

Emergency Notification Protocol

UNT Health Science Center

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Emergency Notification Protocol

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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, UNTHSC 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 UNTHSC Police Department, the City of Fort Worth Fire Department, and/or City of Fort Worth 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 UNTHSC 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 tool.

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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 Health Science Center.

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 Health Science Center 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 UNTHSC 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 UNTHSC 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, UNTHSC 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.

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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 UNTHSC:

- President or designee
- Provost
- EVP Clinical Affairs
- EOC Leader¹
- Incident Commander²
- Chief of Police or designee
- Senior Police Supervisor on duty
- Safety Office staff³

¹As noted in the UNTHSC 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 Operations and the line of succession for this position is specified in the EMP.

²As noted in the UNTHSC Emergency Management Plan, the Incident Commander is the individual charged with managing the on-scene response to an emergency situation.

³Safety Office 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. UNTHSC 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 UNTHSC 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 UNTHSC Police Department (UNTHSCPD)
 - Investigation by other UNTHSC campus unit, including but not limited to, Safety Office, Facilities Management, and/or the UNT Health
 - Investigation by City of Fort Worth Fire Department and/or Police Department
 - Fort Worth 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

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3. **Determine segment of campus.** Depending on the circumstances, UNTHSC 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. UNTHSC 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 UNTHSC 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 UNTHSCPD
 - Investigation by other UNTHSC staff, including but not limited to Safety Office, Facilities Management, and UNT Health
 - Investigation by Fort Worth Fire Department or Fort Worth Police Department
 - Tarrant County Public Health Department
 - Texas Department of State Health Services
 - Media reports originating from the incident scene

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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 Health Science Center 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 risk⁴, 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

⁴In 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 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 Marketing and Communication in collaboration with UNTHSCPD and/or other responding campus units(s). Various methods may be employed to disseminate information, including the UNTHSC website and/or communications directly with the local media.

Communication Tools

The following 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.

Communication Tool Choices at UNT Health Science Center

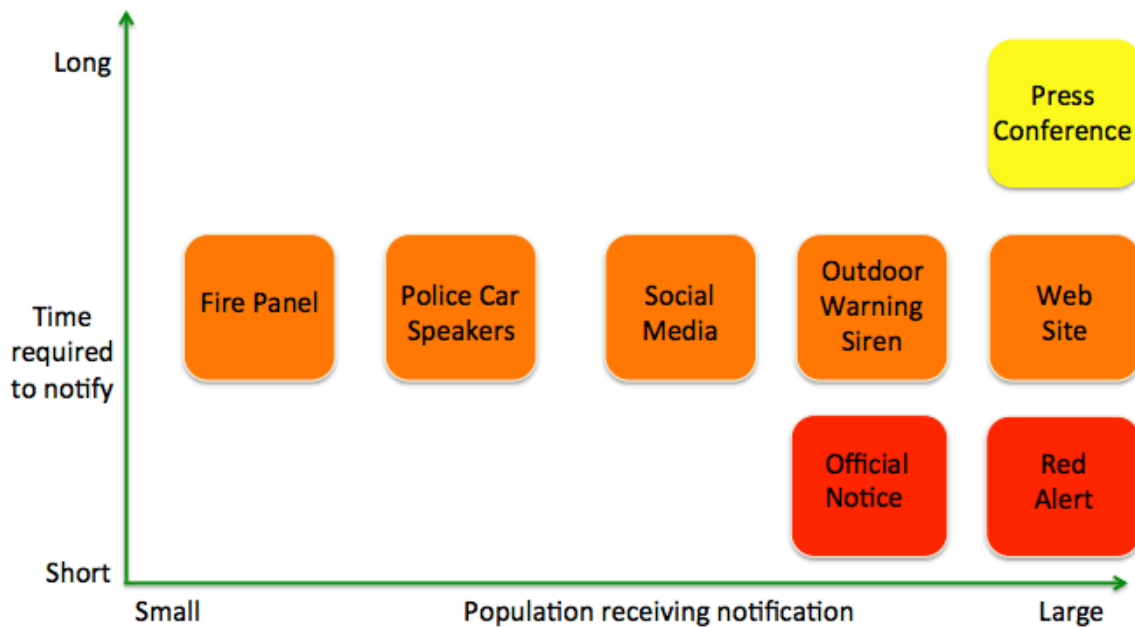


Figure 1 Communication Tools

Red Alert (Blackboard Connect)

Capabilities

UNTHSC 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. At UNTHSC, we call messages sent from this system Red Alerts. Students and employees at UNTHSC are automatically enrolled. However, a student or employee may elect not to receive notifications from the Health Science Center. This preference must be submitted electronically or in writing and must be renewed at

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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

Staff designated from the following UNTHSC departments are trained to use issue notifications using Blackboard Connect:

- UNTHSCPD
- Marketing and Communications
- Safety Office

Website

Capabilities

The main UNTHSC website, www.hsc.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 Marketing and Communications are trained to issue notification messages via the main UNTHSC website.

Official Notices (and Newsflash variation)

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 UNTHSCPD, Marketing and Communications, the President's Office, Safety Office and EOC Team members are trained to issue notification messages through Official Notices.

Social Media

Capabilities

UNTHSC 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 Marketing and Communications are trained to issue notification messages using UNTHSC sponsored social media sites.

Fire Alarm Notifier System

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Capabilities

UNTHSC has the capability to make voice announcements in a limited capacity through the fire alarm system loudspeakers of certain buildings.

Trained Users

Designated staff in Facilities Management are trained to issue notification messages using the fire alarm notifier system.

Police Patrol Vehicle Loudspeakers

Capabilities

UNTHSCPD 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 UNTHSCPD are trained to issue notification messages using police patrol vehicle loudspeakers.

Outdoor Warning Sirens

Capabilities

The City of Fort Worth owns and operates 137 outdoor warning sirens strategically placed throughout the city. Activation of the sirens occurs at the discretion of the City of Fort Worth Office of Emergency Management based on policy⁵ established by the city. When activated, the sirens emit an audible tone that warns citizens who are outdoors that they should take shelter indoors and to find out why the sirens are sounding by consulting local media, NOAA All Hazards and Weather Alert Radio and internet sources for the latest local weather and news. 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 Fort Office of Emergency Management has Duty Officers who are trained to operate the outdoor warning sirens.

⁵The Duty Officers at the Fort Worth Office of Emergency Management may active the City of Fort Worth Outdoor Warning System for the following conditions: (1) National Weather Services issues a tornado warning, (2) sustained wind greater than 60 miles per hour, (3) hail larger than one inch in diameter, (4) chemical emergency, (5) Texas Governor's declaration of a State of Emergency, (4) President of the United States declaration of a National Emergency, (7) other emergencies as directed by the City Manager's Office.

Pre-scripted Notification Messages

Red 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

Red Alert! A [situation] has occurred near [location]. Seek shelter indoors. Check www.hsc.unt.edu for updates. (89 characters excluding situation & location)

Armed Subject

Red Alert! An armed subject has been reported near [location]. Avoid the area and seek shelter immediately. (97 characters excluding location)

Winter Weather Closure

Red Alert! UNTHSC is closed for [date] due to weather. Check www.hsc.unt.edu for updates. (89 characters excluding date)

Red 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 UNT Health Science Center community members. This is a Red Alert. [Provide a brief description of the situation]. Please go to a safe location. Check www.hsc.unt.edu for more information and updates. Sent [date] at [time]. Thank you for listening to this Red Alert.

Armed Subject

Hello UNT Health Science Center community members. This is a Red Alert. An armed subject has been reported near [location]. Please avoid the area and seek shelter immediately. Check www.hsc.unt.edu for more information and updates. Sent [date] at [time]. Thank you for listening to this Red Alert.

Winter Weather Closure

Hello UNT Health Science Center community members. This is a Red Alert. The UNT Health Science Center is closing all offices, the library [and clinics] for [time and date] at its Fort Worth campus due to inclement weather. Check www.hsc.unt.edu for more information and updates. Sent [date] at [time]. Thank you for listening to this Red Alert.

Appendices

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Appendix A: Record of Changes

Date	Change entered by	Section(s) Revise
August 31, 2011	James Sims, Ph.D.	Added Introduction Added Planning Assumptions Added Authorized Officials Added Types of Emergencies Added Communication Tools Added Appendix A: Record of Changes Added Appendix B: Acronyms
April 13, 2012	James Sims, Ph.D.	Added an additional Authorized Official Updated trained communication tool users Updated Appendix B: Acronyms

Appendix B: Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
EMP	Emergency Management Plan
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EVP	Executive Vice President
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
UNTHSC	University of North Texas Health Science Center
UNTHSCPD	University of North Texas Health Science Center Police Department