Emergency Communications Plan

Vancouver Point Grey Campus

June 3, 2013

UBC Public Affairs
Risk Management Services
Emergency Communications Plan

1. Introduction

The Emergency Communications Plan (ECP) is intended to outline guidelines for quickly communicating with UBC’s Point Grey Vancouver campus community, community partners and external stakeholders during an emergency. This plan is an addendum to the UBC Emergency Management Plan. (Risk Management Services is currently drafting a Crisis Management Plan, and once approved, the ECP will be adapted for that purpose).

An emergency is a situation which results in, or is likely to result in, harm to persons or damage to property or disruption of services on the Point Grey Campus. This can include an earthquake, fire, hazardous materials accident, or criminal event. Of concern to the University is the need to alert individuals when there is the potential for injury and/or loss of life.

The procedures and messages contained within the ECP were developed by UBC Risk Management Services and UBC Public Affairs, with guidance from the Communications Subcommittee of the Emergency Planning Steering Committee.

2. Emergency communications context and approach

a. Most emergencies occur with limited or no warning and can present an immediate threat to members of the campus.

b. Through social media, information and speculation can spread within minutes of an event.

c. In consideration of the above, timely and accurate communication is critical for the safety and wellbeing of the campus community.

d. UBC is committed to working to meet expectations for quickly sharing information by enabling rapid, accurate communication in coordination with the institution’s broader processes.

e. Therefore, those responsible for mobilizing UBC communications in the immediate aftermath of an event are authorized to utilize available channels to issue prompt notification and safety information in the first critical phase of response. This includes the authority to respond within minutes via social media to acknowledge reports of emergency events, indicate verification is underway, and to urge campus members to be alert while establishing the UBC emergency website as the source of accurate information.

f. At the outset of an emergency, people expect authorities to have more information than they do. Efforts to communicate accurately and quickly may mean some communications are incomplete. Honesty and speed are critical in a crisis, and it is vital to speak with accuracy about what we know and not speculate about what we do not know.
3. **Audiences**

Important audiences for UBC during an emergency event include students, staff, faculty, campus residents and businesses, and visitors to campus considered to be at risk. Also of concern are parents, alumni, donors, stakeholder organizations, all levels of government, media, and the general public. Priority in messaging will be given to those considered at greatest life safety risk.

4. **Objective**

Our objective is to provide information and safety instruction as quickly as possible, and updates as circumstances evolve, to ensure the safety of UBC campus members and the continued operation of UBC services.

5. **Procedures**

5.1 **Initiating a first emergency alert**
UBC’s Emergency Management Plan calls for immediate notification of first responders: police, fire, ambulance, etc. During this phase, the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Director (or designate) will work with UBC Campus Security, which operates the University’s Emergency Messaging Application (EMA), and first responders (RCMP, fire, etc.) to determine the need for, and to activate if necessary, a UBC emergency alert via the EMA.

5.2 **Convening the emergency communications team**
In the event of an emergency, the EOC Director (or designate) will partially or fully activate the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC). Within the EOC, the Director, UBC Public Affairs (or designate) mobilizes a team that will include those responsible for website communications, social media communications and media relations.

5.3 **Approvals of outgoing information**
Cumbersome approval processes will not work in an emergency situation, when there is a need for unusually crisp decision-making. The Emergency Management Plan requires alerting UBC Executive members, or the Executive on Call and maximum collaboration with EOC members will be sought, however in the interest of safety the following authority is given:

Authority for issuing a first emergency alert via the EMA is given the EOC Director (or designate) and UBC Campus Security. If the EOC Director is unavailable, UBC Campus Security has authority to issue the alert.

It may not be possible for EOC members or communicators to convene prior to timely notification. Given the need to communicate quickly, the Director, UBC Public Affairs (or designate), under the authority of the Vice President for Communications and
Community Partnership can begin taking communications actions immediately, in consultation with the Executive on Call and the EOC Director or designate where possible.

UBC Public Affairs is authorized to implement UBC’s emergency social media protocol, using social media channels to promptly acknowledge unverified reports, point to UBC’s website as the source of verified information, and urge members to take care of personal safety.

During the first phase of response, UBC Public Affairs and Risk Management Services will engage with first responders, including working with RCMP operations to as quickly as possible to confirm the nature of the incident and the required safety actions and appropriate communication.

Beyond the immediate safety response, UBC’s policy decisions around campus operations, support efforts for campus members, and recovery efforts, will be approved by the Policy Group, comprised of UBC Executive members. These decisions are then communicated to the UBC community by the emergency communications team.

6. Immediate and secondary response needs

Our priority is to communicate to the community on the UBC Vancouver (Point Grey) campus. Where appropriate, all communications will confirm that operations at other sites and campuses (e.g. Robson Square, Okanagan, hospital campuses) are unaffected.

Should one of UBC’s community partners (e.g. UBC Hospital, Vancouver School Board) be directly affected by a threat or risk, all efforts will be made to alert the partner immediately. Where possible, direct communication will be made with the partner’s identified emergency contact.

When the hazard does not directly impact a community partner, these organizations are expected to monitor www.ubc.ca for information and updates.

6.1 Immediate response communications checklist

In an emergency, our goal is to issue our first communication as quickly as possible for the safety of university community members, with regular updates as needed. Such communications may include:

- An initial UBC emergency alert delivered via the EMA
- Implementation of emergency social medial protocols: monitoring, acknowledging reports, pointing to www.ubc.ca for verified information, providing accurate information updates
- Activation of the emergency website, with appropriate banner alert on www.ubc.ca
- Notification of key partners and stakeholders (e.g. University Neighbourhoods Association, all levels of government, health authorities, etc.)
- Response to media requests and/or provide advisories, in conjunction with first responders
- Utilization of all available emergency communications tools for the above, including:
o UBC and Emergency websites
o Digital Signage
o Broadcast Emails
o Social Media (primarily Twitter and Facebook)

6.2 Secondary response communications checklist
Once the immediate response is well underway and the emergency communications team is convened, the following tasks will be carried out:
- Continue to provide emergency updates via appropriate channels
- Identify and assign responsibilities for specific communication requirements for university groups, including: directors and heads; students; faculty and staff; campus residents, etc.
- Determine university spokespersons
- Identify facts, and Q&As about emergency event, injuries, safety information, UBC response, campus impacts, duration, support services, etc.
- Determine if a media centre and/or media conference are required, and establish location

6.3 The end of the emergency
The Policy Group, in consultation with the EOC, will determine when an emergency has ended and routine communications processes can resume. At that time, the emergency communications team will work with the Policy Group to determine how to help the community recover and return to normal. This may include the need for messages from the President or other senior leaders, promotion of support and counselling services, and Town Hall meetings. The decision to declare the emergency/crisis over will trigger a review of how the crisis was handled and how communications can improve.

7. Education and plan maintenance

7.1 Education and testing
Risk Management Services and Public Affairs, with guidance from the Communications Subcommittee of the Emergency Planning Steering Committee, will take the lead in educating our community about how and when members should get messages from UBC in a crisis or emergency.

The University will conduct annual drill of emergency management exercises, which will include a test of the Emergency Communications Plan.

7.2 Updating
We will regularly review and update this plan, including details of communications channels, contact lists, and approved templates.