director of Media Relations and Communications.

- **Notifying key constituencies:** The Crisis Communications Team will determine which groups need to be informed, and in what order. The report notes that "effective communication will help quell rumors, maintain morale and ensure public safety." Key constituencies include students, faculty, staff, parents of students, the Board of Regents, public officials, alumni, area neighbors, the general public and the news media.

- **Fact sheet:** Such a document should be prepared as soon as possible, time stamped, reviewed by the executive director and provided to reporters by the spokesperson.

It should be updated as new information becomes available.

- **Alerting the media:** The Director of News & Information, in consultation with the executive director, will decide on the best way(s) of reaching the news media. In the case of a prolonged emergency, the director may create a Joint Information Center and/or news media briefing center to coordinate information flow. The report states, "In general, the University will welcome reporters and allow them as much access as public safety and good taste permit."

There is an ever-growing set of options available to achieve this aim: It's called the communications toolbox. Here are some of the tools listed and comments about their effectiveness:

- **UW Web site alerts:** A great way to share information if the community knows where to look, but it does not provide "active notification." Currently, staff members are working on coordinating the same message on the UW public home page, UWIN and MyUW, as well as the UW Emergency Management home page.

- **www.emergency.washington.edu:** This is an alternate UW Web site based outside the Puget Sound region that will be updated with critical information in the event that a catastrophic event disrupts the Seattle-area infrastructure.

- **UW Information hotline, 206-UWS-INFO (897-4636) or 1-866-UWS-INFO (897-4636):** As with the Web site, effective but only if people know to look there.

- **UW ListServ E-mail:** Provides instant notification, but only when recipients are near their e-mail or portable devices to

check it. Building coordinators and deans, directors and chairs are two key groups that can be notified rapidly in this manner.

- **Bulk e-mail:** Takes several hours for complete delivery, and is dependent on people checking their e-mail account.

- **Short message service (SMS):** Provides active notification, but only to those subscribing. Beginning Sept. 26, faculty, staff and students may sign up for UW alert, a new crisis notification service that delivers text messages to mobile devices such as cell phones. Visit www.washington.edu/alert for more information.

- **206-UWS-I'M OK and 1-888-UWS-I'M OK:** A registry under consideration and intended to provide a way for faculty, staff and students to report their status following a major emergency event.

- **An outdoor public address system** is being considered to improve communication with major outdoor areas such as Red Square and the campus mass assembly areas.

Other tools include faxes, pager systems, two-way radios and runners to carry information across campus when other systems are down. The media, too — local television and radio — can play a critical role in keeping the campus and outside community informed of ongoing events.

Based on the timing, location and severity of the event, any or all of the options in the communications toolbox may be put into use.

But even these reports are not the final word on UW emergency preparedness or communications — that conversation will continue, involving the entire campus community.

Emergency Responder Summit set for Nov. 6

It won't be an emergency, but campus emergency responders — building coordinators, police, evacuation wardens and first-response teams — should keep the afternoon of Nov. 6 open on their calendars.

That's because the Second Annual Building Emergency Responder Summit will be held from 1 to 2:30 p.m. in Hogness Auditorium in the A Wing of the Health Sciences building. And all those who respond to crises or are involved with the UW's emergency preparedness program are asked to attend.

This informational forum will feature the latest on how crisis communications are being improved across the UW campus, and how those changes will affect emergency response on campus.

UWEM staff

Steve Charvat, director.

Scott Preston, business continuity manager, CERT coordinator.

Clarice Nakata Hall,

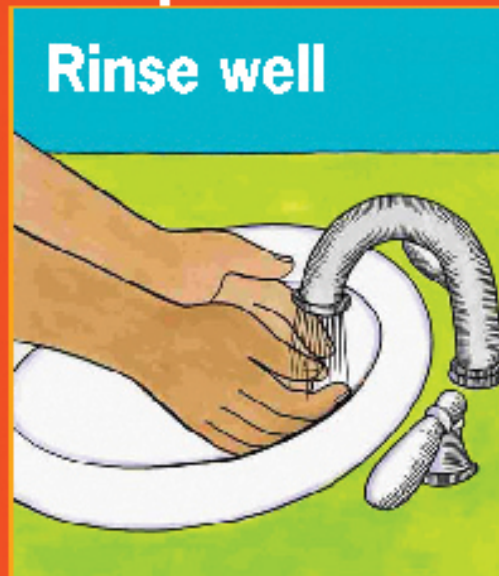
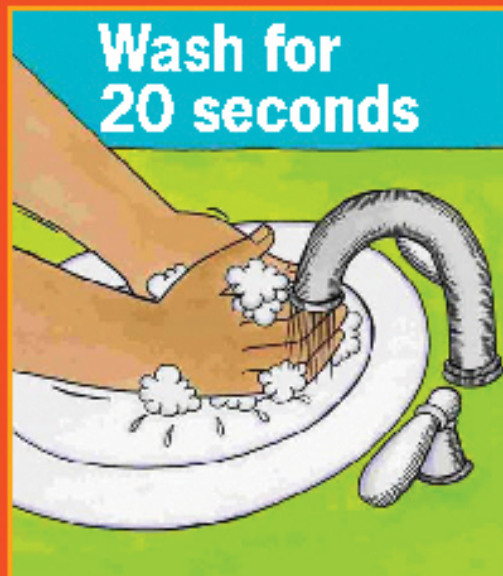
special projects,

Delia Hough, fiscal specialist.

■ Stories by Peter Kelley and Catherine O'Donnell, UW News & Information.

Stop Germs, Stay Healthy!

Wash hands often with soap and warm water



¡Detenga los gérmenes, manténgase saludable!

- Lávese las manos frecuentemente con jabón y agua tibia
- Lávese por 20 segundos, enjuáguese bien, séquese
- Cubra su boca al toser y estornudar
- Quédese en casa cuando esté enfermo

Cover coughs and sneezes



When sick, stay home



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