Sam Houston State University
A Member of The Texas State University System
Division of Information Technology

TO: **Cabinet**

FROM: **Mark Adams, VP for IT**

DATE: **11/15/2016**

SUBJECT: **SHSU Crisis Communication Plan Update**

During the August 2016 Cabinet retreat, we agreed I would coordinate a team composed of Kris Kaskel-Ruiz, David Yebra, Kevin Morris and Steve Shields to review the 2014 SHSU Crisis Communication Plan and provide recommendations on updates. The team convened and agreed the current plan is appropriate and only needed minor clerical updates. The updates have been made and approved by the team. Attached are the updated sections of the SHSU Crisis Communication Plan for review. The team looks forward to your observations and upon your approval the team supports finalizing these documents into the SHSU Crisis Communication Plan.

Attached Updates:

1) Crisis Communication Plan Overview
2) Appendix C: Crisis Communication Plan Contacts
3) Appendix D: Communication Tools

Attached no updates:

1) Appendix A: Communication Flowchart
2) Appendix B: Leadership Notification Flowchart

SHSU
Crisis Communication Plan

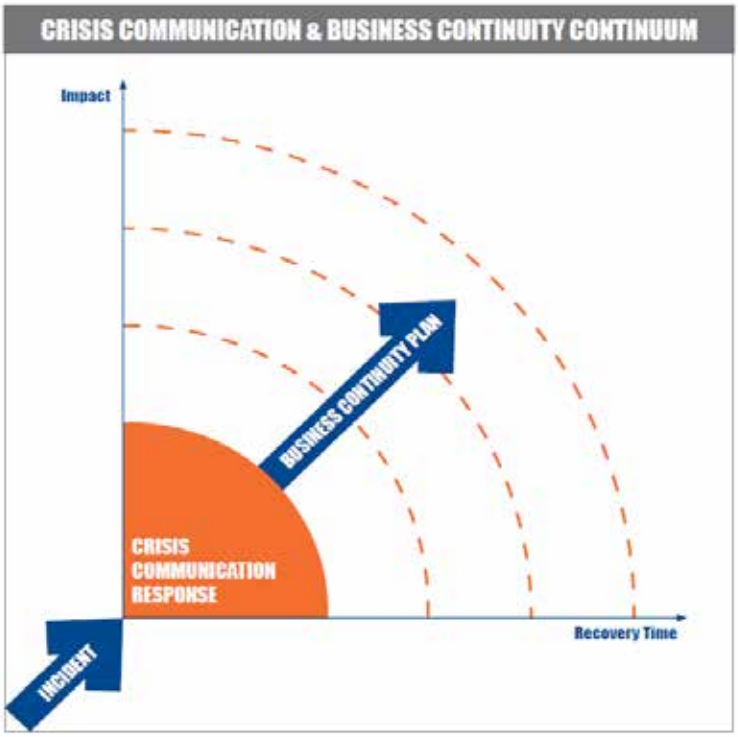
Version
11/15/2016

Sam Houston State University
CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

I. Purpose

This plan provides guidelines for communicating crucial information to the media, public and/or university community in the event of an emergency, crisis, or incident.

Disasters, emergencies, and other events disrupt the university's normal activities and may require activation of the SHSU Emergency Response Plan and/or Business Continuity Plan.



Any event that is determined to have the potential for disruption will initiate the Crisis Communication Plan. A crisis communication response will always be needed in any emergency situation. The severity of impact and recovery time will be determining factors in deciding to invoke the Business Continuity or other Emergency Response Plans.

This plan describes SHSU's approach to managing crisis communication and the various roles and responsibilities of key individuals involved in creating, disseminating, and coordinating vital information to key constituents to facilitate safety and a return to normal operations.

The plan is to be flexible according to the situation and be used in conjunction with emergency decision-making procedures of the university.

Elements should be tested periodically in conjunction with campus-wide emergency drills and appendices should be checked for accuracy at least annually.

ll. Objectives

A. Determining whether the situation requires invoking this plan.
B. Assembling a Crisis Communication Team (CCT) to recommend and coordinate responses.
C. Implementing immediate actions to:
   1. Identify key constituencies who need to be informed.
   2. Communicate facts about the situation and minimize rumors.
   3. Restore a sense of confidence and order.

III. Procedures

The flow of decision-making and communication is illustrated in Appendix A. Due to the varied circumstances surrounding any incident, the process may deviate to accommodate other factors.

1. Assessment & CCT Activation. Once Executive Leadership or University Police have identified a potential crisis or emergency, the Marketing and Communications Office should be notified (see Appendix B.) The Associate Vice President, Public Information Officer (PIO) and/or other delegate (s) will confer with Executive Leadership to determine whether it is appropriate to invoke this plan and convene the CCT. If this is done, the Associate Vice President, PIO and/or delegate will coordinate with Executive Leadership and the CCT on messaging and other response tactics during the entirety of the event.

2. Crisis Communication Team Assembly. At the core of the CCT is the Marketing & Communications Office, University Police, Risk Management, Legal, and Information Technology (IT). Depending on the nature and duration of the event, representatives from other organizations may play a critical role in the development and deployment of communications.

   Time is of the essence in communicating crucial information to key constituents and the team will be assembled as quickly as possible. Based on the timing, location and severity of the incident(s) or event(s), this may occur either in-person/on-site or off-site, remotely, or a combination of the two. The Associate Vice President of Marketing and Communications, PIO or delegate will determine when a sufficient number of the team is engaged.

   Appendix C contains a list of key Crisis Communication Team members and their contact information.

3. Spokesperson Assignment. Generally, the PIO is the spokesperson for the university. However, the individual with the highest credibility and understanding of the events surrounding the crisis may be designated to address the general public, the media or the university community on an as-needed basis.

4. Key Constituencies Notification. Working with Executive Leadership, the CCT, directed by the Associate Vice President, PIO or delegate, will determine which groups to notify, key messaging content, and delivery mechanisms. It is important to keep in mind that people

will seek — and believe — other sources of information (social media, rumors, news reports, word of mouth, etc.) in the absence of official communication. Effective and timely communication will help quell rumors, maintain morale, and ensure public safety. Appendix D contains a description of the communication tools, their possible applications in a crisis, and who can operate those tools.

Key constituencies include:

- Students
- Faculty
- Staff
- Parents of Students
- TSUS System Office
- Board of Regents
- City of Huntsville/Walker County
- Alumni
- Media
- General Public

5. Information Management. Throughout an event, the CCT becomes the nexus point for information inflow and outflow. Messaging/content will be disseminated to key constituencies as facts are gathered and new information becomes available that can be both legally and ethically released to the public. Meanwhile, public sentiment measurement and internal/external information monitoring provide necessary feedback for the CCT in evaluating the overall effectiveness of communications as well as the need for additional messaging.

6. Media Relations. The PIO should decide on the best way(s) to reach the news media. In cases where a crisis is likely to be prolonged, and/or especially complex, the PIO may choose to create a news media briefing center to coordinate the information flow and assure that the right people are involved in collecting and disseminating information. This will be in coordination with the Business Continuity Plan/Critical Incident Management System. Consideration should be given to appropriate media staging locations that can accommodate vehicles such as satellite trucks. Depending on the nature of the incident, examples of location might include the Visitor Center, Coliseum or the Walker Education Center at the Sam Houston Memorial Museum. For incidents requiring an extended recovery time, the Emergency Operations Center in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences building could serve as a staging center.

   Communication with the media must occur frequently. Information from news briefings may be captured in audio and/or video and posted to the Internet along with updated facts. News coverage in key media outlets will be monitored in order to correct significant inaccuracies either through direct contact with media outlets or through content distributed by the university via the appropriate communication channels.

In general, the university will welcome reporters and allow them as much access as public safety and operations permit. Public Information Officers will facilitate access to key individuals and respond quickly to as many requests as possible. Communication must occur early and often but be confined to the facts.

IV. Plan Review

This plan shall be reviewed and updated at least once a year.

V. After-action Report/Review (AAR)

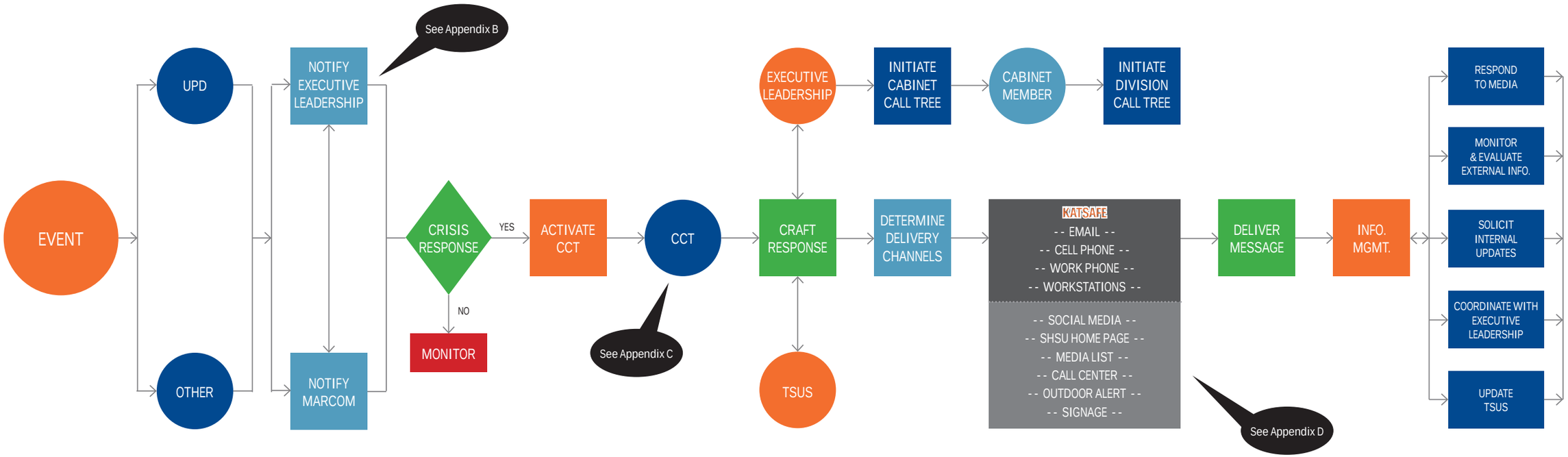
Depending on the nature of a crisis, the Associate Vice President or delegate will convene the Crisis Communication Team for a review of lessons learned. This AAR may be used to provide summary information to a more comprehensive campus-wide AAR coordinated through SHSU Emergency Management.

Attachments

Appendix A: Crisis Communication Flowchart
Appendix B: Executive Leadership Notification
Appendix C: Crisis Communication Team Contact Information
Appendix D: Crisis and Mass Communication Tools

Appendix A: Crisis Communication Flowchart

The circumstances surrounding an event will vary and may require deviations from the recommended crisis communication flow chart.



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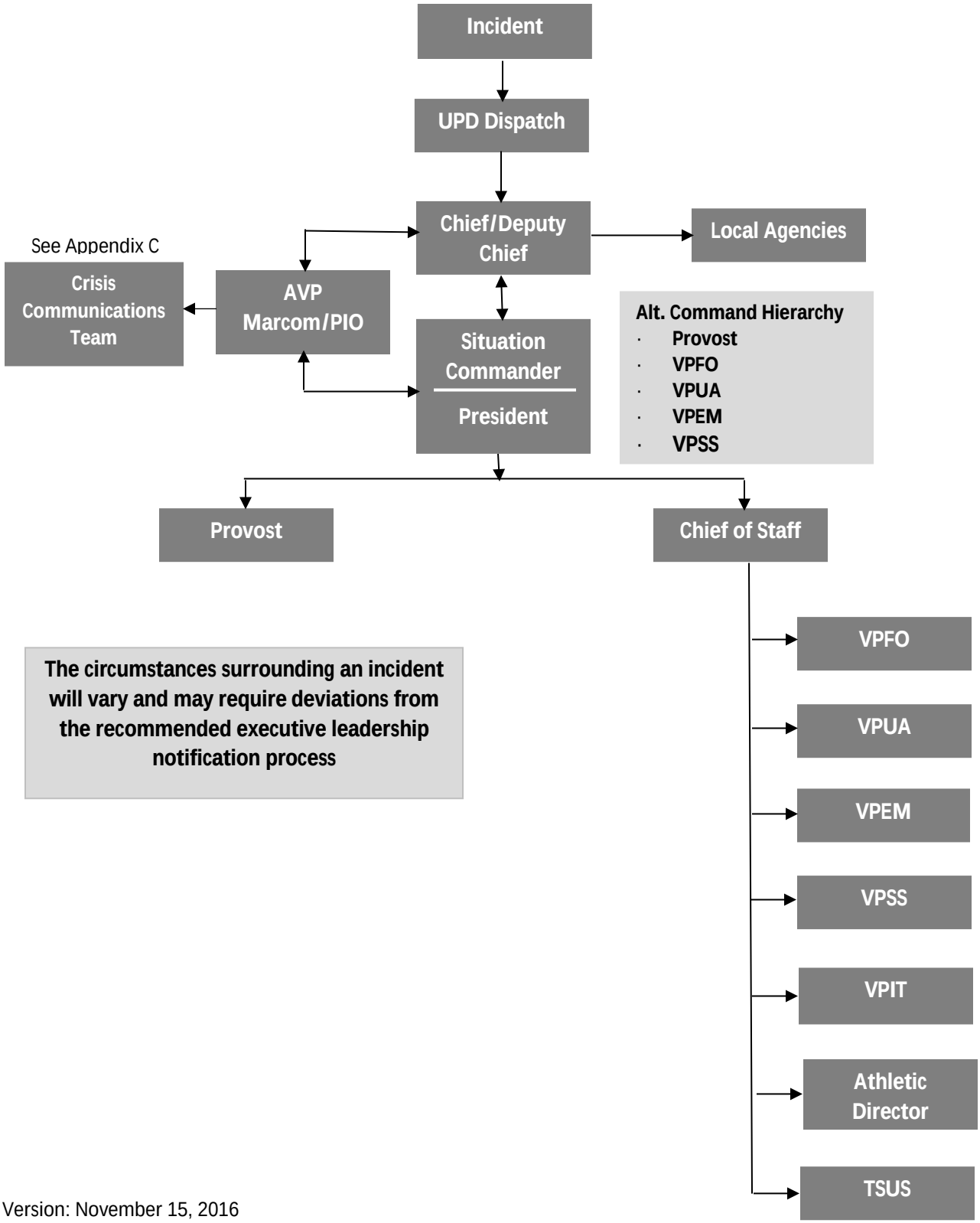
Appendix B: SHSU Executive Leadership Notification



The circumstances surrounding an incident will vary and may require deviations from the recommended executive leadership notification process

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Appendix D: Crisis and Mass Communication Tools

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In a crisis situation, no single medium will suffice to notify all constituencies. Depending on the particular situation, some combination of the communication tools listed below may be employed to reach the widest number of people as quickly as possible.

Communication Tool	Application	Characteristics	Responsibility
KatSafe Emergency Notification System	Blackboard Connect platform. Messages sent directly to recipients' multiple devices: · Office phone · Cell phone · Home phone · Email · SMS text · Social Media · SHSU Workstations	· Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of SHSU or threaten the health or safety of members of the SHSU community. · Provides active notification to multiple devices. · Message delivery dependent on network conditions and the number of recipients. · Messages are less detailed and shorter. ·	· Marcom – Develops message content · IT – Delivers message
Katsafe Microsite		· Microsite site centralizes messaging and serves as a resource for emergency preparedness	· UPD/HR oversight & development · Marcom assists in content development & messaging
SHSU Home Page	Under Campus Notice: Short messages posted as banners on official SHSU web site. Can link to KatSafe microsite	· Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of SHSU or threaten the health or safety of members of the SHSU community. · Crisis Communication team posts information. · Provides updates.	· Marcom – Develops message content, backup to web posting · IT – Posts message
Social Media	Short messages on SHSU Facebook & Twitter	· Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that my disrupt the normal operation of SHSU or threaten the health or safety of members of the SHSU community. · Crisis Communication team posts information. · Messages are less detailed and shorter. · Provides updates. · Can be monitored with response.	· Marcom – Develops message content, delivery & monitoring · IT – backup for delivery

Today@Sam	More detailed messages posted on this web site	· Not timely. · More of a wrap-up of information; not part of the emergency notification system. · Marketing & Communications Office posts information. · Messages can be as detailed and as long as necessary.	· Marcom – Develops message content and posting · IT – backup for posting
Media List	Messaging sent directly to key, regional media outlets (print, TV & radio)	· Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of SHSU or threaten the health or safety of members of the SHSU community. · Proactive communication. · Messages can be as detailed or long as necessary. · Messaging content can be written, photographic or video. · Promotes goodwill with media.	· Marcom – maintains media list, develops and distributes messaging
Call Center	Provides pre-approved messaging, routes media calls and source for monitoring sentiment	· Allows concerned constituents to reach out to a "real" person. · Risk of providing too much information or unsubstantiated information to public. · Great source for monitoring sentiment and public questions.	· Marcom – provides messaging for callers and voicemail · EM/Call Center – communicates with callers, routes media calls & provides CCT feedback on any issues · IT – initiate voicemail messaging
Outdoor Alert	Short messages broadcast to loudspeakers on main SHSU campus	· Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of SHSU or threaten the health or safety of members of the SHSU community. · Provides active notification to people within earshot of the broadcast. · Messages are usually less detailed and shorter, but can be customized to provide more details as needed.	· Marcom – develops message content · IT – initiates alert
Interior LED Signage	Short messages displayed on limited number of LED signs on campus	· Can be used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of SHSU or threaten the health or safety of members of the SHSU community. · Messages are less detailed and shorter. · Localized and limited reach.	· Marcom – develops message content · IT – initiates alerts