

MOUNT VERNON NAZARENE UNIVERSITY
CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURES

All crisis response plans and materials can be found online at www.mvnu.edu/crisis.

PURPOSE

To provide a living crisis communications process as a guideline for communication during a crisis event or incident. It is meant to be a basic outline as, due to the nature of a crisis, procedures may change and will require flexibility.

CRISIS DEFINITION

Any life threatening event or situation that requires an immediate response to:

- Preserve lives and public health, or
- Protect property;

Or any event that can:

- Cause serious injuries or deaths,
 - Significantly disrupt operations (or infrastructure), or
 - Threaten the institution's financial standing or its ability to fulfill MVNU's mission.
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LEVELS

The Crisis Response Team will monitor incidents closely to determine when they will be moved from INCIDENT to CRISIS to EXTREME CRISIS and take the necessary action to deal with each situation.

For example: An ice storm accompanied by a power outage may at first be an incident, but if it lasts for more than 24 hours it may move to CRISIS or EXTREME CRISIS levels with appropriate action following.

Non-Crisis Level "Emergency Incident"

- Any significant incidents that do not rise to the level of a crisis as determined by the CR coordinator and executive team members (Examples: the natural death of a member of the campus community, death in an auto accident, etc.)
- May still require immediate action by appropriate MVNU personnel.

"Crisis"

- The majority of events will fall into this category (see Definition above).

"Extreme Crisis"

- In certain circumstances, the CR coordinator and executive team may deem a crisis to be an "extreme crisis."
 - This may happen when the effects of damage are widespread, affecting the surrounding area.
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THE IMPORTANCE

- Lasting impact on institutional reputation and constituent support.
 - Emotions usually accompany crises, so images formed from crisis reporting are especially important in shaping long-lasting public impressions of the institution.
 - Priority will be on maintaining timely and open communications with the media, providing complete and accurate information that has been confirmed about the situation and MVNU's response to the crisis at hand.
 - Communications with the media will be frequent throughout the duration of the emergency situation.
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ASPECTS

First Responders

- First responders should contact 911 if appropriate. (*No need to dial 9+911, just dial 911.*)
- **Campus Safety** should also be notified immediately by calling **extension 4000**.

Crisis Response Team (CRT)

- In case of an emergency of any kind, the first person notified is **Dennis Martin, the Crisis Response Coordinator**. The chain of notification within the team flows from an organized Phone Tree Chart (listed as an *ADDENDUM I*). If an individual in the chain is either unavailable or is the subject or target of the crisis, the responsibility for continuing the chain rests with the next person in line or a back-up team member.
- The CRT is responsible for carrying out the Crisis Response Plan which outlines emergency procedures and campus operations during a crisis.

Crisis Communications Team (CCT)

- A variety of campus personnel form the Crisis Communications Team. They will be put into effect as soon as possible after a situation has been deemed a crisis by the CRT.
- The CCT is responsible for carrying out necessary communications both internally and externally regarding the crisis situation, and for following up with members of the media after the crisis is over.
- *If power is out* and/or computer service is unavailable, the Director of Communications (**Carrie Crouch**) and/or Web Publicist (**Carlos Serrão**) may be working from **Switchboard Operator Pam Maynard's office** (Pioneer Hall) **or the basement of the library** as these locations will have computers and power.

Official Spokesperson

- MVNU's official spokesperson is **Dr. Henry Spaulding**, University Provost.
- Having one spokesperson builds trust and credibility with our audiences. If a crisis is long-lasting, other individuals will be brought in as necessary.

Media Center

- WITH ELECTRIC: **FEBC Round Room 133**
- NO ELECTRIC: **Thorne Library Room 14 (this room will have power)**
- Here, media will receive the most up-to-the minute reports on the crisis situation.
- Please direct members of the media to the appropriate location.

Phone Hotline

- MVNU will activate the Phone Hotline (**ext. 5000**).
- Ext. 5000 will appear in any official communication and online for external audiences.

Phone Bank

- May be established and operated out of various personnel offices (mostly Alumni, Church Relations, and Development) if high volume of calls. Will be manned by these individuals.

- Switchboard lines will roll over if deemed necessary.

Web Sites

- Primary: www.mvnu.edu/crisis (or a link will be on home page)
- If servers down: mvnucrisis.blogspot.com
- Twitter updates: www.twitter.com/mvnunews
- **Carlos Serrao** will be responsible for web updates during a crisis.
- His back-up is **Sheila Wachtel, ext. 4227 or CELL (419) 560-0544.**

Internal

- Will receive regular updates by voicemail, e-mail, or web.
- Text message alerts are available. To sign up, log into my.mvnu.edu or call ext. 4420.
- Information you receive from the Communications Office is what you may pass on to any members of the media who ask questions.
- **Faculty, staff, and students have a right NOT to speak with the media.** The media has access only to the public areas, no residence halls, apartment units, or private offices. Any situations where individuals feel a reporter has abused rights should be reported to the Director of Communications.
- **Addendum II** contains guidelines and hints in dealing with the media in a crisis.

External

- Includes parents, alumni, media, trustees, churches, educational organizations, and anyone else outside of MVNU.
- Will be coordinated by the Director of Communications in conjunction with Dr. Spaulding.

AGS

- AGS has its own Crisis Comm Plan, which is a subset of this plan.
- The plan addresses the specialized needs of its students, faculty, and external constituencies.
- **Dr. Henry Spaulding**, University Provost, is the official spokesperson (followed by Lanette Sessink).

PROCESS

The Director of Communications, under the direction of the **University Provost** and the **Executive Director of Marketing**, is responsible for the development and dissemination of *most* University communications in the event of a campus emergency. This includes internal, external, and media.

The MVNU Web site and e-mail system will be utilized as key mediums for updating our campus community and the public on the details of the situation and actions we are taking.

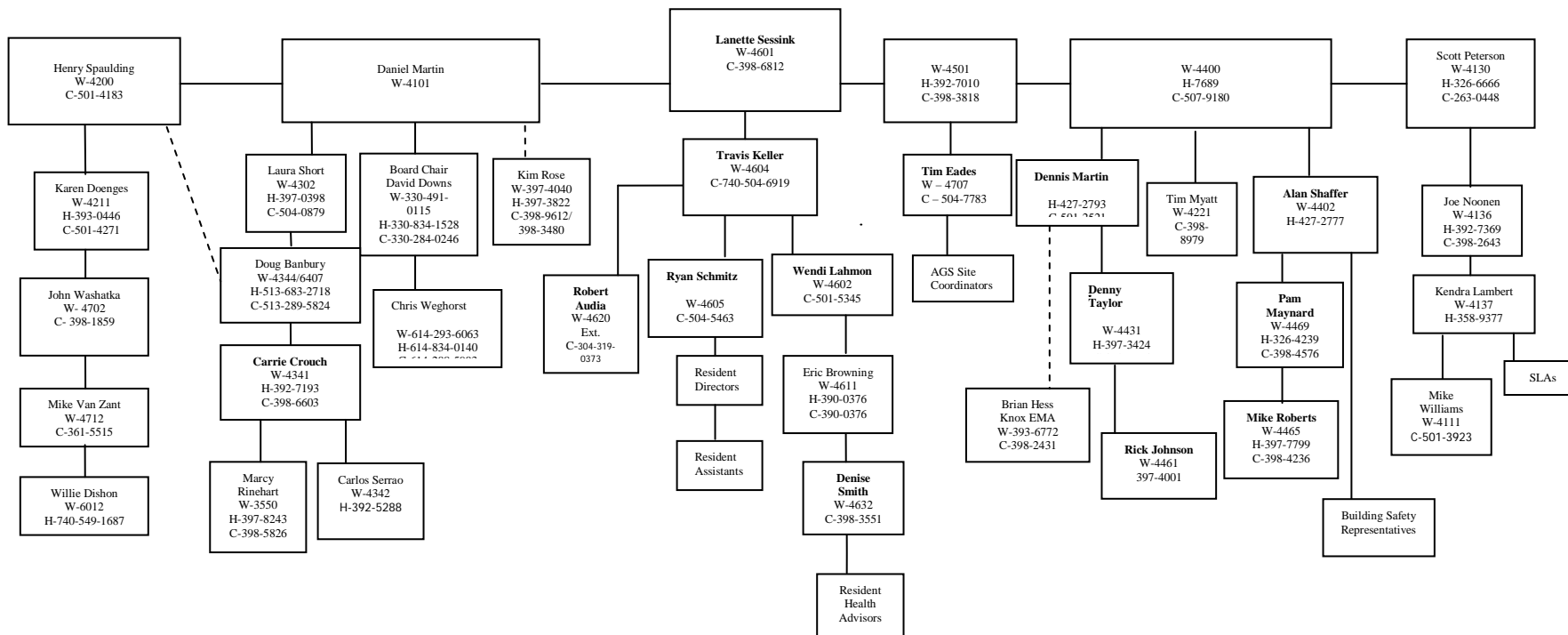
- Prepare immediate statement(s) for switchboard, phone bank, e-mail, Web site, and voicemail. Provide continuous updates as new information becomes available.
- Inform internal audience of situation, providing as much information as possible. Provide continuous updates as new information becomes available.
- Work with senior administrators to craft messages for release to the media. If media are on campus, gather them in the Media Center (FEBC 133) where updates will be given on a regular time schedule. Provide continuous updates as new information becomes available.
- Work with Official Spokesperson Henry Spaulding to prepare him for media.
- Ensure crisis photography and video are being obtained by proper authorities.

ADDENDUM I:

**CRISIS RESPONSE PHONE TREE
(12/7/2009)**

FIRST RESPONDERS TO CALL 911 AS APPROPRIATE

When you are called, please call the person(s) immediately connected to your name.
If you reach a voice mail/answering machine, leave a message requesting a call back
and continue to call down the list until you reach a live person. Repeat the process until everyone has been notified.



A Team-**Bold**

Knox Community Hospital 393-9000
Mount Vernon Police Dept. 397-2222
Mount Vernon Fire Dept. 397-4444
Knox County Emergency Management Agency 393-6772
After 4:00 p.m. 397-2727

The **Crisis Response Executive Team** will meet in the Facilities Services Conference Room. The Bailey Conference Room (HCC 207) will serve as the back-up location.

The **Senior Leadership Team** will meet in the Cougar Room (PSU) and the Religion Conference Room (HCC) will be the back-up location.

----- Denotes optional calls as needed

ADDENDUM II:

GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

In an emergency, the media is MVNU's most important link to the public. Developing and maintaining positive relationships with the media outlets is crucial to successful crisis communications.

Dos

- Give all media equal access to information. Don't favor one media outlet or organization over another.
- When appropriate, conduct press briefings and interviews. Give local and national media equal time.
- Try to observe all media deadlines.
- Escort media representatives when possible to ensure safety.
- Only give the media information that you have received through campus communications.
- Keep records of the information that was released to whom and the date and time.
- Direct or take members of the media to the Media Center (FEBC 133).

Don'ts

- Do not offer speculations or gossip.
- Do **NOT** answer a reporter's question with "no comment." This only leads them to believe we are hiding something.
- Do not be condescending or underestimate the reporter's intelligence, but do make sure the reporter understands your responses.
- Remember you do **NOT** have to talk with a member of the media.
- Do not place blame for the incident.
- Do not cover up or mislead the media.

Privacy

Any media inquiries that involve information about specific students should be directed to the Vice President for Student Development or to the Director of Communications. Such inquiries will be handled in strict compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This federal law protects the confidentiality of a student's education record and some personal information.

Information that may be given includes information found in a directory:

- Student's full name (*but not in some cases, i.e. medical privacy*)
- Campus address and phone number
- Dates of attendance and degrees
- Honors and certificates received
- Class level (e.g. freshman)
- Academic major(s)

Grades may only be provided to the media if a student wishes to release the information in connection with an award or scholarship (check with the Director of Communications to find out if student has given such permission).

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