

Crisis Communication Plan

Delaware Technical Community College

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Section I. Purpose

The purpose of the Crisis Communication Plan is to effectively prepare Delaware Technical Community College to manage emergency communication at every level of the institution. This Plan outlines procedures that ensure concise, consistent, credible, accurate and timely communication with internal and external constituents in the event of an emergency incident. Crises may take many forms – violent acts, natural disasters, mechanical breakdowns, or any type of unplanned event that disrupts the College’s normal activities or adversely impacts or threatens life, health, or property at one or more campus locations.

The priority of the College in crisis communication is to ensure the safety and welfare of all members of the campus, continue the academic operation of the College whenever possible, ensure business continuity and reduce financial loss, and safeguard the institution’s integrity. Decisions regarding communication during an emergency incident will be guided by the commitment to public disclosure and the public’s legitimate right to be informed, balanced by a concern for the right of the individual for privacy and personal security, as well as the impact immediate public disclosure could have on impending investigations or legal actions. All communication during an emergency incident will be developed and disseminated in accordance with the College’s Media Policy. *See Protocols and Guidelines, Appendix A – Media Policy.*

Section II. Identification of Threat Levels and Essential Communication Personnel

Threat Assessment Levels

In the event of an incident that occurs outside of normal operating procedures, the first step is to assess the level of the incident. Not all incidents require the same degree of response, and each incident will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Incidents will be classified by the director of public safety and/or Campus chief of public safety into one of the following levels, and each level will prompt a series of actions to communicate with internal and external constituents (Crisis Communication Plan), as well as actions to respond to the incident (Emergency Management Plan). **It is important to note that this plan is focused on communication;** see Delaware Tech Emergency Management Plan for incident response guidelines.

Threat Assessment Levels:

Threat Level	Definition	Examples
Level 1	Non-emergency level. Represents a short-term situation affecting one campus location where limited outside resources are needed, a defined area is involved, and no injuries or anticipated threat exists. Control of the incident is within the capabilities of the College/Campus employees with limited outside agency involvement.	Inclement weather; Automatic fire alarm; Small chemical spill; Localized water pipe break; Student demonstration; Petty theft; Vandalism; Non-emergency police/medical/fire response
Level 2	Minor emergency level. Represents a situation with a predictable duration that may adversely impact or threaten life, health, or property of one campus location. Control of the incident may require outside agency assistance.	Localized fire or explosion; Chemical spill that requires hazardous materials response; Unarmed burglary; Water main break; Loss of heat or power to a building; Abrupt illness or death of a student; Threat to campus; Threat of infectious disease; Off-site incident without injuries involving College employees/students

Threat Level	Definition	Examples
Level 3	Moderate/Major Emergency level. Represents a situation of unpredictable duration that disrupts or potentially affects operations of the College or may adversely impact or threaten life, health, or property on a large scale at one or more campus locations. Control of the incident will require outside agencies in addition to College/Campus personnel. Long-term implications may result.	Widespread fire, flood, or chemical release; Loss of heat or power to multiple buildings; Large scale civil unrest on Campus; Confirmed infectious disease outbreak; Off-site incident involving injuries to employees/students; Threat of acts of terrorism; Threat of natural disaster; Acts of violence on or near campus; Computer virus
Level 4	Disaster level. Represents an incident occurring within the College that potentially disrupts, impairs or halts operations and/or adversely impacts or threatens life, health, or property/systems on a large scale. Control of the incident requires multiple outside agencies in addition to College/Campus personnel. Long term implications may result for the Campus(es) and/or surrounding communities.	Armed intruder; Severe natural disasters; Widespread extended power outage; Acts of terrorism; Building collapse; Large-scale chemical release

NOTE ON THREAT LEVELS: The assessment and reaction of an incident or emergency should be swift, knowing that at the beginning of the response only preliminary information will be available. College/Campus priorities will be to assure the public welfare, protect critical infrastructure, and provide support to emergency response organizations/operations. As the situation develops, designated College officials will have to continually reassess the threat and response activities, which means the threat levels may change due to evolving information.

Essential Communication Personnel

For all emergency incidents on the campus, the initial campus point of contact for communication is the director of communication and planning. If the director of communication and planning is not available, back-up personnel will be contacted as identified in ***Go-Kit, Appendix I – Essential Communication Personnel***.

The involvement of communication personnel and the identification of College spokesperson(s) will be driven by the threat level assigned to the incident. It is important to note that a campus or collegewide communication professional will be designated to serve on the College/Campus Emergency Management Team, which represents a full range of personnel necessary to respond to the emergency, including the director of public safety, chief legal counsel, vice president and campus director, and president. This individual will work in collaboration with the College/Campus Emergency Management Team to provide leadership and strategic direction for all communication and then utilize communication personnel and/or the Crisis Communication Team to disseminate the message(s). The designation of a campus or collegewide individual to serve on the College/Campus Emergency Management Team will be based on the threat level assigned.

A Crisis Communication Team also may be deployed to manage communication activity related to the incident. Members of the Crisis Communication Team include:

Crisis Communication Team:

Position	Location
Vice President for Strategic Communication and Marketing (Chair)	Office of the President
Director of Communication and Planning	Stanton/George, Terry and Owens Campuses
Public Relations Managers	Stanton/George, Terry and Owens Campuses
Public Information Officer	Owens Campus

The vice president for strategic communication and marketing may add administrators and other key personnel to the Crisis Communication Team as deemed necessary and in accordance with the type of incident.

The director of communication and planning (or the vice president for strategic communication and marketing if the Crisis Communication Team is deployed) will utilize the following chart to involve other essential communication personnel and identify possible College spokespersons. The determination of a spokesperson will be made based on the type of incident.

Essential Communications Personnel and Spokespersons:

Threat Level	Essential Communication Personnel	Possible College Spokespersons
Level 1	Director of Communication and Planning Campus Public Relations Manager Crisis Communication Team*	Director of Communication and Planning Campus Chief of Public Safety Director of Public Safety* Vice President for Strategic Communication and Marketing Social Media Manager Public Relations Manager Subject Matter Expert(s)** Vice President and Campus Director***
Level 2	Director of Communication and Planning Campus Public Relations Manager Crisis Communication Team*	Director of Communication and Planning Campus Chief of Public Safety Director of Public Safety** Vice President for Strategic Communication and Marketing Social Media Manager Public Relations Manager Subject Matter Expert(s)** Vice President and Campus Director***
Level 3	Crisis Communication Team	Director of Public Safety Vice President for Strategic Communication and Marketing Subject Matter Expert(s)** President***
Level 4	Crisis Communication Team	Director of Public Safety Vice President for Strategic Communication and Marketing Subject Matter Expert(s)** President***

**For Level 1 and 2 incidents, with the exception of inclement weather delays and closures, the director of communication and planning will confer with the vice president for strategic communication and marketing to determine if the Crisis Communication Team should be deployed. If deployed, the director of public safety, vice president for strategic communication and marketing will serve as the spokesperson.*

***When necessary, subject matter experts will be assigned as spokespersons by the vice president and campus director, or vice president for strategic communication and marketing.*

****The vice president and campus director and president should never serve as the general spokesperson. These positions should only provide prepared remarks related to the concern for student/employees, the humanity/compassion/spirit of the institution, and the vibrancy/functionality of the institution.*

For threats identified as Level 1 or Level 2, in the event of absence of the director of communication and planning and/or one of the campus essential communication personnel, **See Go-Kit, Appendix I – Essential Communication Personnel** for back-up contacts. Essential communication personnel will participate in briefings with the College/Campus Emergency Management Team to determine communication strategies and to gather facts and other information needed to craft messages for constituents and the media. **See Protocols and Guidelines, Appendix B – Initial Briefing Agenda.**

Crisis Communication Team Logistics

When the Crisis Communication Team is deployed, it may be necessary for members of the Team to be executing communication strategies from multiple campus locations in order to get information out in an efficient and timely manner. The Team will utilize a dedicated phone conference line and Fuze, the College’s desktop videoconferencing software to meet as a group, discuss strategies, and execute its responsibilities. **See Go-Kit, Appendix K – Phone and Videoconference Instructions.**

External Spokesperson(s)

It is important to note that in the event of certain criminal incidents, law enforcement or other emergency response officials may automatically become the spokesperson for the incident. When this occurs, College leadership should work closely with the external spokesperson to craft the message. In addition, College leadership needs to be visible with emergency responders as they deliver messages to media.

Section III. Roles and Responsibilities

Communication Personnel

The role of communication personnel in an emergency incident is to develop and disseminate all communication utilizing the guidelines outlined in the Crisis Communication Plan. These responsibilities require that communication personnel collaborate with other members of the Emergency Management Team to determine strategy and initiate immediate action.

As noted in Section II, the scope of involvement of communication personnel will be driven by the threat level assigned to the emergency incident. Based on the threat level assigned, communication will be managed solely by Campus communication personnel or at a collegewide level utilizing the Crisis Communication Team.

Please refer to **Go-Kit, Appendix J – Roles and Responsibilities** for specific roles and responsibilities for Communication personnel.

Spokesperson

In the event that an emergency incident requires the appointment of a College spokesperson, the person designated to serve in that role will be made based on the type of incident (See Section II – Essential Communication Personnel). The spokesperson will participate in briefings with the Emergency Management Team and Crisis Communication Team in order to fully understand the context behind strategies and messages. **See Protocols and Guidelines, Appendix C – Guidelines for Spokesperson** for additional responsibilities and direction.

Despite the level or type of incident, the positions of vice president and campus director and president should never serve as the general spokesperson. If comments by these positions are necessary, they will be limited to expressing concern for the employees/students; discussing the humanity, compassion, and spirit of the institution; and/or assuring the vibrancy and functionality of the College.

Section IV. Communicating with Constituents

Definition of Constituents

The following key constituencies will be communicated with by the Crisis Communication Team during an emergency incident:

- Faculty/Staff
- Students
- Campus Visitors
- Media
- Community

Additional constituent groups (e.g. Board of Trustees, Child Development Center parents/relatives and educational partners, Government and Community Leaders) will be notified through existing internal processes during an emergency event. Other constituent groups (e.g. alumni, neighbors of the College) may be communicated with during the emergency incident or after the incident in the post incident and recovery phase to provide clear and accurate information regarding the emergency incident.

Order of Notification

The order in which constituents will be notified in the event of an emergency incident will be based on the threat level of the situation. In all cases internal constituents (e.g. employees and students) will receive priority notification.

Communication Tools

Effective crisis communication employs multiple and layered methods of communication with constituents. In the event of an emergency incident, the Crisis Communication Team will use **Go-Kit, Appendix L – Decision Matrix for Use of Communication Tools** once the threat level has been determined to select appropriate methods for communicating information (e.g. ENS alert system, mass email, social media, building announcement, digital signage, etc.)

Developing the Message(s)

During an emergency incident the appropriate individual(s) (see Section III – Roles and Responsibilities) will develop the message(s) for conveying key information using **Protocols and Guidelines, Appendix D – Key Messages Fact Sheet**. The message will be developed also using **Protocols and Guidelines, Appendix E – Guidelines for Drafting Messages** and **Go-Kit, Appendix M – Sample Messages**.

Disseminating the Message(s)

Once the threat level has been determined, the appropriate constituents to receive the message will be determined and the appropriate communication tools will be utilized based on **Go-Kit, Appendix L – Decision Matrix for Use of Communication Tools. Protocols and Guidelines, Appendix C – Guidelines for Spokesperson** will be utilized to guide the spokesperson's message. Messages will be disseminated by the assigned individual(s) (see Section III – Roles and Responsibilities) based on the level of the emergency incident. Messages will be disseminated via phone, text, email, Facebook and Twitter using the College's emergency notification system, Regroup. **See Go-Kit, Appendix N – Instructions for Deploying Emergency Notification System (ENS)**. Emergency messages also will be placed on the website as appropriate.

Social Media

The College will use the official College's Facebook and Twitter accounts as an additional means to disseminate information regarding an emergency incident and provide a channel for feedback and questions. Throughout the

duration of the crisis, all pre-scheduled social media and Banner Communication Module (BCM) posts will be halted and the only messages being shared through social media and Banner will be those related to the emergency incident.

Website

The website serves as an important tool in communicating emergency incident information to all constituents and will be utilized as appropriate based on the threat level assigned to the incident. In the event of most emergency incidents, the red emergency alert bar on the home page will serve as the main area for up-to-date information regarding the incident.

In the event of some Level 3 and Level 4 emergency incidents, the College may decide to activate a streamlined version of the home page for the duration of the emergency incident with the sole purpose of providing emergency information to the public. In cases of widespread power or system failure, the College may launch a mirror version of the website from a designated third-party vendor to ensure uninterrupted web communications during the emergency incident. The vice president for institutional effectiveness and college relations will work in collaboration with the web manager to make these types of decisions based on the emergency incident.

Section V. Communicating with the Media

In the event of an emergency incident, communication with the media will be imperative and determined by the crisis level. The message will be developed using ***Protocols and Guidelines, Appendix D – Key Messages Fact Sheet, Go-Kit Appendix M – Sample Messages*** and ***Protocols and Guidelines, Appendix F – Guidelines for Drafting Media Alerts and Press Releases***.

The ***1A Crisis Communication Media List***, located on the Collegewide Marketing shared drive, will be used to disseminate messages.

Media Inquiry

In the event of an emergency incident, all media inquiries should be directed to the appropriate individual as indicated in the roles and responsibilities section. The vice president for strategic communication and marketing will be notified immediately by the director of communication and planning of an emergency incident. In the event of a Level 3 or Level 4 emergency incident, the vice president for strategic communication and marketing will become the media contact.

Information should always be communicated to the internal audience first prior to being released externally.

Go-Kit, Appendix O – Media Inquiry Worksheet will be utilized to document all media inquiries. Receptionists will be alerted as to whom to refer media calls pertaining to the emergency incident. Only College personnel designated as the College spokesperson(s) should respond to media inquiries or make statements regarding the emergency incident.

Press Conference

A determination will be made by the Crisis Communication Team as to whether a press conference is the appropriate means of conveying information to the news media and public. The Crisis Communication Team will determine the logistics of the press conference (when, where, how the media will be contacted, who will be contacted). ***Go-Kit, Appendix P – Press Conference Logistics Worksheet*** will be utilized to organize the press conference, a College spokesperson will be determined, and a joint press conference may be held with external

agencies depending upon the emergency incident. The communication professional who is the designated lead to serve on the College/Campus Emergency Management Team will have final approval for all media interaction.

Media Kit

A media kit is a tool box for the media to construct their story. A media kit may include, but is not limited to, general information about the College and the official statement or key message regarding the emergency incident. A visual (graphic or photograph) will be included, if applicable, to help tell the story – refer to **Protocol and Guidelines, Appendix G – Media Kit Guidelines** for details.

Spokesperson Training

Individuals designated as a College spokesperson should initially receive formal training from an external organization specializing in crisis communication. Thereafter the College should hold bi-annual training sessions for individuals designated as a College spokesperson. **Protocol and Guidelines, Appendix C – Guidelines for Spokesperson** will be used.

Section VI. Legal Requirements

Clery Act

Timely Warning

Delaware Technical Community College, in its commitment to safety on campus and in compliance with the Clery Act, has procedures in place to alert the campus and/or college community in a timely manner of certain crimes reported to the Public Safety Office that occur either on or near campus. The decision to issue a timely warning is decided on a case by case basis in light of all the facts surrounding an incident, including factors such as the nature of the crime, the continuing threat to the campus and/or College community, and the possible risk of compromising law enforcement efforts. In the event of a Clery reportable crime that, in the judgement of the Director of Public Safety, Campus Public Safety Chiefs, or other administrative officials, constitutes a serious or continuing threat to the College community, a campus or college wide timely warning, also known as a “Crime Alert” will be issued. The Vice President for Strategic Communication and Marketing, Directors of Communication and Planning, or other administrative officials develops the content of the message and initiates distribution of the timely warning. See **Go-Kit, Appendix Q – Timely Warning Standard Operating Procedure**.

The warning will be issued to College students, faculty and staff through a variety of sources, including but not limited to, the emergency notification system (Text, email, phone) and College email system. The purpose of a timely warning or “Crime Alert” is to maintain an informed campus and to enable members of the campus community to better protect themselves. Additionally, Crime Alerts will provide the impacted community with available information that will aid in the prevention of similar occurrences. It is the policy of Delaware Tech that, when issuing a timely warning about crimes occurring within the designated campus geography, the names of the victims are considered confidential and will, therefore, be withheld from the messages. See **Go-Kit, Appendix Q – Timely Warning Standard Operating Procedure**.

Members of the community who are interested in receiving information about emergencies on campus should sign up for the emergency notification system at <https://www.dtcc.edu/about/news/stay-connected/alert>.

Emergency Notification

The College follows its emergency response and evacuation procedures to notify the campus community of any on-campus emergency situation that presents an immediate threat to the health or safety of students and/or employees.

Emergency Notification and Timely Warning, Sorting Out the Differences:

Emergency Notification	Timely Warning
Scope: Required for on any significant emergency or dangerous situation (e.g., crime, severe storm, chemical spill, disease outbreak)	Scope: Required for certain Clery Act crimes (criminal homicide, sex offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, arson, and arrest for liquor law violations, drug law violations, illegal weapons possessions, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking) that represent an ongoing threat to the safety of the campus community (e.g. a string of robberies on campus)
Why: Emergency notification is triggered by an event that is currently occurring on or imminently threatening the campus. Initiate emergency notification procedures for any significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or employees occurring on campus.	Why: Timely warnings are triggered by serious crimes that have already occurred (but may be continuing) but which represent an ongoing threat. The College must issue a timely warning for certain crimes that are considered by the institution to represent a serious or continuing threat to students and employees.
Where: Applies to situations that occur on campus.	Where: Applies to crimes that occur on campus, in or on non-campus buildings or property, and on public property.
When: Initiate procedures immediately upon confirmation that a dangerous situation or emergency exists or threatens.	When: Issue a warning as soon as the pertinent information is available.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allows the College to disclose directory information without written consent, unless the student has notified the College that directory information cannot be disclosed without prior written consent. **See *Protocols and Guidelines, Appendix E – Guidelines for Drafting Messages.***

Section VII. Monitoring Media and Social Networking Sites

Monitoring

All forms of media will be monitored in the event of an emergency incident. Traditional media will be monitored using Google Alerts. Social media, including College Facebook and Twitter, also will be monitored in the event of an emergency incident. A designee from Marketing and Public Relations will monitor all forms of media ongoing at the beginning of the emergency incident, and at least hourly until the initial phase of the emergency incident is concluded.

Media will be monitored and documented to track sentiment and media coverage. An external monitoring service may be contracted in the event of a Level 3 or Level 4 threat to ensure the College is aware of and has

the opportunity to respond to inaccurate information or rumors. **See Go-Kit, Appendix R- Media Monitoring Logsheet.**

In the event of an extended crisis or one that results in a vast amount of traditional or social media attention, the College will activate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with an outside agency to monitor, analyze and report the coverage and related comments, and advise the College on strategies to counter any misinformation or negative impact on the institution.

Misinformation/Responding to Inaccuracies

Responses to inaccurate information, reported by the media, will be determined by the director of communication and planning and the vice president for strategic communication and marketing.

If substantive inaccuracies (inaccuracies that have the potential to further the emergency incident or problem) occur then a plan for correcting the inaccuracy must be initiated. The correct information must be communicated quickly, widely and by a credible source (i.e. College spokesperson or official). **See Protocol and Guidelines, Appendix H –Guidelines for Responding to Inaccurate Information or Rumors.**

The **Go-Kit, Appendix S – Social Media Crisis Communication Decision Chart** will be used to determine if the College will respond to an individual’s social media post or tweet. Responses should be made in a timely manner. Comments that are incorrect, belligerent and/or abusive may be deleted.

Rumor Control

A member of the Communications team will be appointed to monitor rumors. This individual will identify potential detrimental rumors and consult with the director of communication and planning and the vice president for strategic communication and marketing depending on the threat level to rapidly determine effective ways to deal with rumors.

Rumor control should follow the same guidelines as misinformation (see above.)

Section VIII. Recovery/Post Incident Evaluation

Post-Incident Communication

After the emergency incident is declared over, the Crisis Communication Team will work in conjunction with the Emergency Management Team to determine the needed steps for recovery/return to normal operations (level 2 threats or higher). The Crisis Communication Team will identify the communication needed for recovery/return to normal operations **See Go-Kit, Appendix T – Post Incident Communication Worksheet.**

The following post-incident responsibilities and follow-up would fall to the director of communication and planning at specific campus of the emergency incident or if the Crisis Communication Team has been deployed, to the vice president for strategic communication and marketing in collaboration with the directors of communication and planning. Follow-up action should occur within a two-week time frame following the emergency incident.

Post-Incident Responsibilities and Follow-Up

Once the emergency incident has been resolved, it is important to review the Crisis Communication Plan and identify, examine, and reinforce what worked or did not work in response to the emergency incident at hand. Crisis Communication Team personnel involved in the various stages of the incident should be interviewed and possibly a focus group held to determine the following:

- Was the plan effective, clear and easy to use, and did it work?
- Was the plan current? Had recent changes to communication process and practices been included or updated?
- Were all contact details in the plan current?
- Were key personnel familiar with and comfortable in their roles during and after the incident?
- How can this process be improved?

Based on information received, amendments to the plan will be completed, sent for approval, and communicated to all relevant parties.

Measures of Success

Based on constituent involvement and outreach, it will be beneficial to the College to identify internal and external perceptions and capture measurable analytics to create a baseline and measure effectiveness.

- Did the internal and external constituents feel informed as deemed appropriate?
- If not, what hindered this perception?
- List changes and include measurable – Facebook responses, interviews conducted and determination of whether the results were neutral, positive, or negative.

This information may be beneficial in understanding what messages resonated with the audience, which channels used to disseminate the message were most effective, and ways in which to improve information dissemination about a future emergency incident.

Reporting

In addition, a report should be generated that denotes some of the following:

- A consolidated event timeline
 - Evaluate the timeline for areas of improvement
- Create a timeline for implementation of improvements
- If known, incident cause and recommendations for future prevention
- Evaluation to see if roles and responsibilities were followed per the Crisis Communication Plan or if changes are needed
- Evaluation of communication tools and their effectiveness
- Implementation of the Crisis Communication Team and performance of plan in place – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
- Lessons learned from social media responses
- Post-incident perception from campus community not involved in crisis management part and community perception
- Key Lessons learned
- Quantitative measures

Post-Incident Debriefing

In each emergency incident where the Crisis Communication Team is deployed, a post-incident debriefing will be held to evaluate the effectiveness of the crisis communications **Go-Kit, Appendix U– Post Incident Debriefing Worksheet**. The debriefing will include the affected campus’s Crisis Communication Team as well as counterparts from other campuses and Office of the President staff. Recommendations for improvements or changes may be made to strengthen the crisis communication plan.