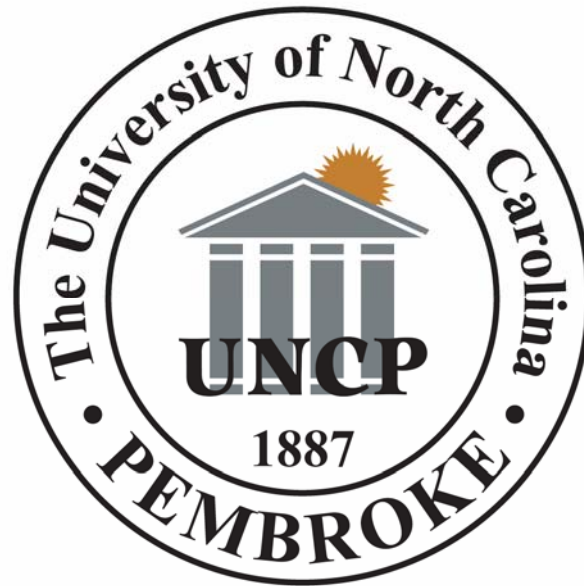


# The University of North Carolina at Pembroke



## Crisis Action Plan

[Updated April 18, 2007]

## **I. PURPOSE**

A crisis action plan provides policies and procedures for the coordination of communications within the University, and between the University, the media and the public in the event of an emergency or controversial issue. Emergencies may include fires, bomb threats, acts of terrorism, natural disasters or major crimes. Controversial issues may include police investigations, protests 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 (521-6235).** This plan not only addresses media relations and communications issues, but also includes procedures for the rapid identification of potentially harmful situations and the methods for responding to these situations quickly and effectively. It is the goal of this crisis communications 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 normal decision-making hierarchy of the University and does not supplant that decision-making process.

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## **II. PLAN OBJECTIVES**

1. To factually assess the situation and determine whether a communications response is warranted.
  2. To assemble a Crisis Action Team that will make recommendations on appropriate responses.
  3. To implement immediate action to:
    - Identify constituencies that should be informed about the situation
    - Communicate facts about the crisis
    - Minimize rumors
    - Restore order and/or confidence
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## **III. PROCEDURES**

*Assessment* – A crisis is an unplanned event that potentially presents risk to persons and facilities and can include inclement weather, accidents, criminal acts and other situations not usually associated with the University. The individual who encounters the potential crisis should gather accurate information from the appropriate sources. After fact gathering, the appropriate individual should determine whether an immediate response is necessary and, if so, should consult:

- Chancellor
- Vice Chancellor for University and Community Relations
- Director of Police and Public Safety
- University Attorney
- Appropriate Vice Chancellor

These campus representatives will determine whether to convene a Crisis Action Team, a task force that meets on-call to plan for, or react to, a disaster that may affect the University, and will immediately inform the remaining Vice Chancellors.

*Assembling Crisis Team* -- Composition of the crisis team will include at minimum (Core Team):

- Chancellor
- Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost
- Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs
- Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
- Vice Chancellor for University and Community Relations
- Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management
- Vice Chancellor for Advancement
- University Attorney
- Director of Police and Public Safety

Other personnel may be added to this core team to form the larger Crisis Action Team, which will then formulate a response based on the nature of the crisis. Those added could include the following, depending on the situation:

- Director, Health Services
- Director, Physical Plant
- Director, Food Services
- Director, University Communications
- Representative, Computing Services
- Dean of the appropriate college
- Chair, Faculty Senate
- Chair, Staff Council
- Student Representative, preferably Student Government Association President

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#### **IV. RESPONSE**

The Core Crisis Team, after assessing the nature and scope of the situation, should call together all members of the Crisis Action Team to develop a plan of action including some, or all, of the following:

1. Designate a spokesperson. In most cases the spokesperson should be the person possessing the most direct knowledge of the crisis (for example: the Campus Police Chief in the event of a campus crime).

In cases of a significant crisis, the Chancellor or the highest ranking University official must take the lead in conveying the administration's response to the crisis, showing that the University 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 Director of University Communications or his or her designee. Communications spokesperson(s) from specific areas may also be designated (i.e., Athletic Director in the case of an Athletic issue).

2. Draft a fact sheet. The fact sheet should contain a summary statement of the situation, including all known details to be released to the media. This information should be reviewed by the University Attorney, Vice Chancellor for University and Community Relations and the

appropriate Vice Chancellor and be made available to (and approved by) the Chancellor. This fact sheet should be analyzed with respect to the public's right to know and concerns for privacy and security in consultation with the University Attorney.

3. Notify key constituencies. Determine key constituencies that should be informed of the crisis. It is important to keep administration, faculty, staff and students informed of appropriate details and actions taken by the University during an emergency. Effective communications will help quell rumors, maintain morale, and ensure continued orderly operations of the University. The campus will utilize the Public Information Emergency Response (PIER) system as a primary communication tool as group contact information is pre-loaded within the system. The system also contains pre-formatted message types to speed the communication process. (The advantages and disadvantages of each PIER communication method are described in the addendum.) Among the groups that should be considered for communication in a crisis situation are:

- Law enforcement agencies
- Administration, faculty and staff
- Trustees / Office of the President
- Parents of students
- Students
- Board of Governors
- General public
- Mass media
- Foundation Board of Directors
- Accreditation organizations

4. Assign members of the Crisis Team to communicate the facts of the situation (contained in the fact sheet) and the University's intended response. Among those that may be notified, depending on the situation, are:

- Law enforcement agencies -- should be notified by Campus Police representative
- Campus administrators, faculty, staff -- Information to administrators other than those selected to serve on the Crisis Team should be provided via facsimile, electronic mail, campus mail and/or mass meetings. The Office of University and Community Relations can set up specialized broadcast e-mail messages to the campus.
- Students -- Notices to students can be submitted through mass meetings if needed. Mass meetings can be set up in GPAC. Dedicated phone lines with taped messages can also be set up by the University and Community Relations office. A voicemail broadcast to all resident students with voicemail accounts can be issued. Fliers may be distributed in residence halls.
- Trustees/Office of the President -- May be reached via telephone or facsimile. The Assistant to the Chancellor, who will coordinate any correspondence with these bodies, maintains phone lists.
- Parents of students -- A hotline or a dedicated line with taped updates on the situation can be established. Direct mail is also an option.
- Local community -- If the situation has an impact on local residents, fliers can be distributed. If appropriate, meetings can be arranged with leaders of the neighborhood associations near the University. This should be coordinated by the Vice Chancellor for University and Community Relations.
- Mass media -- University and Community Relations may prepare news releases for distribution. All media inquiries should be directed to the Office of University and Community Relations.
- Government Agencies -- If government entities (Mayor's, Governor's offices) need to be informed, this will be handled by the Vice Chancellor for University and Community Relations.

5. Alert the media. 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 Director of University Communications in consultation with the Vice Chancellor for University and Community Relations will determine logistics of the news conference including when, where and how the media will be contacted, which media will be contacted, who will supervise the news conference, who will appear, etc.
  6. Establish Crisis Command Center. Determine whether the magnitude of the crisis merits establishing a Crisis Command Center (for Campus Police and University officials) and/or a Media Briefing Center (for larger gatherings of the media for briefings or press conferences).
  7. Photography. 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. Determine need to supply video footage from files. Decide whether to provide TV footage for immediate distribution. Determine whether it is appropriate to allow location shooting by TV and newspaper photographers. Determine when, where and who will accompany the media.
  8. Radio responses. Discuss need to produce taped responses for radio, or who to make available for radio sound bytes.
  9. Other spokespersons. Identify any other individuals who may serve as spokespersons or who might be made available to the news media; assign a University and Community Relations staff person to discuss with that individual the idea of making his/her side of the issue known to the media.
  10. Internal communications. Determine strategy of internal communications to be used if the crisis affects University students and employees, working closely with Human Resources and the University newsletter. Information Technology maintains faculty and staff contact groups within the PIER system.
  11. Alternative communications. Discuss alternative or additional means of conveying information including letters to parents of students or selected constituencies of the University, letters to newspaper editors, and consultation with editorial boards.
  12. Switchboard. The University switchboard will receive high volumes of incoming telephone calls to the University and should be notified regarding the key facts of the crisis (fact sheet) and where to refer calls pertaining to the crisis.
  13. Rumor control. Consider establishing a rumor-control hotline and/or a dedicated call-in line for media use. The University has a dedicated emergency information hotline used for taped telephone updates.
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## **V. ONGOING PROCEDURES DURING CRISIS**

1. Alert University and Community Relations staff member handling newspaper and video clippings to give highest 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 Chancellor, the appropriate Vice Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor for University and Community Relations and the University Attorney.
2. Set up information files on the crisis to reside in University and Community Relations office. Material related to the crisis, including clippings, statements, letters, memos and any other documents, should be forwarded to University and Community Relations and filed in chronological order.
3. Monitor the situation at least daily, and frequently update staff and appropriate administrators.
4. Take notes during crisis to be reviewed and used to improve future crisis responses.

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## **VI. AFTERMATH COMPONENT**

Following any crisis, appropriate action must take place to ensure that members of the University community, and others as necessary receive needed information and assistance to help bring closure to the crisis as well as relief from the effects of the event. Attention also should be placed on identifying and implementing measures to improve the action plan used during the crisis.

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## **VII. COMMUNICATIONS**

Whenever possible, a public forum should be scheduled and coordinated by University and Community Relations to communicate details of the incident and events to all interested members of the University. The timeliness of this meeting is critical and every effort should be made to see that it occurs within three workdays from the close of the crisis. Representatives from Campus Police, the Vice Chancellors areas and the University Attorney should attend. Specific departments and/or individuals also may be requested to attend and participate depending upon the nature of the crisis.

Immediately following a crisis, it is imperative that the University be sensitive to the needs of faculty, staff and students who may have been personally affected by the disaster. There may be a need to assist a victim, or victims with obtaining information and/or a referral to available resources. The core team will be responsible for notifying appropriate individuals within the following designated areas: Human Resources will be the contact for employees and Student Affairs for students. Also, representatives from the two areas should follow up with their respective constituents to ensure their needs are being addressed and offer further assistance.

It is not unreasonable to expect that rumors would follow a crisis, further creating an atmosphere of anxiety. One means of combating rumors would be to take full advantage of electronic mail, rumor-control hotlines, etc. and report facts as appropriate. Voicemail broadcasts to faculty/staff, students and others with voicemail accounts can be arranged.

Depending upon the nature of the crisis, services and assistance may have been rendered by agencies, companies and/or individuals from outside the University. University and Community Relations should ensure that applicable follow-up information, as well as thank-you letters, are forwarded to appropriate persons.

The core team shall meet within 10 days following a crisis and review all actions taken as a result of the crisis to determine effectiveness and efficiency of operations and make any needed changes to the Crisis Action Plan.

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### **VIII. CLEAN UP**

The Physical Plant is responsible for overseeing and implementing services necessary to clean and repair areas and facilities damaged as a result of a crisis.

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### **IX. FACILITY EVACUATION/OPERATIONAL SHUTDOWNS**

It may become necessary to evacuate buildings and/or areas surrounding facilities to protect and ensure the safety of people. If such a situation occurs, decisions regarding work space accommodations and/or leave requirements for faculty and staff, as well as class schedules and possibly housing accommodations for students, would need to be addressed.

Issues surrounding leave for staff employees should be directed to the Human Resources Division. Note: Normally time away from work is accounted for through current leave policies. Student questions should be directed to Student Affairs, and the faculty should address any concerns with the Provost's Office.

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### **X. UPDATES**

This plan will be updated regularly. All Crisis Action Team members will receive updated copies.

The Core Crisis Team should be assembled periodically to discuss the plan and any updates. The Vice Chancellor for University and Community Relations will serve as Core Team leader and convene these meetings. Results of the meetings and revisions of the plan are to be documented. Copies of this plan should be addressed to all employees listed in the plan and any other personnel who might play a role in the event of a crisis.

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**ADDENDUM**  
**Public Information Emergency Response**  
**Communications Methods: Advantages and Disadvantages**

The University will utilize various means to communicate with multiple constituencies as defined in Section IV item 3. One of the main crisis communications systems is the Public Information Emergency Response (PIER) system. The advantages and disadvantages of each communication method available in PIER are described as follows:

- **SMS Text Messages**
  - *Advantages & Recommended Usage*
    - Best when the need is for rapid communication (when physical danger is imminent or possible)
    - Can reach recipients during non-business hours
    - Provides an immediate signal of receipt (ring, vibration)
    - Word of mouth will spread the message to others in proximity who did not receive the message
    - Message is enduring - recipient may refer to it indefinitely as a reference for URLs or phone numbers
  - *Disadvantages & Considerations*
    - Can only reach those who have opted-in / registered for the service in PIER
    - 140-160 character limit, use to point recipients to other sources of detailed information.
    - Many factors may prevent messages from reaching the recipient
      - Local cell towers may be hampered by capacity issues for large distributions.
      - Cell carriers are not required by law to deliver SMS messaging
      - Recipients may not get messages or message delivery may be delayed.
      - Phone messaging from PIER is not interactive
  
- **Text-to-Voice Phone Messages**
  - *Advantages & Recommended Usage*
    - Best when rapid communication is needed. (when physical danger is imminent or possible)
    - Especially useful for targeted messages to critical internal response teams
    - Most effective when sent to distributed phone networks (cell or home numbers)
    - Word of mouth will spread the message to others in proximity who did not receive the message
    - Rapid, detailed distribution reporting is available in the PIER
  - *Disadvantages & Considerations*
    - Large distribution delivery times are dependent upon phone system capacity to place calls
    - Can only reach those who have opted-in / registered for the service
    - Message is not enduring when a live recipient answers the call
    - Recipient will hear the message played twice and then the call will end

- Message must point recipients to other sources of detailed information
  - Message should be crafted to be "user friendly"
    - Critical information is repeated so the recipient can write down details like URLs and phone numbers
  - If a live answer or voicemail option is not available, the system will stop attempting to place the call after three unsuccessful attempts
  - Phone messaging from PIER is not interactive
    - Recipient cannot reply to message or provide feedback
    - Recipient cannot opt-out of future messages
- **Email and/or Simultaneous Posting to Web**
  - *Advantages & Recommended Usage*
    - Best used in less time-sensitive situations, when detail is required, and/or as a follow up to phone messaging.
    - Most effective during business hours and to audiences who are likely to be monitoring e-mail
    - Unlimited detail may be provided
    - Group e-mail addresses pre-loaded into PIER
    - Enduring message may be referred to later by recipient for detail
    - If simultaneously posted to Web, enduring message reaches a broader audience of Web site visitors
  - *Disadvantages & Considerations*
    - Complex SPAM settings in today's e-mail systems can be a challenge to work around if the UNCP email address is forwarded to another address
    - End-user settings may also present challenges
    - Recipient may not recognize message as critical
      - Subject line, sender address, and message content must be well crafted to create recognition of emergent issues