

Emergency Notification System

Policy 302.7

1 Introduction

1.1 Appalachian State University (“University” or “Appalachian”) has an Emergency Notification System (“ENS”) with multi-channel capabilities. Appalachian’s ENS is intended to rapidly disseminate emergency information on an incident, and provide instructions to the Appalachian campus population in Boone, North Carolina. This policy outlines the emergency notification process and organization.

1.2 This policy does not address Clery Act timely warning notifications.

1.3 The purpose of this policy is to establish the process for activating the Appalachian ENS protocols when a threat or emergency situation is reported to the University Police Department (“PD”) or to another Responsible University Authority operating within their direct area of responsibility and directly involved with the emergency response for a safety or security incident at Appalachian. Authorizing decision making at the operational response level enables Appalachian to disseminate rapid and responsible emergency information to the campus population.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all staff identified as a Responsible University Authority for the purposes of emergency notification and all staff responsible for notification or support of the emergency notification system.

3 Definitions

3.1 AppState-ALERT

The common title of Appalachian State University’s emergency notification system.

3.2 Emergency Notification

Procedures to notify the campus community upon the confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or staff occurring on the campus.

3.3 Desktop Alerts

Automated messages that override the computer user’s screen with an emergency message that requires acknowledgement. Message is only delivered to university-owned computers (not Macs) that are logged in to the campus network.

3.4 Outdoor Warning Sirens

Outdoor system which utilizes a series of multiple sirens that are capable of producing audible signals to warn persons of a threat while outdoors.

3.5 Responsible University Authority

University officials who are directly involved with emergency response for safety-and-security incidents at the University . A Responsible University Authority is limited to issuing an alert in response to an incident or event within that official’s direct area of responsibility (as defined by agency/office mission and/or position description).

3.6 Short Message Service (“SMS”)

A service that allows for short text messages to be sent from one cell phone to another cell phone or from the web to a cell phone.

4 Policy and Procedure Statements

4.1 Training and Exercising

4.1.1 Training and exercising are essential to demonstrating and improving the ability of Appalachian to execute its ENS protocols, and the most effective methods for implementing ENS. Periodic exercising also helps ensure that equipment and procedures are maintained in a constant state of readiness. Testing Appalachian ENS technology may help identify issues and determine functionality before an emergency occurs.

4.1.2 Staff with responsibilities in the ENS will receive an initial training on the ENS protocols and process. University executives will be briefed on the ENS. On an ongoing basis, staff and leadership will be trained and exercised on the ENS and will be informed when ENS protocols or system characteristics or capabilities are updated.

4.1.3 Appalachian recognizes that trained staff may not be available in an emergency to perform their functions under the ENS protocols and has committed to cross-training staff on responsibilities. New staff with ENS roles will be trained on the system and protocols as they assume their positions.

4.2 Operational Guidelines

4.2.1 Purpose and Authority of the Emergency Notification System

4.2.1.1 This policy provides operational guidelines for issuing emergency messages via ENS.

4.2.1.2 This policy is integrated with and supplements the University's Emergency Operations Plan ("EOP").

4.2.1.3 The PD shall maintain an internal policy for activation of ENS components and that policy shall supplement these policies.

4.2.1.4 This policy is consistent with the safety and security policies of the University, and has been approved by the University Safety and Security Council, which is co-chaired by the Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

4.2.2 Purpose of the University ENS

4.2.2.1 The purpose of the ENS is to authorize and issue safety and security warning notifications to the Appalachian campus population in an emergency or when specific actions must be taken to maintain safety and security on campus.

4.2.3 Responsible University Authorities

4.2.3.1 The following University officials have been assigned the authority by the Chancellor of the University to authorize emergency notifications to provide alerts, warnings and safety or protection instructions:

1. Director of Public Safety and Risk Management / University Police Chief
2. Police Patrol Commander
3. Police Investigations Commander
4. Police Support Services Manager
5. Director of Environmental Health, Safety and Emergency Management

4.2.3.2 These positions are collectively referred to as "Responsible University Authorities" for the purposes of this policy.

4.2.3.3 At all times in this policy, reference to any position at the University shall include designees of the referenced position.

4.2.4 Initial Activation

4.2.4.1 The process for activating the ENS protocols begins when a threat or emergency situation is reported to the PD. For confirmed threats or emergency situations that require immediate or urgent notification, the Responsible University Authority will authorize the emergency notification based on the operational guidelines in this policy.

4.2.4.2 It should be noted that, for the majority of emergency threats and incidents on the Appalachian campus, the first notice of the situation will be via an incoming call to the PD telecommunications center, either directly from the reporting party or Boone Police Department Telecommunications Center. If the Responsible University Authority is not already aware of the situation, the University Police Telecommunications Center shall notify one of the Responsible University Authorities in accordance with internal PD policy.

Figure 1: Initial Activation Process



Step One	Step Two	Step Three
PD receives threat of emergency information.	PD notifies the Responsible University Authority 24/7/365.	Responsible University Authority determines campus condition and corresponding alerts.

4.2.4.3 The messages posted to key web pages (4.2.4, c) are the responsibility of University Communications. Although not a Responsible University Authority for the purposes of emergency notification, at least one member of the University Communications staff shall remain on standby at all times to publish emergency notification messages to the key web pages. University Communications' internal policy shall determine the procedures and protocol for posting emergency messages to key web pages in a timely matter.

4.2.5 ENS Channels

4.2.5.1 Appalachian ENS consists of the following channels:

1. AppState-ALERT voice and text alert is a messaging system controlled by a web-enabled management interface that allows an operator to simultaneously send outbound ENS messages via the following phone alert channels:
 1. SMS or text messages sent to mobile devices (including cell phones) which may also convert to an audible message if the phone is answered.
 2. Phone calls (and voice mails for unanswered calls) to non-campus phone numbers, including cell and land lines (U.S. 10-digit numbers)
2. Emails to University addresses ([name]@appstate.edu)
3. Posts to key web pages
 1. www.appstatealert.com
 2. www.appstate.edu
 3. myasu.appstate.edu
 4. emergency.appstate.edu
4. Desktop Alerts posts an outbound message pane on the screens of all personal computers that are logged on to the campus network (system excludes Macs).
5. Outdoor Warning Sirens and Public Address is a system that consists of siren blasts from outdoor speakers located throughout the campus. It is also capable of playing a recorded message or live audio.

4.2.6 Emergency Notification Message Characteristics

4.2.6.1 To the extent practicable, all ENS messages will contain at minimum the following information, in this order:

1. Nature of the incident;
2. Location (as specific as possible); and
3. Actions to be taken by affected populations, which will include directing recipients to the www.appstatealert.com webpage.

4.2.6.2 ENS messages generated via these protocols will follow consistent formatting. SMS messages will never exceed 160 characters. Desktop alerts and the voice mails may include longer messages, but will generally not exceed 250 characters.

4.2.6.3 Additional or subsequent messaging via non-SMS alerts may use additional characters, as appropriate, to convey more information. As soon as possible following the issuance of an emergency message, the Appalachian homepage and www.appstatealert.com will contain additional and/or supplemental information about the alert and/or the incident. These will provide instructions for:

1. Obtaining additional detailed information if University programs and/or services are interrupted;
2. Receiving additional updates and information; and/or
3. Reporting information.

4.2.7 Campus Conditions

4.2.7.1 The current campus conditions are:

1. Normal: On a day-to-day basis, the University operates under normal conditions. There is no emergency information.
2. Guarded: There is some credible general threat information that may affect the University, such as an FBI alert of a threat directed at a college campus in North Carolina.
3. Elevated: There is credible information about a specific threat directed towards ASU, such as a gunman on campus.
4. High Risk: There is information of an immediate threat on campus, such as an active shooter or major hazardous material leak.
5. Special Condition: The University is not operating regularly due to adverse weather, such as classes cancelled or delayed.

4.2.8 Channel Activation by Campus Condition

4.2.8.1 The process for activating the ENS protocols begins when a threat or emergency situation is reported to a Responsible University Authority. The specific channels that are activated depend on the University condition, as determined by the Responsible University Authority in accordance with the following:

1. No channels are activated for a Normal condition.
2. University email is activated for a Guarded condition.
3. University email, SMS, voice mail, and desktop alerting channels are activated for an Elevated condition.
4. University email, SMS, voice mail, desktop alerting, and siren channels are activated for a High Risk condition.
5. No channels are activated for a Special condition.

4.2.9 Status Updates and All Clear

4.2.9.1 A Status Update is made when there is new information or instructions for the campus population; it may provide an update on the situation or change in protective actions. An All Clear notification indicates that the emergency has been contained. Status Update and All Clear notifications should be timed such that SMS messages do not overlap. Status Update and All Clear Notifications are authorized by the Responsible University Authority after receiving sufficient information to confirm that there is no longer a risk to the campus population.

4.2.9.2 Both Status Updates and All Clear messages shall be broadcasted using the same channels that were used for the initial emergency alert.

4.3 Staff Assignments and Roles

4.3.1 PD Dispatcher

1. Coordinate with the senior police officer on duty.
2. Activate the Sirens and Public Address System as instructed by the Responsible University Authority.

4.3.2 Senior Police Officer on Duty

1. Confirm the emergency situation or threat.
2. Notify the Responsible University Authority of the situation, notifications recommended, notifications not recommended due to the potential to compromise university efforts to contain the emergency, and any other actions taken to contain the emergency.
3. Advise the Responsible University Authority to send an All Clear Notification (for incidents in which this person has incident command).

4.3.3 Responsible University Authorities

1. Confirm whether the emergency situation threatens the life safety or security of the campus population for situations within the authorization of the Responsible University Authority.
2. Authorize the PD Dispatcher or trained staff to activate the siren warning system.
3. Activate the ENS.
4. Coordinate with the senior police officer on duty.
5. Restrict the sending out of a notification if it would create a more serious emergency and/or compromise the University's efforts to contain the emergency.
6. Send status updates.
7. Send notifications or All Clear messages (for incidents in which this person has incident command).

4.3.4 University Communications

1. Issue web notifications.
2. Provide additional information on notification messages on the Appalachian homepage, via voicemails, and on the hotline, as able.

4.3.5 Director of Environmental Health, Safety and Emergency Management

1. Provide safety and security information for notifications as needed.
2. Confirm whether the emergency situation threatens the life, safety or security of the campus population for situations within the authorization of the Director of Environmental Health, Safety and Emergency Management per the Emergency Operations Plan, office mission, and/or position description.
3. For situations within the authorization of the Director of Environmental Health, Safety and Emergency Management, restrict to the extent practicable the sending out of a notification if it would create a more serious emergency and/or compromise

the University's efforts to contain the emergency.

4. For situations within the authorization of the Director of Environmental Health, Safety and Emergency Management, may send notifications; generally may authorize status update notifications or all clear notifications.
5. Provide technical support to the PD, University Communications, Director of Public Safety and Risk Management, and other Responsible University Authorities in the operation of the ENS and associated networks and systems.
6. Coordinate with service providers as needed to ensure system operability.
7. Notify the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor of Finance and Operations, and other officials as necessary of the situation, notifications authorized/issued, and any other actions taken (in the absence of the Director of Public Safety and Risk Management).

4.3.6 University Police Chief

1. To the extent practicable, determine whether an emergency notification to the campus would create a more serious emergency and/or compromise the University's efforts to contain the emergency.
2. Notify the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor of Finance and Operations, and other officials as necessary of the situation, notifications authorized/issued, and any other actions taken (in the absence of the Director of Public Safety and Risk Management).
3. May authorize status updates.
4. May authorize additional notifications or all clear notifications.

4.3.7 Director of Public Safety and Risk Management

1. Authorize notifications.
2. Notify the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor of Finance and Operations, and other officials as necessary of the situation, notifications authorized/issued, and any other actions taken.
3. May authorize status updates.
4. May authorize additional notifications or All clear.

5 Additional References

1. [Campus Security and Fire Safety Annual Report and Policy](#)
2. [Emergency Management Program](#)
3. [University Emergency Operations Plan](#)

6 Authority

1. Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990 (Title II, Public Law 101-542) as amended

7 Contact Information

1. University Police - (828) 262-2150
2. Office of Environmental Health, Safety and Emergency Management - (828) 262-4008

8 Original Effective Date

February 17, 2012

9 Revision Dates