



Crisis Planning and CAP Alerts for Digital Signage

DIGITAL SIGNAGE WHITE PAPER



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Defining a Crisis

By definition, a crisis is an unexpected and detrimental situation or event. A thorough crisis communications plan can play a significant role by transforming the unexpected into the anticipated, and clarifying how to respond effectively.

Knowing how to define a crisis and then immediately trigger a reliable action plan is crucial because the health and safety of your audience depends on the speed and accuracy of your response.

After Hurricane Katrina, one survey indicated that only 67 percent of communicators interviewed had a formal crisis communication plan. Of the organizations that had actually experienced a crisis, 42 percent said they still didn't have a formal crisis communication plan, and 54 percent said they didn't have a plan because they lacked the support of senior managers.



Communicators must be prepared to leverage the available technology to get the word out as fast as possible. Although this white paper focuses on alert strategies for higher education venues, the principles and advice apply to all organizations.

Emergency Standards

There are several warning system standards and pieces of legislation that may influence how you set up and operate your emergency alert system. What follows here is a brief overview of some, but you should research on your own to find out which apply to you – not just to make sure you are in compliance with local laws, but to take advantage of opportunities to get grants or additional funding for your emergency plan.

Emergency Alert System (EAS)

The [EAS](#) is a national public warning system that requires broadcasters, cable television systems, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio radio service (SDARS) providers, and direct broadcast satellite (DBS) providers to deliver communications capability to the President to address the American public during a national emergency.

The EAS system may also be used by state and local authorities to deliver important emergency information, such as AMBER alerts or weather warnings targeted to specific areas.

Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)

[IPAWS](#) is a joint venture of FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security, providing a multi-agency emergency population warning system in the United States. It was developed after 9/11, but is still being legislated and has had limited testing to date.

IPAWS is designed to provide rapid, reliable and effective communication to the public in case of major emergencies such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks. The system uses open standard digital formats such as the EDXL-based Common Alerting Protocol v1.2 for its messages, allowing for interoperable dissemination to a wide range of third party receivers.

Common Alerting Protocol (CAP)

[CAP](#) is a simple but general format for exchanging all-hazard emergency alerts and public warnings over all kinds of networks. OASIS (Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards) is responsible for the CAP standard.

CAP allows a consistent emergency message to be disseminated simultaneously over many different warning systems, simplifying the task of getting the news out and increasing the warning's effectiveness. By coordinating several systems, CAP also allows people to detect emerging patterns in local warnings that seem to be unrelated at first glance, but indicate a greater threat or hazard is developing in a locale.

CAP provides a template for effective warning messages by combining best practices from real-world experience and academic research. This is what most campuses will use to actually deliver emergency announcements, and one method you can use to send alerts to digital signs.

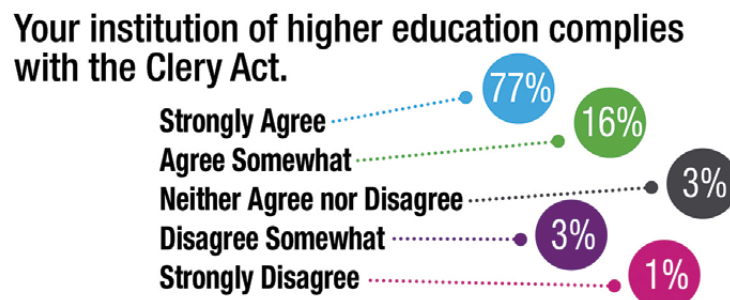
Legal Influences

[The Clery Act \(Federal statute 20 U.S.C. § 1092\(f\)\)](#) – A 1990 amendment to the Higher Education Act that requires institutions to give timely warnings of crimes that represent a threat to the safety of students or employees.

[U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Opportunity Act \(HEOA\)](#) – Campus Safety – Legislation that creates disaster and relief loan programs to institutions recovering from emergencies, and establishes a competitive matching grant program to help institutions develop and implement campus safety plans, including communications systems and training.

[National Fire Protection Association's National Fire Alarm and Signaling Systems Code](#) – The most extensive revision since 1993, expanded to include mass notification requirements in a variety of serious emergency situations.

[UL \(Underwriters Laboratories\) 2572 Mass Notification Systems](#) – Sets criteria for how all components of mass notification systems are designed and tested.



Survey results from Campus Safety Magazine; featured in the [Campus Safety 2013 Yearbook](#)

Funding Options

Cost is the number one challenge to implementing mass notification solutions for campuses. There are a number of programs available to help offset your cash outlay.

Since 2003, US colleges and universities have applied, as sub-grantees, for funding under the Homeland Security Grant Program administered by the Grant Programs Directorate within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Homeland Security Grant Program includes the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP), the Urban Areas Security Grant Program (UASI), the Citizen Corps Program (CCP), the Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS), and Operation Stonegarden (OPSG).

On July 9, 2009, the U.S. Department of Education awarded more than \$9.7 Million to higher education institutions for emergency management plans. Additionally, on August 19, 2010, the U.S. Department of Education awarded \$28.8 Million to school districts to improve readiness and emergency response plans.

In FY 2013, the total amount of funds distributed under the HSGP was \$968,389,689. Below is the funding distribution across FY 2014 HSGP's three related grant programs:

HSGP Programs	FY 2014 Allocation
State Homeland Security Program (SHSP)	\$401,346,000
Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI)	\$587,000,000
Operation Stonegarden (OPSG)	\$55,000,000
Total	\$1,043,346,000

Colleges and universities have also applied for the following grant programs:

- Fire Prevention and Safety Grants (FP&S)
- The Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG)
- The Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP)

[The Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\)](#) discretionary grant program supports the efforts of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to create, strengthen, and improve emergency management plans at the district and school-building levels, including training school personnel on emergency management procedures; communicating with parents about emergency plans and procedures; and coordinating with local law enforcement, public safety or emergency management, public health, and mental health agencies and local government.

If you're using digital signage (DS) as part of your alert system, you can also offset costs by realizing revenue streams. We have another white paper on this topic – [Digital Signage Advertising Revenue for Campuses](#) – that goes into detail on this subject.

Building a Crisis Communications Plan

A crisis communications plan outlines what you need to communicate, how, when and to whom. It is usually a subset of an overall crisis plan that includes emergency operations procedures and business recovery tactics.

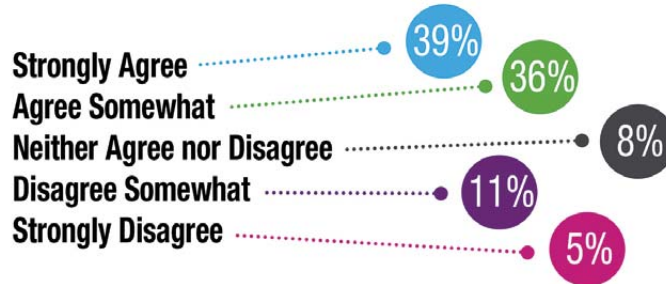
Effective crisis communication strategies will typically consider achieving most, if not all, of the following objectives:

- Maintaining connectivity
- Being readily accessible to the news media
- Showing empathy for the people involved
- Allowing distributed access
- Streamlining communication processes
- Maintaining information security
- Ensuring uninterrupted audit trails
- Delivering high-volume communications
- Supporting multi-channel communications
- Removing dependencies on paper-based processes

Your plan needs to be clear and easy to execute. Each member of your organization should be able to take action and fulfill the plan in an emergency without convoluted directions or burdensome hierarchies to slog through.

Emotions often run high in emergencies, so providing simple visual tools that guide users through the plan, such as checklists, can be extremely helpful.

Your institution's top administrators take safety and security seriously.



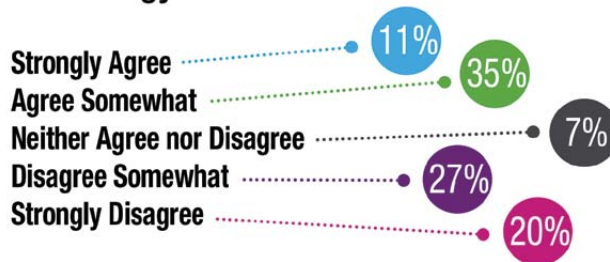
Survey results from Campus Safety Magazine; featured in the [Campus Safety 2013 Yearbook](#)

Essential Buy-In

Developing an emergency strategy has to start at the top, with executive cooperation throughout the creation, testing and maintenance of your crisis plan. Without the support of every senior manager and department, even a beautifully crafted plan will be ineffective – and that can cost time, money and endanger people.

Every element of the plan should be pre-authorized by management. Executives and legal departments should sign off on the plan in advance so that there are no meetings or approval processes to slow execution. Your entire process should be as streamlined as possible, with each person clear on the chain of authority and that chain should be as short as possible. The worst time to try to make decisions is during a crisis.

Your institution dedicates enough money, resources and personnel to campus safety/security efforts and technology.



Survey results from Campus Safety Magazine; featured in the [Campus Safety 2013 Yearbook](#)

The concept of people being injured, or worse, is so frightening and so outside normal, everyday experience that people often can't commit to the idea, but it's in everyone's interests to ensure that everyone who is at your facility is as safe as they can possibly be.

Be Prepared

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) does not define what constitutes a "significant emergency" or "dangerous situation". So campuses need to define their emergencies long before one occurs.

A series of scenarios should be explored and prepared for, with detailed instructions for each. Consider every possible emergency on an organizational, local, state, national and even global level:

- Fire
- Severe weather
- Power outage
- Workplace violence
- Terrorist alert
- Biological event/toxic spill
- Evacuation
- Computer virus
- National or international breaking news
- Physical plant issue

Each crisis has its own challenges. In some instances, you may need to prepare to execute your plan without the help of technology, or from an identified off-site crisis center.

Time Sensitive

Put bluntly, timely communication during a crisis can save lives. Your plan should target four main audiences:

- On-site students, employees and visitors
- Emergency workers, such as police, fire and EMS
- Families and the community at large
- Press and social media

People on the premises should be immediately informed of the emergency and told precisely what is expected of them. When creating and testing the plan, every available means of communication should be explored to find the most reliable and efficient delivery method. Starting with the most effective, each communication channel should be employed to ensure maximum coverage. Make sure email distribution lists and phone trees are regularly updated.

The plan should include a complete list of emergency contacts, and the entire plan should be readily available at all times to everyone in the organization. In addition to local fire, police and EMS services, don't forget to include less common resources such as Hazmat, FBI, and IT recovery contacts.

Pre-written statements, posts and tweets should be shaped so that only minimal facts need to be added to press releases and social media sites. You don't want people under stress and time constraints hampered with cumbersome writing assignments during a crisis.

The first hour is critical. Protocols and timelines for communications to all groups should be established in advance. Be specific – instead of just listing the order of contact, set deadlines such as “Call emergency workers within two minutes.” and “Notify all on-site personnel within three minutes.”

Try out your plans BEFORE an emergency happens. Testing is essential to getting your plan right, so be sure to build in crisis drills during plan development and on a continuing basis to guarantee that everyone in your organization is prepared. Better to practice and be prepared but never need it than to be poorly-prepared if an emergency does arise.

Technology Tools

During a crisis, you can get the word out much faster with communications technologies than without them. However, technology shouldn't be your only resource. Staff and students should be trained in how to notify people near them of a crisis. Emergency training courses can help prepare individuals for leadership under extreme circumstances.

The point is – you need layers. Don't rely on a single delivery method to get the word out during a crisis.

Because every emergency alert system has its strengths and weaknesses, it is generally considered a best practice for campuses to have several modes of mass notification in place.

Popular alert methods:

- Text Messaging (SMS)
- Loudspeakers
- E-mails
- Digital displays
- Website announcements
- Pop-up alerts via computers/projectors in rooms
- Sirens
- Intercoms/Overhead paging
- Social networking websites
- Phone trees/telephony
- Call boxes
- Radio announcements
- Bull horns
- TV announcements
- Weather radios
- Posters



Text Messaging (SMS)

Text messaging was once thought the silver bullet for alert notices, but this hasn't proven true. Because SMS alerts rely on people subscribing to the service, you can't rely on reaching everyone with a text message. (86% of Campus Safety survey clients use text messaging today, yet only 48% of the student populations in those schools have signed up.)

Also, keep in mind that some people may not have SMS service, their phones may be off, or the cellular network may be down or overloaded. Texts can be useful as another source of information, but should not be the only element in an effective crisis plan.

Digital Signage Alert Triggers

One of the main advantages of digital signs is their high visibility when placed in public areas. Whatever software you are using to drive your DS should have the ability to interrupt its service with crisis announcements.

In most cases, you'll want to concentrate your DS messages on what to do in an emergency, not the alert notice itself. If people are in public areas, they need to know where to go to reach safety. It doesn't do any good to broadcast a tornado warning without telling people where they can take shelter. Inadequate instructions simply add more chaos to an unpredictable situation.

Message saturation is essential. Consider the number of displays, locations and placement of your displays in concert with emergency notices. If you only have one display per building, you may want some additional displays. If your screens are only near exits, you may want to place more in the interior. You want every single person at your institution to be reachable.

Your alert capabilities will depend on the systems you have in place. In terms of DS, your content management software should have the ability to trigger alerts, but you'll need to verify the exact features and configurations available to you. For example, AxisTV's Alert Notification Module allows for manual alert overrides using the software interface and provides multiple ways for integrated third-party systems to automatically trigger your alert notices – by posting CAP messages to the content manager, sending emails to the content manager, or by communicating with the available API.

Four Ways to Trigger an AxisTV Alert Notice:

Manual



CAP



API



Email



Manual

- Users can activate alerts by clicking a button within the DS software interface.
- You can supplant all scheduled content on the entire system or select individual and grouped players to reach targeted regions.

Email

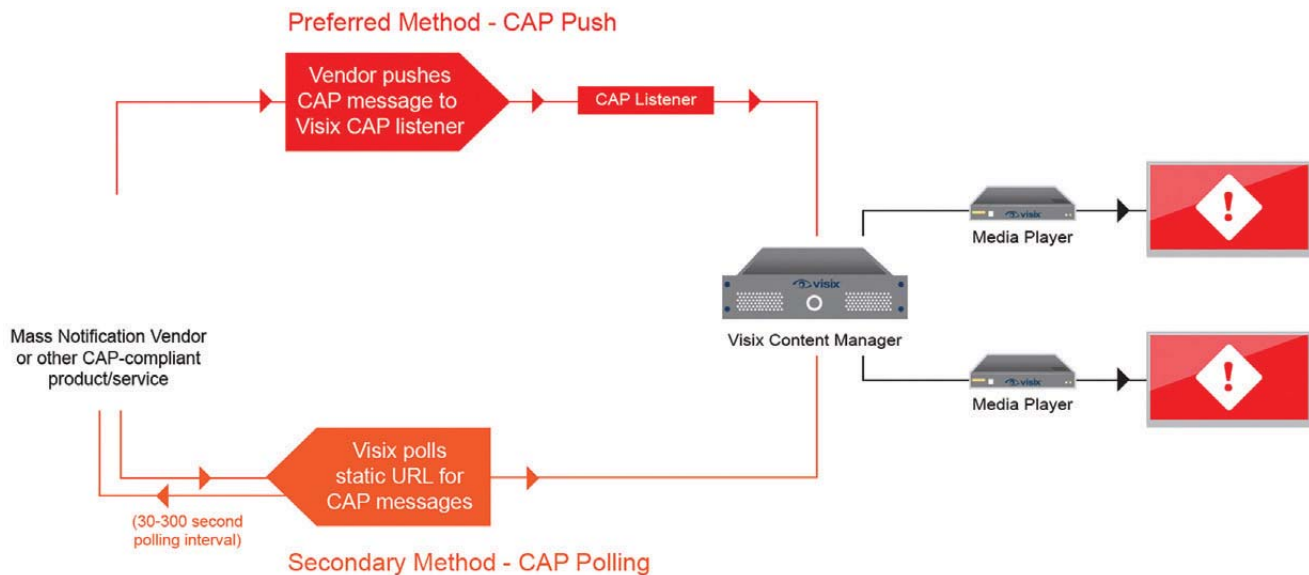
- Email is an option for campuses with alert messaging vendors that do not currently support CAP.
- This allows a user to submit an email to the DS system that is turned into a message on screen(s).

Remote Control Application Programming Interface (API)

- This is highly effective, but programming by the client or a third party is required.
- This is also the least secure method as you are working outside your own network and software.

CAP Alert

There are two different methods to integrate CAP alerts with your AxisTV software: CAP Listener and CAP Polling.

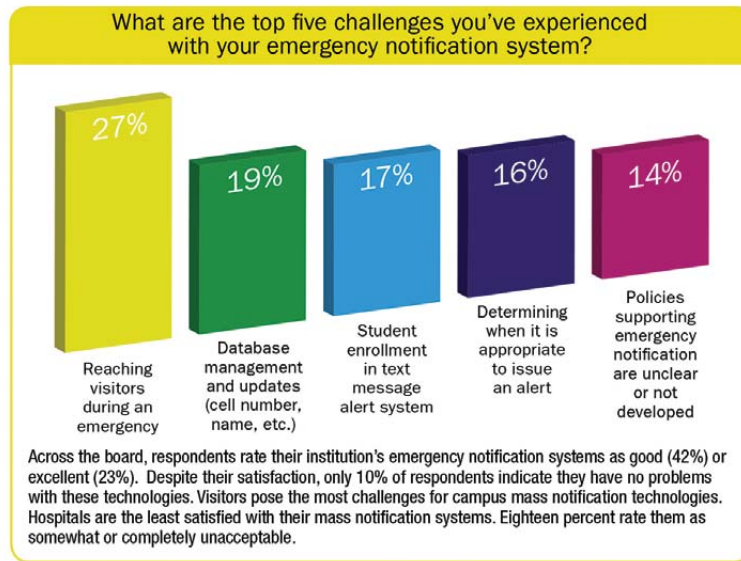


CAP Listener – Preferred Method

- The CAP Listener resides on its own PC or server.
- It listens for an HTTP post (alert message) from a third-party vendor (i.e. RaveMobile).
- The third-party vendor must be willing to modify their product code to post to the URL of the CAP Listener (e.g. RaveMobile’s “RaveAlert”).

CAP Polling – Secondary Method

- CAP polls for a static URL that contains the Alert Message at predefined intervals (30 – 300 second polling interval).
- This increases the amount of chatter on the network.
- It also increases the time it will take for an alert message to reach your endpoints.



Survey results from Campus Safety Magazine; featured in the [Campus Safety 2013 Yearbook](#)

Technology Challenges

The number one problem facing campuses wanting to deploy a comprehensive alert structure is the number of disparate systems they have to tie together. None of the above technologies is designed to work together, and a lot of them don't have an API or mechanism that lets them talk together.

This is where CAP comes in as a real-world solution. Campuses can use CAP to trigger alerts across all the technologies designed to recognize those triggers. However, you'll have to identify one point of origin to activate all the others and remain consistent.

Some institutions have 20 or more methods they use. If each of those methods has its own activation process, the amount of time it takes to send a message via each modality could be burdensome. For example, depending on who is working at the time, it can take Florida State University (FSU) between 13 and 20 minutes to activate all of its 27 systems.

To address this problem, many mass notification vendors now offer solutions that can alert campus communities via text, email, digital display signs, website announcements, computer pop-ups and more. FSU Emergency Management Coordinator Dave Bujak warns that although this method is enticing, it creates one common point of failure. "If for some reason that third party vendor fails, you've just lost five of your alerting methods at one time," he says.

Although not all officials at other campuses are as concerned about this issue, Bujak is weary of relying too much on vendors. Instead, his institution is creating its own "easy" button where multiple modes of alerts can be activated all at once. "We know that even though we've built our own mask for multiple systems, we still have independent systems," he explains. "So, if for some reason our mask fails, we can still activate our system independently. If you're using a third party vendor and their mask fails, you have no recourse."

Try to seek out solutions with APIs (or interfaces) capable of being triggered by external sources. Some technologies may have built-in data triggers. Others, such as traditional contact closure devices (e.g., physical handles for fire alarms), will need to be converted to a data system, like computer-aided facility management software.

Network infrastructure is also an important consideration. Most data networks are not designed to include redundant systems, so all emergency scenarios should have contingencies built in for the failure or unavailability of any or all communication technologies, such as computer networks, phones and power.

Make it Clear

You want every element of your emergency alert plan to be extremely clear. Sounds should be standardized and unique, so people know instantly “Oh, that’s an alarm.” DS alerts should be made clear, with a standard background (perhaps bright red) and large text fonts. Telephone communications, social media posts, and SMS texts should be concise, standardized and instantly recognizable.

One good idea, used by the University of Iowa, is branding campus alert communications. They have called it “Hawk Alert” and have a simple and easy-to-read logo that immediately identifies that the message about to come is an important emergency alert. They have also included a standard script and voice for audio alerts:

Alert template: severe weather

This is UI Police Chief Chuck Green. Please listen to this important alert.

Text-to-speech enunciated:

<Date><Time> A <severe weather threat> is reported to be in <location> and heading in the direction of <2nd location>. Avoid <locations> or, if anywhere near these areas, take safe cover immediately. See <website address – spelled out> for further details as available. Call 911 for emergency services or to report injuries.

SMS script:

<severe weather threat> in <location> and heading towards <2nd location>. Avoid <locations> or take cover. See <website address>.

Test, Test and Test Again

In a perfect world, all of these elements would be interconnected and centralized, and you would simply push a big red button to send the alert out on all systems. However, you probably don’t have such a comprehensive emergency tool, so it’s vital to test each and every method of communication regularly to ensure that everything goes smoothly if you need it.

Roleplay scenarios for every conceivable emergency on a regular basis to keep everyone on their toes and ready. Conduct regular, extensive tests of the overall system - not just isolated elements. Remember: even an unsuccessful test is a success - identifying and correcting weak spots is an important step to streamlining and perfecting your emergency alert system. It is not possible to have an alert system that is too efficient, so you should constantly be improving and updating your system.

Repetition also makes the emergency system a part of the fabric of life at your facility, much like the fire drills we had in grammar school. The point is to make reactions to emergencies predictable and instantaneous – adrenalin will run high and having everyone thoroughly trained can only help the situation.

Look to the Future

Be sure to include recovery tactics in your plan. Getting up and running as soon as possible after an emergency is crucial - as is communicating with the community at large. Showing progress toward normality after a crisis is essential to calming people down and restoring their trust.

There is no time that can better demonstrate the power of effective communications than during a crisis. If you’ve laid the groundwork, developed and implemented a good, organized plan, and have drilled your staff and audience on using it effectively, you should have few troubles during an emergency. A well-crafted crisis plan can save lives, money and lessen the strain of an emergency on both your people and your organization.

Hopefully you will never need to use your emergency system, but if you do, you will want it to be fast and as effective as possible – reaching the maximum number of people in the shortest amount of time.

Your Campus Emergency Notification Check-List*

* Courtesy of Campus Safety Magazine, "Your Campus Emergency Notification Check-List" by Robin Hattersley Gray

Be sure to carry out these tasks to ensure your mass alert systems reach everyone on campus during a crisis.

1. Conduct a risk analysis. "Understand what you are trying to solve or the risk you must mitigate," says Cooper Notification Vice President of Marketing Ted Millburn. "Based on the study, figure out, 'Do I solve the problem with a process or a technology?' Unless you do that, you are throwing either a technology solution or process solution at the last emergency that occurred on your campus."

2. Involve the [IT department](#) in your planning process, and develop buy-in with other on-campus stakeholders, including parking, facilities, athletics and administrators.

3. Share resources (funds, technology and personnel) with other departments on campus as well as off-campus agencies, such as county emergency management and local police. Will the systems you are considering work with outside agencies? Also consider less traditional [sources of funding](#), such as endowments, financing and vendor price structuring.

4. Use a layered approach that incorporates several different technologies so that the strengths of each solution compensate for the weaknesses of the others. Be certain to account for the [hearing and sight impaired](#).

5. Conduct [site assessments](#) for each technology being deployed. For example, with loudspeaker systems, such as Giant Voice Alerts, test the technology to see how intelligible it is when it is used on campus. Consider the campus' geography. Will trees, buildings or hills block or distort the sound? For SMS text solutions, does your campus have cell phone dead zones? Test the signal strength, and if it is weak, work with the cell carriers to see if they can improve it.

6. Determine ahead of time who has the authority to [issue emergency alerts](#). Also develop the standard operating procedures concurrently with the purchase of the system.

7. Create clear, [concise audible and written emergency messages](#) ahead of time that can be edited on the fly. The messages should originate from a campus or district authority and should be vetted by the campus communications department.

8. Use and test the system often (but not so often that your audience becomes immune to it). A reasonable amount of system usage, especially for campus-wide closures related to severe weather, encourages employees and students to sign up for the campus emergency alert SMS text system. It also helps educate them regarding campus emergency preparedness and procedures.

9. Develop various groups of first responders and decision makers (police, residence life, emergency management, facilities, etc.) who are designated to receive messages more frequently. That way, during an actual emergency when the system must reach everyone in the community, campus emergency notification system administrators have actually practiced deploying the solutions.

"This helps to avoid what I like to call the 'big red button with dust on it' syndrome," says Rick Tiene, who is Cooper Notification's Vice President of Homeland Security Solutions. "It's generally the same people who also have to send out the tornado or active shooter alerts. They are just sending the messages to different [more] people."

10. Automate your SMS text alert database so that the system automatically adds and deletes cell numbers and E-mails appropriately. It is best to tie in student enrollment and human resource databases for this task.

11. Incorporate adequate logical security measures so that your campus' SMS text message database won't be hacked. Maintaining the database onsite and only providing a vendor with as much information as it needs could also help prevent a data breach.

12. Avoid spam filters by whitelisting. Campuses or their vendors can work with cell carriers and aggregators so their emergency messages aren't blocked.

13. Consolidate the activation process of all of your systems. Although it is a best practice to adopt several modes of mass notification, activating each separately can be time consuming. Many emergency alert vendors now offer solutions that can notify campus communities via text, E-mail, digital signage, website announcements, computer pop-ups and more simultaneously.

14. Educate the campus community on how the system is used and what to expect and do during an emergency. Campuses often do this via E-mail announcements, new student and staff orientations, website announcements, teacher/parent meetings, parent association meetings and so on.

Real-World Examples

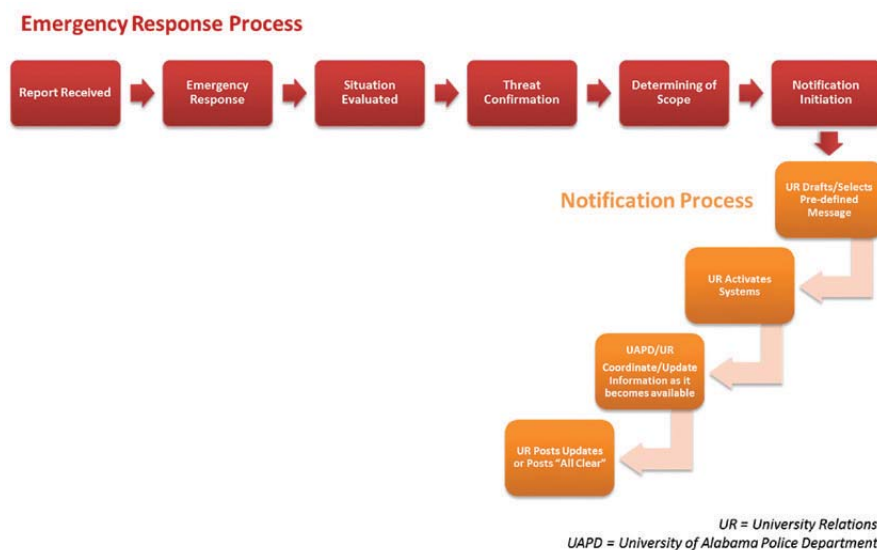
University of Alabama (Blackboard Connect)

The University of Alabama's Emergency Operation Plan directs the University Police (UAPD) to respond and manage campus emergencies with oversight by the Emergency Preparedness Response Policy Group (EPRPG).

The EPRPG is made up of key University officials representing senior leadership positions. The Office of University Relations (UR) is responsible for emergency notification and crisis communication. For redundancy, UAPD and the Office of Emergency Preparedness serve as a backup to UR. In terms of managing emergency occurrences and response, everything has been scripted in advance.

Emergency Response and Notification Process

- 1) UAPD and other agencies respond to a reported emergency, evaluate the situation, and confirm there is a campus threat.
- 2) UAPD and other appropriate response agencies assess whether the threat is area-specific or campus-wide.
- 3) UAPD notifies UR.
- 4) UR drafts or selects pre-scripted message.
- 5) UR activates emergency notification systems.
- 6) UAPD coordinates with UR and provides updated information when available.
- 7) UR posts updates or communicates "All Clear" as appropriate Crisis Communication.



University of Alabama's Emergency Response Process Workflow courtesy of The University of Alabama 2011 Annual Campus Security and Fire Safety Report

University at Buffalo (RaveAlert!)

Members of the UB community can expect to receive quick communication and accurate information during an urgent situation, whether it's an incident on campus, or severe weather that affects university operations.

UB Alert is UB's official crisis communication vehicle. This system sends emergency messages to everyone who has a @buffalo.edu email address, and also has triggers for SMS, RSS, Twitter, Facebook and CAP alert messages for digital signs.

Anyone who wants to receive UB Alert text messages on their phone, or have email alerts sent to an alternative email address, such as a Gmail or Hotmail account, must sign up via the UB Alert website. Learn more at <http://emergency.buffalo.edu/>.

The screenshot shows a web-based form for creating a CAP alert. It is divided into three numbered steps: 1. Alert Name, 2. Alert Methods, and 3. Deliver Alert To. Step 1 has a text input field with 'Snow Emergency' and a 25-character limit. Step 2 shows a dropdown menu with options: Text, Mail, Voice, RSS, Twitter, Facebook, and CAP. Step 3 shows a dropdown menu with 'Profile: Snow Emergency Message for Visix Details'. Below this, there are four text input fields: 'Event' (25 characters), 'Headline' (108 characters), 'Description' (948 characters), and 'Instruction' (935 characters). At the bottom, there is a 'Deliver Alert To - Everyone (168 users) Edit' section and a 'Send Now' button.

The RaveAlert! CAP message creation screen. Screenshot courtesy of Rave Mobile

Virginia Commonwealth University

The Department of Homeland Security offered Virginia Commonwealth University a grant if they purchased a digital signage system to develop public emergency communications. This extra money allowed them to get a unified software solution, which is now the centerpiece of a campus-wide digital signage system that delivers news, announcements and emergency alerts across 15 buildings and over a television network connected to the RF (CCTV) system.

"To communicate, you've got to use multiple channels because different people perceive messages differently," says Sam Kennedy, Assistant Director of User Services. "We have a wide-focus communication plan that assists word-of-mouth. People must be integrated into the solution or it ultimately has no meaning."

The software gets information to VCU's audience wherever they are, delivering crisis communications to thousands of endpoints. At the click of a mouse, it pushes information to 40 channel players, which send content to 50 displays, desktop screensavers, and RSS-enabled devices like smartphones. Because the software is browser-based, they can activate the alert mode from any PC or smartphone – anything with access to the web – to alert the whole network.

The system was first implemented in residence halls near security check-in desks. "These desks are staffed 24/7," explains Kennedy, "and the displays have small sirens on them that can sound a tone in case of emergency, drawing attention to the display." Sirens are also placed around the campus to alert people to the fact that something is happening and cue them to check displays for vital information.

Kennedy concludes, "We always had to fight the noise, but digital signage is clearer and more dynamic. Plus, our ability to push information beyond displays to PCs and portable devices is invaluable."

Coastal Carolina University

For educational institutions, the elephant in the room is campus violence. Marvin Marozas, former Chief Information Officer and Special IT Projects Coordinator at Coastal Carolina University, explains, “The tragedy that happened at Virginia Tech really raised everyone’s awareness in terms of the role digital signage could play in emergency messaging on a university campus.”

Being able to tie their DS software into the school’s unified mass emergency notification system was an important factor. “That had appeal even before the Virginia Tech tragedy, but after that, key administrators realized the campus needed to have some major messaging capability in the event of an emergency.”

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

After a tornado struck the Florida campus of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Brian Wilson and his team began expanding the use of their DS system. “The tornado took out a couple of buildings on campus, and people had to be relocated,” he tells us. Right after students came back from holiday break, we used digital and posted signs, and set up computers and monitors in different locations just to get information out.”

During this time of crisis, much of the information updating was manual and time-consuming. Wilson believes that their DS system would have made the difference if it had been used more extensively. “We knew that if we’d had this tool implemented across campus, we could have gotten the information out in about three minutes.”

Further Reading

Legal, Federal and State Resources

- [Federal Emergency Management Association \(FEMA\) - Alerting Authorities](#)
- [National Fire Protection Association - NFPA 72: National Fire Alarm and Signaling Code](#)
- [OASIS Standards - CAP v.1.1](#)
- [OASIS Press Release: Common Alerting Protocol CAP 1.2 Receives Approval as OASIS Standard](#)
- [Underwriters Laboratories TOC for UL 2572](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education - Action Guide for Emergency Management at Institutions of Higher Education](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education - The Emergency Management for Higher Education \(EMHE\) grant program](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education - Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance \(TA\) Center](#)
- [U.S. Department of Homeland Security – Grant Funding, Planning and Training and links to additional Resources](#)

Articles, Research and Reports

- [Mass Notification for Higher Education - Tod Schneider, National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities](#)
- [Navigating the Complexities of Emergency Notification Systems Integration - Campus Safety Magazine](#)
- [Amassing Mass Notification Know-How - Campus Safety Magazine](#)
- [How to Select a Digital Signage System - Campus Safety Magazine](#)
- [9 Ways to Optimize Your Mass Notification Systems - Campus Safety Magazine](#)
- [27 Emergency Notification Best Practices - Campus Safety Magazine](#)
- [Your Mass Notification Cheat Sheet - Campus Safety Magazine](#)
- [Your Emergency Notification Cheat Sheet - Campus Safety Magazine](#)
- [Timely Warnings vs. Emergency Notifications - Campus Safety Magazine](#)
- [Without Integration Alert Notification is Useless - Digital Signage Today](#)
- [UB alert informs campus in emergency - UB Reporter](#)

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