

Emergency Notification Protocol

August 2011

This page was intentionally left blank.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Planning Assumptions.....	3
Authorized Officials.....	4
Types of Emergency Notification	5
Communication Tools	8
Pre-scripted Notification Messages	12
Appendix A: Record of Changes.....	15
Appendix B: Acronyms.....	17

This page was intentionally left blank.

Introduction

Policy Statement

Upon confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the life, safety, or security of the campus community occurring on campus, UNT will, without delay, and taking into account the safety of the community, determine the content of emergency notification messages and initiate the notification system, unless issuing a notification will, in the professional judgment of responsible authorities (including, but not limited to, the UNT Police Department, the City of Denton Fire Department, and/or City of Denton Office of Emergency Management), compromise efforts to assist a victim or to contain, respond to, or otherwise mitigate the emergency.

Examples of significant emergencies and dangerous situations that could necessitate issuance of emergency notification message(s) include:

- Bomb threat
- Campus violence
- Civil unrest
- Explosion
- Fire (localized building fire or wildfire)
- Gas leak
- Hazardous material spill
- Public health crisis
- Severe weather
- Terrorist incident

Scope

This Emergency Notification Protocol describes the procedures for the approval and issuance of emergency notification messages during emergencies and dangerous situations. It is an attachment to the UNT Emergency Management Plan (EMP) and should be viewed in the context of that document.

Training & Testing

University officials who are authorized to approve the dissemination of notification messages will be trained to:

- determine appropriate message content
- determine the segment of campus to receive notification
- choose the appropriate communication tool.

Also, the users of each communication tool will receive training on the specific procedures for issuing notifications using that particular tool¹.

¹ The training required to use most communication tools described in the UNT Emergency Notification Protocol is already a part of the regular training for many staff members.

This Emergency Notification Protocol will be tested at least once per calendar year. Tests may range from testing the functionality of communication tools to testing the ability of users to issue a notification. Additionally, testing of communication tools may be incorporated into broader emergency response exercises. Tests are described in more detail in the EMP.

Planning Assumptions

Emergency planning requires a commonly accepted set of assumed operational conditions that provide a foundation for establishing protocols and procedures. The following assumptions provide the basis for emergency notification at UNT.

1. With the exception of certain weather situations, most emergencies requiring emergency notification will arise with little to no notice and may present an immediate threat to life, safety, or security.
2. As emergencies arise, the University will balance confirming the threat with the need to provide emergency notification quickly.
3. The majority of emergencies will be reported to and dealt with by the UNT Police Department.
4. Because many situations may require an immediate response, there likely will not be time for consultation before issuing a notification.
5. A single notification system may not reach members of the campus community in a timely manner; therefore, a multilayered approach to emergency notification may be needed, using a number of communication tools depending on the situation.
6. Members of the campus community will seek additional information once notified of a dangerous situation.
7. It is probable that speculation will occur in the absence of information; therefore, notification messages should be clear and provide as much accurate information as possible.
8. Basic services, such as electricity, may be interrupted during an emergency situation, limiting some communications.
9. Regular testing of emergency notification systems is necessary to ensure that those authorized to issue notification are familiar with the protocol for their usage. Regular testing of the emergency notification systems also will be conducted to ensure that they operate as expected.

Authorized Officials

During or in the lead up to an emergency that threatens life, safety, or security, it will be necessary for notification to be provided to the UNT community with speed and accuracy. Conditions may not allow time for responders or other officials to seek approval to send notification messages.

For this reason, UNT has designated specific campus officials to serve as Authorized Officials who are empowered to authorize the issuance of emergency notifications. Each Authorized Official is expected to act within his/her realm of responsibility as defined by department mission and authorize emergency notification when experience and prudence indicate that emergency conditions warrant such actions be taken.

It is important here to draw a distinction between the *authorization* of an emergency notification and the *issuance* of a notification. *Authorizing* a notification involves:

- making a determination that notification is necessary
- formulating message content
- selecting the appropriate segment of the campus to receive notification
- choosing the appropriate communication tool.

In contrast, *issuing* a notification is the physical act of using a communication tool to send a notification message to the population. Authorized Officials likely will have not received training for all of the emergency notification systems, nor is this necessary. Upon authorization of an emergency notification, the Authorized Official will either issue the notification him/herself or contact an individual who is trained to operate the system to send it.

The following individuals are the Authorized Officials at UNT:

- President or designee
- Provost
- EOC Leader²
- Incident Commander³
- Chief of Police or designee
- Senior Police Supervisor on duty
- Emergency Management staff⁴

² As noted in the UNT Emergency Management Plan (EMP), the EOC Leader is a designee of the President who gives overall direction to campus emergency response activities and communicates directly with the Policy Group during an emergency. The primary EOC Leader is the Vice President for Finance and Administration and the line of succession for this position is specified in the EMP.

³ As noted in the UNT Emergency Management Plan, the Incident Commander is the individual charged with managing the on-scene response to an emergency situation.

⁴ Emergency Management staff are empowered to authorize and issue severe weather notifications.

Types of Emergency Notification

Emergency situations are unique occurrences and the community will require communication to varying extents depending on the situation. UNT issues four types of emergency notifications depending on the timeframe associated with a given emergency: Immediate, Impending, Status Update, and All Clear. Information is also disseminated to the larger community.

Immediate

When an imminent or already occurring situation poses an immediate threat to life, safety, or security on campus, the following actions will be taken:

1. **Confirm report.** Here, confirmation means that a UNT official(s) has verified that a legitimate emergency or dangerous situation is imminent or already occurring. However, this does not necessarily mean that all of the pertinent details are known or are even available. Depending on the situation, confirmation may be achieved through one or more of the following sources:
 - Investigation by UNT Police Department (UNTPD)
 - Investigation by other UNT campus unit, including but not limited to, Risk Management Services (RMS), Facilities, and/or the Student Health and Wellness Center (SHWC)
 - Investigation by City of Denton Fire Department and/or Police Department
 - Denton County Emergency Services and/or Health Department
 - Texas Department of State Health Services
 - Media reports originating from the incident scene

If the responding unit determines through its own investigation or through contact with another source that there exists a credible threat to the life, safety, or security of the campus community, s/he will contact an Authorized Official to inform him/her of the situation.

2. **Determine message content.** The Authorized Official will determine how much information is appropriate to disseminate at different points in time. S/he may consult with other campus officials as appropriate.

Subject to the technological restrictions of the mass notification system being used, emergency notification messages should contain the following information:

- Date and time of incident or threat
 - Location of the incident or threat
 - Nature of incident or threat
 - Actions that should be taken by affected or potentially affected populations
 - Additional details necessary to preserve safety and security
 - Sources for additional information regarding the incident or threat
3. **Determine segment of campus.** Depending on the circumstances, UNT may send emergency notification messages to the entire campus community or only a segment of the population. If a confirmed emergency situation appears likely to affect a limited segment of the campus community, emergency notification messages may be limited to that group. If the potential

exists for a very large segment of the campus community to be affected by a situation or when a situation threatens the operation of the campus as a whole, then the entire campus will be notified. In any case, there will be a continuing assessment of the situation and additional segments of the campus community may be notified if the situation warrants such action.

4. **Choose communication tool.** The Authorized Official will, considering the nature of the threat and the population to be notified, choose the appropriate communication tool(s) to utilize. UNT has at its disposal a number of tools that may be used to disseminate emergency notifications to the campus community. Available tools are described in detail in the pages that follow.
5. **Authorize emergency notification.** The Authorized Official will, having confirmed the threat and determined message content, the segment of campus to be notified, and the appropriate communication tools, authorize the dissemination of emergency notification.
6. **Issue emergency notification.** The Authorized Official will issue the notification or contact the trained user of the chosen communication tool(s) to issue it.
7. **Notify EOC Leader.** As soon as he/she is reasonably able to do so, the Authorized Official will notify the EOC Leader of the decision to issue notification.

Impending

When a situation appears likely to occur at some point in the near future that may pose a threat to life, safety, or security on campus the following actions will be taken:

1. **Confirm report.** Here, confirmation means that a UNT official(s) has verified that a legitimate emergency or dangerous situation may exist at some point in the near future. However, this does not necessarily mean that all of the pertinent details are known or are even available. Depending on the situation, confirmation may be achieved from one or more of the following sources:
 - Investigation by UNTPD
 - Investigation by other UNT staff, including but not limited to RMS, Facilities, and the SHWC
 - Investigation by Denton Fire Department or Denton Police Department
 - Denton County Health Department
 - Texas Department of State Health Services
 - Media reports originating from the incident scene

If the responding unit determines through its own investigation or through contact with another source that a credible threat to the life, safety, or security of the campus community may exist, s/he will contact an Authorized Official to inform him/her of the situation.

2. **Consult with EOC Leader.** If the report is confirmed, the Authorized Official will contact and consult with the EOC Leader to determine whether the situation requires emergency notification. The EOC Leader may choose to consult with other University officials.

- If it is determined that emergency notification is required, the EOC Leader will direct the Authorized Official to proceed using the process noted above for *Immediate* notifications or may assume that responsibility him/herself, or
- If it is determined that emergency notification is not required, the EOC Leader will direct the Authorized Official to continue to monitor the situation for further developments that may require emergency notification to be sent

Status Update

If new information is received that could further impact the life, safety, and security of the campus community, an Authorized Official may issue a status update message using the process noted above for *Immediate* notifications. Messages should contain at a minimum the following information:

- Date and time of incident or threat
- Current situation status
- Continued actions(s) that should be taken by affected or potentially affected populations
- Sources for additional information regarding the incident or threat

All Clear

When the situation has been contained and the life, safety, and security of the campus community is no longer at risk⁵, an Authorized Official will issue an “all clear” message. Messages should contain at a minimum the following information:

- Date and time of “all clear” message
- Actions required to resume normal campus operations
- Explanation of the resolution/conclusion of the incident or threat
- Sources for additional information regarding the incident or threat

Communication with the Larger Community

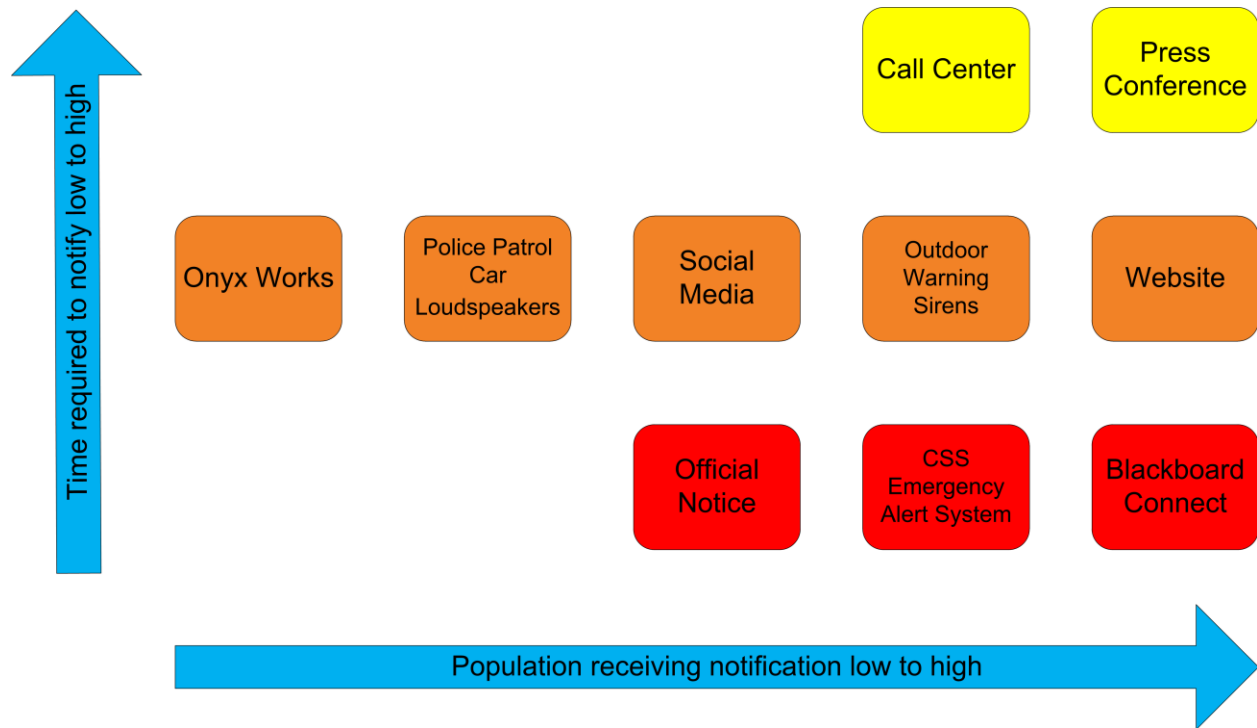
Information will also be disseminated to individuals and/or organizations outside of the campus community. Information provided to the larger community is developed and disseminated as appropriate by University Relations, Communications and Marketing (URCM) in collaboration with UNTPD and/or other responding campus units(s). Various methods may be employed to disseminate information, including the UNT website and/or communications directly with the media the local media.

⁵ In the event of a campus closure due to inclement weather, an announcement will be made on the closure but may not be made for the reopening. This is because it is to be assumed that the campus will reopen the following day unless further closure is announced.

Communication Tools

The following graphic, Figure 1 Communication Tools , may be used by Authorized Officials to determine the appropriate communication tool(s) to use during an emergency situation. Please note that the tools chosen for use may differ depending on the situation.

Figure 1 Communication Tools



Blackboard Connect

Capabilities

UNT has contracted with Blackboard Connect, a web-based mass notification service, to send SMS, voice, and/or email messages to people who are enrolled in the system. Students and employees at UNT are automatically enrolled. However, a student or employee may elect not to receive notifications from the University. This preference must be submitted electronically or in writing and must be renewed at the start of each academic year. Internet connectivity is not required to issue notification messages; notifications may be issued from a computer or by using a cell phone or landline telephone. Example text and voice messages are included at the end of this document.

Trained Users

Designated staff from the following UNT departments are trained to use issue notifications using Blackboard Connect:

- UNTPD
- URCM
- RMS
- Computing and Information Technology Center (CITC)

Website

Capabilities

The main UNT website, www.unt.edu, receives a high volume of daily traffic, providing a location for posting notifications that will be viewed by a sizeable portion of the campus community. Notifications given using this communication tool will be brief and will direct readers to where they can find additional information.

Trained Users

Designated staff in URCM are trained to issue notification messages via the main UNT website.

Official Notices

Capabilities

Official Notices are emails sent to all administrative and student email accounts to provide notification of various campus happenings, both emergency and non-emergency related.

Trained Users

Designated staff in UNTPD and URCM are trained to issue notification messages through Official Notices.

Social Media

Capabilities

UNT uses various social media websites, including Facebook and Twitter, to notify members of the campus community about events occurring on campus, both emergency and non-emergency related.

Trained Users

Designated staff in URCM are trained to issue notification messages using UNT sponsored social media sites.

Classroom Support Services Emergency Alert System

Capabilities

UNT has the ability to send brief emergency notification messages to certain UNT-managed instructor computers from a central location on campus. Once sent, the notification message is displayed as a pop-up on the screen of the computer and is visible to the user.

Trained Users

Designated staff in CITC are trained to issue notification messages using the Classroom Support Services Emergency Alert System.

(Communication tools continued on next page)

Onyx Works Fire Alarm Notifier System

Capabilities

UNT has the capability to send voice messages in a limited capacity through the fire alarm system loudspeakers of certain buildings, including new facilities and any facilities with recently retrofitted alarm systems.

Trained Users

Designated staff in Facilities are trained to issue notification messages using the Onyx Works Fire Alarm Notifier System.

Police Patrol Vehicle Loudspeakers

Capabilities

UNTPD has the ability to make roving voice announcements via loudspeakers mounted within police vehicles. Notification provided using this method is limited by the distance the sound will travel, will likely only be heard by people who are outside, and will not be available if police are engaged in response to an emergency.

Trained Users

Designated staff in UNTPD are trained to issue notification messages using police patrol vehicle loudspeakers.

Temporary Call Center

Capabilities

UNT has the capability to set up a temporary call center on campus to receive inbound calls from people inside and outside the campus community seeking information during an emergency situation. Set-up and staffing of the call center will require the coordinated efforts of several campus departments.

Trained Users

Designated staff in URCM are trained to provide emergency information shared through a temporary call center.

(Communication tools continued on next page)

Outdoor Warning Sirens

Capabilities

The City of Denton owns and operates 16 outdoor warning sirens strategically placed throughout the city, including three located on the UNT campus. Activation of the sirens occurs at the discretion of the City of Denton Emergency Management Program Manager (EMPM), Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC), or their designee based on policy⁶ established by the city. When activated, the sirens emit an audible tone that warns citizens who are outdoors that they should take shelter indoors. The sirens are typically activated for severe weather, such as when a tornado warning is issued for an area encompassing the city.

Trained Users

The City of Denton EMPM and EMC are trained to operate the Outdoor Warning Sirens. The station manager at UNT's KNTU radio station is also trained to operate the sirens in the event that the City of Denton EMC is unavailable.

⁶ The EMPM, EMC or their designated representative may activate the sirens for the following conditions: 1) the National Weather Service issues a tornado warning for the City of Denton or cloud rotation has been spotted in or near the City of Denton; 2) wind speeds at or above 73 mph and/or hail 2 inches or larger in diameter; 3) a hazardous chemical spill that involves evacuation of Denton residents to a safe location; or 4) an incident involving terrorism or suspected terrorism that involves evacuation of Denton residents to a safe location.

Pre-scripted Notification Messages

Eagle Alert Text Messages

The following emergency notification message frameworks are approved for use as *Immediate* notifications. Additional information may be added as needed. Please note that SMS messages are limited to 160 characters, but should be kept below 130 characters if possible because of cell phone carrier restrictions.

Generic Message

Eagle Alert! A [situation] has occurred near [location]. Seek shelter indoors. Check www.unt.edu for updates. (112 characters)

Armed Subject

Eagle Alert! An armed subject has been reported near [location]. Avoid the area and seek shelter immediately. (111 characters)

Winter Weather Closure

Eagle Alert! UNT is closed for [date] due to weather. Check www.unt.edu for updates. (85 characters)

Eagle Alert Voice Messages

The following emergency notification message frameworks are approved for use as Immediate notification messages. Additional information may be added as needed. Please note that voice recordings have no time limits, but a 30-35 second message is recommended for best performance.

Generic Message

Hello University of North Texas community members. This is an Eagle Alert. [Provide a brief description of the situation]. Please go to a safe location. Check www.unt.edu for more information and updates. Thank you for listening to this Eagle Alert.

Armed Subject

Hello University of North Texas community members. This is an Eagle Alert. An armed subject has been reported near [location]. Please avoid the area and seek shelter immediately. Check www.unt.edu for more information and updates. Thank you for listening to this Eagle Alert.

Winter Weather Closure

Hello University of North Texas community members. This is an Eagle Alert. The University of North Texas is closing all offices and libraries for [date] at its Denton campus due to inclement weather. Check www.unt.edu for more information and updates. Thank you for listening to this Eagle Alert.

Appendices

This page was intentionally left blank.

This page was intentionally left blank.

Appendix B: Acronyms

CITC	Computing and Information Technology Center
EMC	Emergency Management Coordinator
EMP	Emergency Management Plan
EMPM	Emergency Management Program Manager
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
RMS	Risk Management Services
SHWC	Student Health and Wellness Center
UNT	University of North Texas
UNTPD	University of North Texas Police Department
URCM	University Relations, Communications and Marketing