

## Is Your Campus Prepared to Lend Assistance After a Disaster?

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Louisiana State University campus in Baton Rouge sheltered approximately 27,000 evacuees as well as 650 first responders from federal and state agencies. Among those finding refuge at LSU were more than 400 displaced family members of LSU students, who moved in with their sons or daughters, some of them bringing along family pets. LSU athletics facilities were turned into an 800-bed field hospital where doctors and medical students treated over 5,000 patients in 10 days.

College and university campuses have resources often in high demand following a disaster: housing facilities, common dining areas, large open areas for temporary shelters and staging activities, information technology infrastructure and computers, among others. However, very few college and university emergency management plans include policies or procedures to guide them in providing access to their facilities following catastrophic incidents.

Campuses should anticipate that they will be called to respond to a disaster even when they have not been directly affected, either as part of an emergency response or disaster relief effort. While disasters are not everyday events, in the United States over the past 10 years approximately one federally declared major disaster has occurred each week. In 2005, the Federal Government declared 48 major disasters in 32 states. The risk of disaster is underscored in the report *Critical Incident Protocol – A Public and Private Partnership* from Michigan State University, which says, "Denial of the potential for a critical incident must be eliminated, for it is not *if* but *when* disaster will strike."

Higher education, by nature, is a giving community. After Hurricane Katrina hundreds of campuses across the country opened their doors to evacuees including displaced students and faculty, raised money, and volunteered in disaster recovery efforts. Although their outpouring of generosity was a lifeline during these awful times, some schools faced difficulties in acting with dispatch to muster their resources and orchestrate arrangements to meet the needs of communities and schools. With a little foresight and planning, your institution can ensure that it will be ready to respond when help is requested.

When it comes to emergency response and disaster relief efforts, institutions can be sure that certain facilities and services will be in higher demand than others. Following is a description of the resources that campuses might be called upon to volunteer along with questions to consider in planning for an emergency response to help others in the educational community.

### Which Campuses May Anticipate Being Asked to Assist?

Your campus location has much to do with how urgently you should consider undertaking emergency response and disaster relief assistance planning. Although campuses from distant locations provided much-needed harbor to students from the Gulf Coast disasters in 2005, aid is usually provided closer to home, as New York City colleges found after September 11. A campus's proximity to a potential terrorist

target or a possible hazard, such as a nuclear power plant, or its closeness to geographic areas prone to natural disasters, such as floods or tornados, help determine how much planning it should do. The pressure on you to plan will be even greater if your campus is the only significant facility in the region.

One way to determine if your campus faces an increased likelihood of providing such support is to undertake an all-hazards analysis. An all-hazards analysis includes the identification of any natural and human-made hazards that have affected your area in the past or that may affect your area in the future. Typical hazards include natural disasters, like tornados, snow or ice storms, fires, floods, epidemics, or earthquakes, and man-made hazards, such as explosions and gas leaks.

Institutions can consult federal, state, and local government agencies for natural hazard information for their geographic region. FEMA and state emergency authorities have hazard compilations and analysis by state while more localized information can be obtained from county or city historical records and local offices of the National Weather Service.

Human-made hazards are perhaps more difficult to identify. News reports, professional associations, government agencies, and professional networks are a few sources that can keep you abreast of potential threats near your campus. You can also consult with local and state emergency management personnel to determine if your campus is near a potential terror target or other high-risk facility.

## **What Resources Might My Campus Be Asked to Volunteer?**

Higher education institutions have provided various resources to help with disasters:

- Following Hurricane Katrina, up to eight feet of floodwater inundated the campus of Dillard University in New Orleans, and fire destroyed several of its buildings. Various institutions, such as Oberlin College and Brown and Princeton Universities, donated funds, equipment, and staff to help the university repair and rebuild its facility.
- After the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, the Borough of Manhattan Community College and Pace University, both situated in lower Manhattan, aided in different ways. Manhattan Community College, although having itself lost students and facilities in the tragedy, was one of the first accessible sites for emergency personnel located near Ground Zero and became an emergency response center for coordinating rescue and recovery work. Pace University opened the doors of its main building to those fleeing the dust clouds. The building was used as a temporary shelter and triage center.
- Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., found itself hosting the fire department's emergency command center and acting as the relocation shelter for the nearby public grammar school during the 1993 wildfires that destroyed 500 homes in the area.
- College Misericordia in Dallas, Pa., unexpectedly found itself facing an influx of victims fleeing the rising floodwaters of the Susquehanna River following Hurricane Agnes. The college ended up sheltering more than 1,000 people and converted an alumni hall into a field hospital where 52 babies were delivered.

In many instances, shelter and food are the primary needs in a disaster relief effort. Emergency management personnel's priority would be to locate housing for first responders and evacuees and to feed the sheltered population. Depending upon the magnitude of the crisis, emergency managers may also need to develop operations centers complete with computers, telephones, copy machines, and faxes to coordinate response personnel and direct the flow of supplies and equipment.

Following are some of the facilities and services that emergency management personnel are likely to request in support of emergency response and disaster relief efforts:

1. Buildings with large, open interior spaces such as conference centers and athletics facilities for temporary shelter.
2. Residence halls for shelter.
3. Dining halls to feed first responders and evacuees.
4. Access to information technology resources such as computers, printers, faxes, copiers, telephones, and access to the Internet.
5. Large, open fields to erect temporary shelters, emergency operations centers, supply tents, portable toilets and showers, and to serve as staging areas for the influx of emergency vehicles and equipment and for helicopter landing sites.

Following are some key questions to consider as you assess your institution's ability to assist with emergency response and disaster relief efforts.

### Planning Questions to Consider

As you undertake the planning process, it helps to identify local and state personnel responsible for emergency management planning as well as local agencies such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army that support disaster relief efforts. Partnerships with these organizations can facilitate your own planning and help prevent your institution from being caught off guard by state and local emergency response plans that may include your institution in disaster relief activities. Additionally, consider the following questions during your plan's development:

1. *What campus resources have local and state emergency management coordinators built into their disaster response plans?*

State and local emergency management coordinators may include your facilities in their emergency response plans, although they may not have made formal arrangements with your institution. This is true whether your institution is public or private.

Get to know your local and state emergency management professionals if you have not already done so and ask them to identify what campus resources, if any, they may have identified in their own plans to support a regional emergency response and disaster relief effort. These trained professionals can also assist you with identifying facilities and services your campus may be able to contribute, if called upon to do so.

2. *What facilities can you spare for emergency response or disaster relief assistance, especially if your campus is still fully operational and already filled with students, faculty, and staff?*

Consider undertaking a facilities inventory with a goal of identifying facilities and outdoor spaces that may be suitable resources in a disaster relief effort. Once you have listed possible venues, consider prioritizing your list by asking some of the following questions:

- a. If you have identified open fields as a potential resource, are they classified as environmentally sensitive? Are they near roadways and easily accessible? If not, will alteration of the terrain, such as light road building or tree removal, be allowed to accommodate heavy vehicular travel?

- b. If you are considering volunteering your athletics facilities, have provisions been made for the proper protection of specialized floors, such as basketball courts, and secure storage of any expensive or potentially dangerous equipment?
- c. If residence halls are on your list, can wearable identification cards be provided to those who will be housed there to protect the security of the building and the safety of student residents?
- d. If you will be volunteering access to information technology facilities such as computer labs, how will confidential records and sensitive information be protected from unauthorized access?

It is important to have a campus employee at the facility during any disaster response to serve as a point of contact for emergency management personnel occupying any facilities. The employee can help emergency management personnel deploy their equipment, unlock doors, and help limit unnecessary damage to the facility.

3. *What information technology resources can you make available?*

The coordination of a modern disaster relief effort is heavily dependent upon technology. Everything from the movement of food, water, and medical supplies to reconnecting evacuees with missing family members and pets is facilitated by technology. In addition to providing temporary shelter space, a campus may be asked to assist a relief operation by contributing access to computers, the Internet, printers, copiers, and telephones. It is important to assess how much hardware you can make available without causing significant detriment to your institution's academic mission. Another key consideration is how much broadband capacity and how many telephone circuits your campus has and how the additional usage will affect your network. Finally, your information technology staff may be required to provide ongoing support for the duration of the relief effort. This can have a significant impact upon a small or minimally staffed information technology department. Plan ahead by identifying what hardware resources could be made available, how much broadband width you could provide access to, and how much personnel support could be diverted to support disaster relief assistance.

4. *Do you have a draft memorandum of understanding that details operational guidelines for use of your facilities and equipment?*

Emergency operations centers are usually run under the guidance of a public emergency management agency while temporary shelters are usually run by such nongovernmental organizations as the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army. Many of these agencies will have a template memorandum of understanding that they use with facilities providers. Templates often include details regarding authorization of use, terms of use for the institution's facility and equipment, length of use, and a requirement to leave the facility in the same condition as it was received as well as hold harmless and indemnification language. Contact your local agencies to review such agreements ahead of time. If you have specialized facilities that require additional guidelines, consider drafting amendments to the agreement or drafting your own memorandum of understanding for future use.

5. *Will you be able to provide adequate security?*

One of the key lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina is the importance of a law enforcement or security presence following a disaster. Although some of the initial reports of crime were found to be exaggerated, it is safe to say that the breakdown of

order in the aftermath of a disaster coupled with a large displaced population can be a recipe for chaos. While most of those who have been uprooted are simply looking to regain a sense of control over their lives, there are some who see the chaos as an opportunity for criminal activity. Especially common are petty theft, vandalism, and looting. Disaster planning needs to anticipate the potential for a second wave of destruction so that it can be avoided.

Administrators at Pace University noted following September 11 that while they made the right decision to shelter persons immediately after the attack on the World Trade Center, a primary planning consideration for the future would be aimed at ensuring a minimum level of security and safety to protect both campus facilities and those who use the facilities in a crisis. Similarly, since September 11 the Borough of Manhattan Community College has provided emergency response training to a significant number of its public safety and building maintenance staff so that at least one employee on every shift is able to focus on safety and security in a crisis.

It pays to keep this need for security in mind as you consider your campus's ability to shelter evacuees. A few key points to remember include:

- a. Select temporary shelters with care. Try to keep student living quarters separate from evacuee shelter and emergency responder housing, if at all possible. It will be easier to manage the unique security needs of these three different populations if they are not commingled.
- b. Review your campus law enforcement's mutual aid agreements with surrounding jurisdictions. Many such agreements provide that local jurisdictions may call upon your personnel in times of an emergency, leaving your own campus with a minimal security presence during a time of heightened need. Consider adopting amendments to your mutual aid agreements that will allow you to keep your campus law enforcement personnel on campus during disaster relief efforts.
- c. Identify additional security resources you may enlist for assistance.

These might include:

- Mutual aid agreements with other campus law enforcement units from geographic areas unlikely to be affected by the same hazards. Professional networks like the International Association of Campus and Law Enforcement Administrators can help you develop agreements.
  - Consider asking students and faculty from criminal justice or law enforcement programs, if you have them, to volunteer as temporary security personnel. Such volunteers can work in pairs to provide security in low-risk areas, or they can be paired with professional officers. Volunteer security personnel should have communication radios, wear similar apparel, such as college logo shirts, be unarmed, and be given a basic orientation to their duties.
  - Consult with state and local emergency management personnel to ensure you know the protocols for requesting assistance from state or federal law enforcement, or both, such as state police personnel or National Guard troops.
6. *How many of your campus personnel are trained in disaster relief, first aid, or shelter operations?*

When your campus becomes involved in disaster relief assistance, some of your employees will likely wish to volunteer their services. Disaster relief work is often physically challenging and can be emotionally difficult. Consider making specialized

training available to your staff. The training will both help support your overall disaster relief assistance and leave your campus better prepared to deal with a crisis. The American Red Cross offers training in disaster relief, first aid, and shelter operations through its local chapters. Also consider providing your employees with training on how to prepare themselves and their families for a disaster. This training is also available through the Red Cross and helps your employees focus on emergency response activities by lessening concerns they may have for their own family's well-being. Check with your local chapter to see if on-site training can be arranged for your employees. Because the training employees receive may be so vital to your own institution during an emergency, consider providing incentives to encourage enrollment in the training programs.

7. *Will you be able to provide counseling support to employees and any students engaged in the disaster relief effort?*

Anticipate that some employees and students, under the stress of disaster relief work, may need to talk about what they experienced. Consider providing access to counseling services as soon as you engage in disaster relief assistance. Recognize that some individuals may need those services right away while others may not need them for days, weeks, or even months.

8. *Do you have a process to keep track of expenditures associated with your emergency response and disaster relief assistance?*

Organizations assisting in emergency response and disaster relief efforts are reimbursed by federal or state emergency management agencies for costs incurred during the relief effort. However, in order to receive reimbursement, an organization must be able to provide a detailed accounting of those costs accompanied by appropriate documentation. Consult with your local and state emergency management agencies to determine what costs are recoverable and the documentation required.

Use your planning process to develop stronger partnerships with local and state emergency management personnel. The effort will not only result in a speedier relief effort but also increase your institution's ability to weather a crisis in the future.

### **Be Prepared to Assist in a Disaster**

With a little thought and preparation, your institution can serve as a valuable community resource during emergency response and disaster relief efforts. Get to know your local and state emergency management authorities and develop a working partnership to better prepare your community for disaster.

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## References and Resources

### American Red Cross

[www.redcross.org/](http://www.redcross.org/)

**Blumenstyk, Goldie**, "Colleges Come to Dillard U's Aid." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 23, 2005

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v52/i05/05a01802.htm>

### Checklist-Based Guide to Identifying Critical Environmental Considerations in Emergency Shelter Site Selection, Construction, Management, and Decommissioning

[www.benfieldhrc.org/disaster\\_studies/rea/resources/emer\\_shel\\_env\\_cklst.pdf](http://www.benfieldhrc.org/disaster_studies/rea/resources/emer_shel_env_cklst.pdf)

### Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

[www.fema.gov/](http://www.fema.gov/)

- List of Federally Declared Disasters by Calendar Year  
[www.fema.gov/library/drcys.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/library/drcys.shtm)
- List of State Agencies of Emergency Management  
[www.fema.gov/fema/statedr.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/fema/statedr.shtm)
- Disaster Resistant Universities  
[www.fema.gov/fima/dru.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/fima/dru.shtm)

### A Guide for Local Jurisdictions in Care and Shelter Planning

Alameda County (CA) Operational Area Emergency Management Organization

[www.cdsscounties.ca.gov/coplanners/res/pdf/doc16.pdf](http://www.cdsscounties.ca.gov/coplanners/res/pdf/doc16.pdf)

**Jones, Redford W.**, *Critical Incident Protocol: A Public and Private Partnership*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University. 2000

[www.cj.msu.edu/~outreach/CIP/CIP.pdf](http://www.cj.msu.edu/~outreach/CIP/CIP.pdf)

**Montanaro, Lisa**, "Campus Security and Crisis Management: Best Practices." NACUA Annual Conference, June 26–29, 2002

### Ready Campus

[www.readycampus.org/index.html](http://www.readycampus.org/index.html)

Ready Campus is a partnership among Pennsylvania's colleges and universities and their neighboring communities designed to strengthen preparation for and response to regional or national emergencies through the use of campus facilities, training campus volunteers and providing college students with service learning opportunities to prepare them to be crisis-ready civic leaders of the future.

## UE Publications

Related articles on disaster and crisis planning are available in the following UE publications in the Members Only Library at the UE website, [www.ue.org](http://www.ue.org).

"Crisis Management: The Benefits of Focused Thinking," *Safety Dispatch*, February 2002,  
[www.ue.org/membersonly/GetDocument.asp?id=201](http://www.ue.org/membersonly/GetDocument.asp?id=201)

"A Crisis Plan May Save Your Institution's Reputation," *Safety Dispatch*, November 2002.  
[www.ue.org/membersonly/GetDocument.asp?id=393](http://www.ue.org/membersonly/GetDocument.asp?id=393)

"10 Steps to Crisis Management Planning," *Safety Dispatch*, October 2000.

[www.ue.org/membersonly/GetDocument.asp?id=139](http://www.ue.org/membersonly/GetDocument.asp?id=139)

"Using Your Website to Inform the Campus Community in a Crisis," *Risk Research Bulletin*, May 2005.

[www.ue.org/membersonly/GetDocument.asp?id=746](http://www.ue.org/membersonly/GetDocument.asp?id=746)

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