

**MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY  
CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN  
Updated January 2020**

**Introduction**

Millersville University's Crisis Communications Plan provides procedures for notifying appropriate personnel in the event of a crisis, emergency or disaster situation and outlines the procedures to determine messages for internal and external audiences.

The overarching elements in Millersville's crisis plan will be communicating within the framework of our EPPIIC values.

**Communication During a Crisis**

At the onset of a crisis, emergency or disaster situation, appropriate initial contacts will be made. Only designated spokespeople for each situation will communicate with the media, under the guidance of University Communications.

Telling our story involves framing. A frame can be a statement of values or beliefs, a narrative story or even a metaphor. At Millersville University we first want to employ our EPPIIC value of compassion and demonstrate that we care about our students, faculty, staff and the public. Then, we need to maintain and strengthen our reputation and relationships with alumni, friends, partners and the communities we serve; and protect Millersville University's name and reputation.

In the event of a campus emergency or disaster, this plan will be utilized as part of the overall Incident Command System (ICS) of the MU Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).

The MU ICS for an emergency or a disaster is:

- Incident Commander (Emergency Coordinator) – University Police Chief or designee
- Safety Officer – Director of Environmental Health and Safety or designee
- Public Information Officer – Director of Communications or designee
- Liaison Officer – University Police Officer or designee

Step 1: Implement Millersville Call Tree

See *Appendix A: Millersville Call Tree*, for names and numbers.

1. The Incident Commander should immediately contact their Vice President to provide details of the situation.
2. That Vice President in turn, needs to immediately contact the President. If the President doesn't answer, a message should be left and if an acting President has been appointed, then the acting President should be called.
3. The President (or his designee) will decide how best to inform the Chancellor and COT.
4. The Incident Commander and/or Vice President aware of the situation should then contact the director of University Communications.

5. In certain situations, other personnel may be contacted (to be determined by the President, Vice President and Incident Commander).

Step 2: Determine key messages/talking points, deadlines

Media training is available through University Communications & Marketing for all spokespeople.

The number one priority in a Crisis is showing compassion and empathy for those impacted. The message must be timely, and the messenger must be empathetic foremost in the delivery.

To frame the response, those involved, see *Appendix A: Millersville Call Tree*, need to answer these questions:

- What would reasonable people expect a responsible organization to do in this situation?
- What was the nature of the event, what happened?
- Who was involved and affected?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- How did it happen?
- If it is known, why it happened – this may not be able to be answered initially.
- Which safety/government agencies are involved (if any)?
- What type of follow-up is necessary?
- What are the most important objectives in managing this crisis?

Messages normally include:

- A statement to distribute to media or a prepared statement to have on hand in case of a media inquiry.
- Statements for key publics (e.g., students, parents, supporters, neighbors, legislators and internal audiences).
- Messages to be shared on social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).
- Messages to be sent through MU Alert.

Step 3: Implement communications response, always keeping in mind Millersville's EPPIIC values.

Specific roles include lead communicator, spokesperson and POI, although one person may fulfil more than one role.

**Lead communicator:** Coordinates all aspects of communication about the crisis for internal and external audiences, with guidance from the President and Incident Commander.

**Primary spokesperson:** Assists in crafting and implementing external/internal message; oversees implementation of the media strategy; maintains an open dialogue with the media; and coordinates communications to additional audiences.

**Others:** In addition, web content specialists, photographers, videographers and others may need to assist with getting the message out to internal and external audiences.

In an emergency or disaster, the Director of Communications will also serve as Public Information Officer (PIO) as defined by the Incident Command System (ICS) in the MU EOP.

Communications responses will be updated on a timely basis, as needed.

#### Step 4: Methods of Communication

Overseen by Director of Communications, with assistance from Assistant Director of Communications, Digital Media Specialist and designated IT representative as needed.

- MU Alert Messaging System - Provides rapid notification via text and email messages to alert students, faculty and staff, as well as others signed up, of an emergency situation that requires them to take immediate action to preserve their safety and security. Participants must sign up to receive messages at <https://mualert.millersville.edu/index.php?CCheck=1>.
- 'Ville Bulletin, 'Ville Notice or 'Ville Daily - A mass email can be sent to all faculty/staff and students through their Millersville email account.
  - These messages may also be forwarded to impacted alumni, or other specific groups.
- Web Page Message
  - IT and University Communications can place emergency messages on the home page (www.millersville.edu) during emergencies.

Social Media – Millersville University’s social media tools can be useful in disseminating important information to large numbers of individuals, almost instantaneously, and tracking what others are saying about a crisis. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are the main tools which can be used.

Not all crises will warrant a social media presence. Millersville University’s social media channels are an important tool for shaping the University’s brand and care must be taken to determine whether an announcement is warranted. Any posting during a crisis, disaster or emergency must be approved by the Director of Communications or their designee.

Once information about a crisis is implemented, it must be updated in a timely and consistent fashion throughout the remainder of the event, to include additional updates as to what members of the community impacted should be doing.

#### Media Outlets

- University Communications will, if necessary, provide advisories to the media on any ongoing emergencies
  - TV - WHTM-TV ABC-27, WHP CBS-21, WPMT Fox-43 and WGAL-TV Channel 8
  - WITF-FM

- Lancaster Online
    - Student media; Snapper and WIXQ
  - Depending on the incident, University Communications may provide speaking points to the Information Desk at SMC, 717-871-4636 and to the non-emergency line for University police, 717-871-4357. Both may be alerted to transfer calls on a certain topic to communications or another appropriate office.
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