



Policy: 01-60-00

Crisis Communication

OFFICE OF RECORD: Office of the President

ISSUED BY: President

APPROVED BY: Douglas D. Knowlton 01-60-00

EFFECTIVE DATE: 9/21/07

Policy

A crisis communication plan provides policies and procedures for the coordination of communication 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, natural disasters, major crimes or death. 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 THE PROPER OFFICES, INCLUDING MADISON POLICE DEPT. (9-911).**

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.

DSU also participates in the State of South Dakota's comprehensive project for the development of Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) for government agencies to ensure Continuity of Government (COG) in the case of a major epidemic or natural disaster. Members of the COOP Planning Team include the Vice President's Council and Director of Physical Plant.

Objectives of the Plan

1. To factually assess the situation and determine whether a communications response is warranted.
2. To assemble a Crisis Communication Team (CCT) that will make recommendation 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.

Procedures

Assessment-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 one of the following:

1. President
2. Vice President for Academic Affairs
3. Vice President/Dean of Student Affairs
4. Vice President for Business & Administrative Services
5. Director of Public Information

These five would be considered the core of the CCT.

Assembling Crisis Team-Additional composition of the CCT will include at a minimum:

1. Director of the Physical Plant
2. Director of Residence Life
3. Counsel
 - Legal
 - Personal
4. Police Chief
5. Campus Ministries

Other personnel can be added to complete the CCT, which will then formulate a response based on the nature of the crisis.

Incident Categories, Key Administrators and Possible Responding Offices

Listed below are incident categories which may be considered significant enough

to warrant institutional crisis communication coordination. The Director of Public Information, working with the designated officer will be responsible for coordination with other offices and staff members called upon to assist as needed:

- Faculty Death/Serious Illness-Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Faculty Misconduct-Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Staff Death/Serious Illness--Director of Human Resources
- Staff Misconduct - Director of Human Resources
- Environmental Hazards-Physical Plant
- Health or Safety Incident-Physical Plant, Red Cross
- Inclement Weather-Physical Plant, KJAM, Student Services
- International Student Incident-International Programs Coordinator
- Major Crimes--Faculty/Staff Related--Director of Human Resources
- Major Crimes--Student Related-Vice President/Dean of Student Affairs
- Politically Controversial and Disruptive Events-Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Property Damage-Physical Plant, Building Administrator
- Student Death/Serious Injury/Illness-Vice President/Dean of Student Affairs
- Student Misconduct-Vice President/Dean of Student Affairs
- Student Organization Misconduct/Incident-Vice President/Dean of Student Affairs

Response

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

1. Designate a spokesperson.
2. Draft a fact sheet.
3. Notify key constituencies: Law enforcement, Administration, Parents, etc.
4. Assign members of the CCT to communicate facts of the situation (contained in the fact sheet) and the University's intended response.
5. Alert the media.
6. Establish a crisis "command center".
7. Photography.
8. Radio responses.
9. Other spokespersons.
10. Internal communications.
11. Alternative communications.
12. Phones/Information.
13. Rumor control.

14. Loss of telephone service. Cellular phones should be used in the event that land lines are down.

Ongoing Procedures During Crisis

- Alert Public Information Office regarding handling newspaper and radio to give highest priority to scanning daily newspapers for stories related to the situation.
- Set up information files on the crisis to house in the President's Office.
- Monitor the situation at least daily and frequently update staff and administration.
- Take notes during crisis to be reviewed and used to improve future crisis response.

Release of Information and Site Logistics

All written or oral statements, including news releases, interviews, news conferences, open memoranda or letters to the news media, the University, community, or the general public, will require the authorization of the President or their Administrative designee and the Director of Public Information.

A spokesperson will be designated by the CCT to respond to news media inquiries. All media inquiries will be directed to the Public Information Office for coordination and immediate response. Other crisis communication logistical arrangements, such as parking, telecommunications, security, news conference sites, access to site and/or individuals, and other relevant tasks will be coordinated by the Public Information Office in cooperation with the CCT Administrative officer and the President or designee.

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

Communications

Public Forum
Faculty/Staff/Student Needs
Rumor Control

Follow-up with Outside Agencies (e.g., thank-yous)
Review by CCT in Timely Manner

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. The Physical Plant can be available 24 hours a day when necessary, and procedures are in place for appropriate dispatch in response to any emergency.

Facility Evacuation/Operational Shutdowns

Refer to policies in the DSU Student Handbook.

Updates

This plan will be updated regularly. All members of Vice Presidents Council will be sent the updates. The CCT should be assembled periodically to discuss the plan and any updates. 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 may play a role in the event of a crisis.

Logistical Details

Potential Crisis Command Center Sites

Lake/Kingsbury Co. Red Cross
DSU Fieldhouse and Madison Community Center
Dakota Prairie Playhouse and Conference Center

Campus Meeting Rooms (capacity)

Oyate Room - Trojan Center (12)
Seminar Room 1 - Science Center (15)
Seminar Room 2 - Science Center (15)
Alumni Room - Trojan Center (16)
Brinker Conference Room - Heston Hall (20)
Regents Room - Trojan Center (25)
Spectrum Lounge - Trojan Center (30-40)
Library 201 (60)
MarketPlace - Trojan Center (250)

Equipment Contacts

Library
Computing Services
Physical Plant

Transportation/Parking

DSU Fieldhouse and Madison Community Center
Athletic Field

Other Policies

The University should also adhere to other applicable policies including but not limited to South Dakota Board of Regents [6:12](#) Bomb Threats and the Dakota State University [Student Handbook](#) sections on Residence Life/Emergencies and University Regulations and Policies. DSU also participates in the State of South Dakota's comprehensive project for the development of Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) for government agencies.