

## **Crisis Communications Plan**

### **University of Washington Office of Media Relations and Communications Updated October 15, 2015**

#### **I. Purpose**

This plan provides guidelines for communicating within the university, and from the university to the media and the public, in the event of an emergency, crisis, or incident where there is a need to provide crucial information immediately to the university community.

Disasters, emergencies and crises disrupt the university's normal activities and may require activation of the UW's Emergency Management Plan (<https://www.washington.edu/uwem/plans-and-procedures/uw-all-hazard-plan/>). This Crisis Communications Plan describes the role of the University of Washington Police Department (UWPD), Media Relations and Communications, News & Information, and Web Communications in communicating vital information to members of the UW community and the public.

This plan is to be flexibly used with emergency decision-making procedures of the university.

Elements of this plan are tested periodically as well as annually in conjunction with campus-wide emergency exercises and drills. Appendices should be checked for accuracy and completeness at least annually.

#### **II. Objectives**

1. Determining whether the situation requires invoking this plan.
2. Convening a Crisis Communications Team to recommend responses.
3. Implementing immediate actions to:
  - a. Identify key constituencies who need to be informed.
  - b. Communicate facts about the situation and minimize rumors.
  - c. Restore a sense of confidence and order.

#### **III. Procedures**

**1. Assessment** – People (including the general campus public as well as members of the UW's Crisis Communications Team) who become aware of a potential crisis or emergency must contact UWPD immediately. UWPD will determine whether to invoke this plan and convene a Crisis Communications Team, or confer with the Associate Vice President for Media Relations and Communications (AVP). Other members of the Crisis Communications Team may also invoke this plan for other incidents as well in order to

begin the initial group assessment of the incident(s). If the plan is invoked, the AVP will inform the President and the Vice President of External Affairs, as well as other appropriate university officials.

2. Sending UW Alert Messages – except for an incident involving an active shooter, the Crisis Core Team (CCT) will convene on a bridge-line conference call to assess the situation and determine if a UW Alert message is warranted.

- If it is decided to send a message, normally the first message will be sent by the UWPD on-call administrator. Subsequent messaging will be handled by other university public information and communications staff.

If the UWPD on-call administrator is unavailable, the initial message will be sent by Emergency Operations staff, followed by university public communications staff as third back-up and UW- IT staff as fourth back-up.

- In situations involving an active shooter, UWPD may send a UW Alert message without convening the Crisis Communications Core team.

**2. Crisis Communications Team** – The Crisis Communication Team comprises people whose organizations may play a critical role in addressing the crisis, including representatives of the following:

- Media Relations and Communications
- University Police
- UW Information Technology
- UW Emergency Management
- Web Communications
- Human Resources
- Student Life
- Environmental Health and Safety
- Attorney General's Office
- Office of the President
- Facilities Services
- The affected unit(s)

The above list is not meant to be exhaustive.

Time is of the essence in communicating crucial information to the university community and the news media, and the team will be assembled as quickly as possible. Based on the timing, location, and severity of the incident(s) or event(s), this may occur either in-person or virtually. The AVP or other senior administrator will determine when a sufficient number of the team is engaged.

Appendix A contains a list of key Crisis Communications Team members and their contact information. For each primary member, there is at least one alternate designated and trained.

The Crisis Communications Team will authorize the following:

**3. Spokesperson(s):** Generally, this is the highest-ranking individual who has direct knowledge of the events or the AVP. The individual selected will have the highest credibility and understanding of the events surrounding the crisis. Public information officers may fill in for these individuals if the crisis is prolonged, but they should not be the initial responders to the general public, the media or the university community.

**4. Notifying Key Constituencies:** The Crisis Communications Team will determine which groups need to be informed first. It is important to keep in mind that people will seek – and believe – other sources of information (e.g., news reports, social media, rumors, word of mouth) in the absence of official communication. Effective communication will help quell rumors, maintain morale and ensure public safety. Appendix B contains a description of the communication tools, their possible applications in a crisis, and who can operate those tools.

Key constituencies include:

- Students
- Faculty
- Staff
- Parents of students
- Board of Regents
- Public officials—Governor, Legislators, Mayors
- Alumni
- Neighbors
- General Public
- News Media

**5. Fact sheet:** As soon as possible after the incident, a fact sheet will be prepared to supplement communication with key constituencies and information provided to reporters by the spokespersons. It will be approved by the AVP and checked for accuracy by those with a direct knowledge of the crisis. Fact sheets released publicly or posted to the Internet must be time stamped and updated as information changes.

**6. Alerting the media:** The Director of News and Information, in consultation with the AVP, should decide on the best way(s) of reaching the news media. In cases where a crisis is likely to be prolonged and/or especially complex, the director may choose to create a Joint Information Center (JIC) and/or a news media briefing center to coordinate the information flow and assure that the right people are involved in collecting and

disseminating information. Consideration will be given to appropriate media staging locations that can accommodate vehicles such as satellite trucks. Communication with the media must occur frequently as new information is known. Information from news briefings may be captured in audio and/or video and posted to the Internet, along with updated fact sheets. Effort will be made to monitor news coverage in key media and correct significant inaccuracies, either in those media themselves or in material distributed by the university. The Media and Communications Room/JIC in the UW's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) located in Suite C-140 of the UW Tower may act as the central location to coordinate media relations if required.

In general, the university will welcome reporters and allow them as much access as public safety and good taste permit. Public information officers will facilitate access to key knowledgeable individuals and respond quickly to as many requests as possible. Communication must occur early and often but be confined to the facts. All information must be conveyed with an eye toward what will be most important to various publics.

#### **IV. Plan Testing and Validation**

This plan shall be updated and tested at least once a year. Full activation of the plan will be incorporated into the UW's annual Emergency Operations Center functional disaster exercises. Responsibility for updating the Crisis Communications Plan rests with the AVP.

#### **V. After-action Report/Review (AAR)**

Within a week of the crisis, the AVP will convene the Crisis Communications Team for a review of lessons learned. This AAR may be used to provide summary information to a more comprehensive campus-wide AAR coordinated through UW Emergency Management.

#### **Attachments**

Appendix A: Crisis Communications Team contact information  
Appendix B: Crisis and Mass Communications Tools

## Appendix A: Crisis Communications Team Call-out List (October 2015 Update)

NAME	WORK	CELL/PAGER	HOME	E-MAIL
<b><u>Media Relations &amp; Communications</u></b>				
Norm Arkans*	543-2560			<a href="mailto:arkans@uw.edu">arkans@uw.edu</a>
Victor Balta*	543-2580			<a href="mailto:balta@uw.edu">balta@uw.edu</a>
<b><u>University Police</u></b>				
John Vinson*	543-0521			<a href="mailto:vinso1jn@uw.edu">vinso1jn@uw.edu</a>
Steve Rittereiser*	616-8347			<a href="mailto:ritters@uw.edu">ritters@uw.edu</a>
Sue Carr	543-4548			<a href="mailto:suecarr@uw.edu">suecarr@uw.edu</a>
<b><u>UW Information Technology</u></b>				
Kent Kurth	685-6281			<a href="mailto:kkurth@uw.edu">kkurth@uw.edu</a>
Ben Roy	616-8258			<a href="mailto:benroy@uw.edu">benroy@uw.edu</a>
Andy Ward*	221-4522			<a href="mailto:award@uw.edu">award@uw.edu</a>
Peter White	221-1054			<a href="mailto:pewhite@uw.edu">pewhite@uw.edu</a>
<b><u>Web Communications</u></b>				
Gina Hills*	543-2561			<a href="mailto:ghills@uw.edu">ghills@uw.edu</a>
Jeff Hendrickson*	543-2736			<a href="mailto:jh1@uw.edu">jh1@uw.edu</a>
<b><u>Human Resources</u></b>				
Mindy Kornberg	685-4730			<a href="mailto:mindyk@uw.edu">mindyk@uw.edu</a>
Liz Coveney	543-2815			<a href="mailto:econ@uw.edu">econ@uw.edu</a>
<b><u>Student Life</u></b>				
Denzil Suite	543-0128			<a href="mailto:djsuite@uw.edu">djsuite@uw.edu</a>
Lincoln Johnson	221-6323			<a href="mailto:llj@uw.edu">llj@uw.edu</a>

<b>NAME</b>	<b>WORK</b>	<b>CELL/PAGER</b>	<b>HOME</b>	<b>E-MAIL</b>
<b><u>Facilities Services</u></b>				
Charles Kennedy	685-1428			<a href="mailto:kennec@uw.edu">kennec@uw.edu</a>
John Chapman	543-3860			<a href="mailto:jchapman@uw.edu">jchapman@uw.edu</a>
<b><u>Attorney General's Office</u></b>				
Quentin Yerxa	685-5372			<a href="mailto:quentiny@uw.edu">quentiny@uw.edu</a>
Karin Nyrop	685-7234			<a href="mailto:knyrop@uw.edu">knyrop@uw.edu</a>
<b><u>Office of the President</u></b>				
Rolf Johnson	616-8550			<a href="mailto:rolfj@uw.edu">rolfj@uw.edu</a>
<b><u>Environmental Health and Safety</u></b>				
Jude Van Buren	616-4146			<a href="mailto:judev@uw.edu">judev@uw.edu</a>
Gene Hutchinson	616-3770			<a href="mailto:geneh@uw.edu">geneh@uw.edu</a>
<b><u>Emergency Management</u></b>				
Steve Charvat*	897-8080			<a href="mailto:charvat@uw.edu">charvat@uw.edu</a>
Scott Preston*	897-1882			<a href="mailto:scottpre@uw.edu">scottpre@uw.edu</a>
Siri McLean*	897-8081			<a href="mailto:sirim@uw.edu">sirim@uw.edu</a>
<b><u>UW Bothell</u></b>				
Laura Mansfield	(425) 352-5406			<a href="mailto:lmansfield@uw.edu">lmansfield@uw.edu</a>
Lisa Hall	(425) 352-5461			<a href="mailto:lhall7@uw.edu">lhall7@uw.edu</a>
<b><u>UW Tacoma</u></b>				
Mike Wark	(253) 692-5771			<a href="mailto:mwark@uw.edu">mwark@uw.edu</a>
John Burkhardt	(253) 692-4536			<a href="mailto:johnbjr@uw.edu">johnbjr@uw.edu</a>

\*Asterisk indicates member of Crisis Communications Core Team

## Crisis Communications Plan

### Appendix B: Crisis and Mass Communications Tools

*Note: In a crisis situation no single medium will suffice to notify all constituencies. Depending on the particular situation, some combination of the communication tools listed below may be employed to reach the widest number of people as quickly as possible.*

Communication Tool	Application	Characteristics <i>(characteristics in bold indicate more unique aspects)</i>
<b>UW Website Banner Postings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UW Homepage</li> <li>• MyUW</li> </ul>	Short messages posted as banners on official UW Web sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used 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.</li> <li>• Great source of information if UW community knows when and where to check.</li> <li>• Does not provide active notification.</li> <li>• Crisis Communications Team posts information.</li> <li>• Messages are usually less detailed and shorter.</li> <li>• Banners are color-coded by the severity of the event.</li> </ul>
<b>“UW Alert Blog” web site</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://emergency.uw.edu">emergency.uw.edu</a></li> </ul>	More detailed messages posted on this Web site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used 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.</li> <li>• Great source of information if UW community knows when and where to check.</li> <li>• Does not provide active notification.</li> <li>• Crisis Communications Team posts information.</li> <li>• Messages can be as detailed and as long as needed.</li> </ul>

Communication Tool	Application	Characteristics <i>(characteristics in bold indicate more unique aspects)</i>
<b>UW Information Hotline</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 206-897-INFO (4636)</li> <li>• 1-866-897-INFO(4636)</li> </ul>	Messages recorded on official UW hotline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used 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.</li> <li>• Great source of information if UW community knows when and where to check.</li> <li>• Does not provide active notification.</li> <li>• By default, the content of messages is automatically taken from the UW Alert Blog website, but can be manually updated as needed.</li> <li>• Messages are usually less detailed and shorter, but can be manually updated to provide more detail as needed.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>UW Alert</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e2Campus (service provider for the mass notification system)</li> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• Twitter</li> </ul>	Short messages sent to SMS text, email, and social networking accounts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SMS text message</li> <li>• UW email</li> <li>• Alternate email</li> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• Twitter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used 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.</li> <li>• Provides active notification to subscribers (opt-in) of UW Alert.</li> <li>• Subscribers need to sign up separately for the Facebook and Twitter capabilities.</li> <li>• Crisis Communications Team posts information.</li> <li>• Messages limited to approximately 140 text characters due to SMS text and Twitter limitations.</li> </ul>
<b>UW Indoor Alert</b>	Short messages broadcast to loudspeakers inside UW Seattle campus buildings. UW Bothell and UW Tacoma have separate systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used 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.</li> <li>• Messages sent using the mass notification capabilities of the fire alarm system inside buildings. Full broadcast capabilities available in approximately 100 buildings.</li> </ul>



Communication Tool	Application	Characteristics <i>(characteristics in bold indicate more unique aspects)</i>
		<p>Paging in common areas or reader boards available in approximately 45 buildings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides active notification to people within earshot of the broadcast.</li> <li>• Crisis Communication Team broadcasts messages.</li> <li>• Messages are usually less detailed and shorter, but can be customized to provide more detail as needed.</li> </ul>
<b>UW Outdoor Alert</b>	Short messages broadcast to loudspeakers on UW Seattle Campus. UW Bothell and UW Tacoma have separate systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used 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.</li> <li>• Provides active notification to people within earshot of the broadcast.</li> <li>• Crisis Communication Team broadcasts messages.</li> <li>• Messages are usually less detailed and shorter, but can be customized to provide more detail as needed.</li> </ul>
<b>UW ListServ Email</b>	Messages sent directly to recipients' email.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be used 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.</li> <li>• Provides active notification to email. However, recipients may not necessarily be able to read/receive email messages.</li> <li>• Examples of recipient groups include building coordinators, deans, chairs, AVPs, directors.</li> <li>• Message delivery dependent on network conditions and the number of recipients.</li> <li>• Messages can be as detailed and long as needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Bulk Email</b>	Email message sent to entire campus or large-scale recipient list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of the UW or threaten the health or</li> </ul>

Communication Tool	Application	<b>Characteristics</b> <i>(characteristics in bold indicate more unique aspects)</i>
		<p>safety of members of the UW community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides active notification to email. However, recipients may not necessarily be able to read/receive email messages.</li> <li>• Message delivery dependent on network conditions and the number of recipients (expect the entire campus list to take at least two hours or more to complete).</li> <li>• Messages can be as detailed and long as needed.</li> </ul>