



**UofL Alert**  
**GUIDELINES**  
**Revised**  
**September 16, 2014**

# ADOPTION

The preservation of life and property is a fundamental responsibility of the University of Louisville in the event of major emergencies or disasters, either manmade, or natural. An inescapable function of the University is to mitigate or lessen the possible impact of these conditions by practical emergency planning, advance preparation, coordinated response and recovery. One of the most important components of this responsibility is rapid notification of emergencies to the University community.

The University of Louisville UofL Alert Guidelines have been designed to ensure coordinated and effective emergency notifications to immediately 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. Therefore, each University of Louisville community member has a responsibility and obligation to become familiar with the contents of these guidelines to ensure that they are prepared to respond appropriately in response to an emergency.

This is a living document that describes existing procedures and personnel; it is subject to frequent updates and will be updated or replaced as procedures change. This plan will be tested at least once annually to ensure that the system and procedures function correctly. This test will be documented in the annual Gene Clery Report.

In summary, the University of Louisville must be prepared for the possibility that an emergency will strike the University or an adjacent area that could be of such magnitude that timely notification to the University community is paramount to save lives. These guidelines are adopted by the University on this date and it will be the responsibility of the Department of Environmental Health and Safety to serve as custodian.

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University of Louisville

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Date

## **Introduction**

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The intent of this Guide is to identify the strategy and methods of mass communication systems that can be activated in times of significant emergencies or dangerous situations involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students, faculty and staff. It should also be noted that the mass communication systems may also be used in non-emergent situations to announce school closing, power outages and similar events.

The primary audience for this guide is administrators and critical staff that would be involved in making emergency announcements in order to protect lives and property at the University of Louisville. This guide will also serve as to provide information to the entire campus community in regards of how they will be notified of an emergency.

This guide is a collaboration of the units directly responsible for the implementation, operations and procedures to make mass emergency announcements.

## **Methods of Mass Communications Hierarchy**

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The University of Louisville relies upon multiple communication systems during a major emergency. Using multiple methods of emergency notification is necessary since there has been no single method that has been proven to be 100% effective, 100% of the time. All of the methods of mass communications available to the university make up UofL Alerts

The methods of mass communication are listed on the chart entitled, Methods of Mass Communications Hierarchy (Figure 1). The individual systems are listed below in the same order, which optimizes the speed of communication in an emergency. It is imperative that, upon activation, these systems be used redundantly to maximize the number of people that can be notified in the shortest period of time if the situation warrants. It should be understood that not every modality has to be used for each emergency and it is the alert administrator's responsibility to decide how many modalities are sufficient to notify the intended audience.

This Guide is written to provide each alert administrator with the capabilities to activate any of the systems listed. In actuality some systems are primarily activated by certain groups, but others may be able to activate those systems when the primary alert administrator is unable to activate the system.

### **InformaCast – Voice over IP Phone Alert**

InformaCast is a system that allows administrators to simultaneously send an audio stream and text message to multiple Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) phones. U of

L has approximately 20,949 of these phones on its campuses (including dorms and classrooms) as of the date of this guide. Anyone on the Approval Hierarchy List can activate this system and send a pre-recorded message or a live broadcast message via a password-protected web page.

InformaCast currently has three groups as outlined below:

Group 1	All Phones
Group 2	Phone Separated by Buildings
Group 3	Buildings divided into "Electrical Loops"

Activation of the InformaCast system for emergencies and other special announcements must be by an alert administrator.

Upon activation of the InformaCast System, all VOIP phones will have an audible tone or message to alert the user to the emergency (in some situations the audible component may not be used in order to prevent the situation from deteriorating; for example, a hostage situation). A text message will appear on the phone display directing the appropriate action for the university community.

### **Rave Alert - Text Messaging/Email System**

Rave Alert is designed to provide rapid notification via text messages and email to alert students, faculty and staff of an emergency at or adjacent to the University. Rave is a simple and reliable means to quickly send messages to many people with text-message and/or email capable cellular phones (or other digital devices). Rave works on any text-message/email capable cell phone and does not require any hardware or software installation by the receiving party.

Every student, faculty and staff member is enrolled in the email portion of Rave upon being issued a U of L email address. The person enrolled is sent an email instructing them regarding their option to sign up for text alerts. During the enrollment process, the enrollee may choose to receive text messages or email or both. Enrollee's may include up to three telephone numbers and three email addresses. It is mandatory that all university owned cell phones be enrolled in the Rave system.

A Rave message can be initiated by anyone on the Approval Hierarchy List. The individual accesses Rave via a password protected web page and provides the emergency message. The Rave server will issue the emergency message to everyone's phone registered into the Rave database. The emergency message is sent out as both a text message and an email.

In an emergency situation, the individual's email account will be sent a UofL Alert message. If they have also signed up for text messaging, they will also receive a text message. The message will advise them of the type of emergency and recommend appropriate action.

## **Bulk E-Mail – E-Mail to all UofL addresses**

In the event that the Rave system is not functioning, a mass e-mail can be sent to everyone who has a university e-mail account. This e-mail is initiated in the Communications and Marketing Office but can be authorized by anyone on the Approval Hierarchy List. This e-mail would be accessible to any account holder whether they are accessing it from campus or remotely.

In an emergency situation, the individual receives an E-mail that advises them of the type of emergency and recommends appropriate action.

## **Website**

The Office of Communications and Marketing has prepared an optimized web site with minimal graphics to provide information to the university community during emergencies. This information will include a description of the type of emergency and provide the appropriate recommended actions. While placing the web page online is the responsibility of Communications and Marketing, it can be authorized by any alert administrator.

## **Outdoor Warning Siren/Public Address**

Louisville Metro government operates a system of outdoor warning sirens that is activated by analog radio encoders. UofL also has an encoder and can activate the system. Sirens are located either on, or adjacent to, every campus. Activation of these sirens is intended to direct people from outside to indoors to listen to media broadcasts or weather radios, or to access the Internet to get further information regarding the emergency.

Two outdoor warning sirens on Belknap Campus have the ability to make public address (PA) announcements. The Department of Public Safety (DPS) has the ability to activate the public address feature of these two sirens and make an announcement. This is an analog radio system that allows real time messages and actual emergency instructions can be provided over the public address feature. The PA feature does not work if the warning sirens are activated in the siren mode. While DPS is responsible for PA activation, any alert administrator may authorize its use.

## **Weather Radio – National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, National Weather Service Weather Radio**

NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) is an "All Hazards" radio network making it a single source for comprehensive weather and emergency information. In conjunction with Local Emergency Management and the Louisville Office of the National Weather Service, NWR broadcasts warnings and post-event information for all types of

emergencies – including natural disasters, environmental emergencies and public safety situations.

An announcement is initiated by a Department of Public Safety (DPS) communications specialist notifying MetroSafe to activate the NWR system for an emergency announcement. MetroSafe would then contact the NWS Louisville Office and request the activation and announcement. Any alert administrator may authorize the use of the NOAA radios to disseminate emergency information.

### **Trimarc Signs – Messages on the interstate highway signs**

Signs are strategically placed on I-64, I-65 and I-71 that can be used to provide a short digital message. These signs are owned and operated exclusively by Trimarc under a contract with the Kentucky Department of Transportation. These signs are digitally controlled and have the ability to display 128 characters of text.

An announcement is initiated by a Department of Public Safety (DPS) communications specialist notifying MetroSafe to activate the Trimarc system and make an emergency announcement. MetroSafe will then contact Trimarc and request the activation and announcement. Part of the announcement should include directions to tune to 1610 AM radio. While DPS is responsible for requesting the city to initiate a message, any alert administrator may authorize its use.

### **1610 AM Radio – Local government’s station for emergency announcements**

1610 AM radio is a Louisville Metro owned radio station that can be used during an emergency. This radio station is operated by the staff of MetroSafe. A DPS communications specialist will request that MetroSafe place an announcement on the radio system and Trimarc will direct drivers to tune to the station.

### **Media Outlets - TV and Radio**

The Office of Communications and Marketing will provide advisories to the media via a formal media advisory or news release, or in response to media inquiries. Once the activation of the mass communication system is initiated and the public becomes aware of a situation occurring at the university, the media will begin to inquire about the nature of the emergency. All contact with the media in an emergency situation must conform to the University of Louisville’s crisis communications policy (see [http://php.louisville.edu/advancement/ocm/crisis\\_comm/](http://php.louisville.edu/advancement/ocm/crisis_comm/))

### **Press Conference**

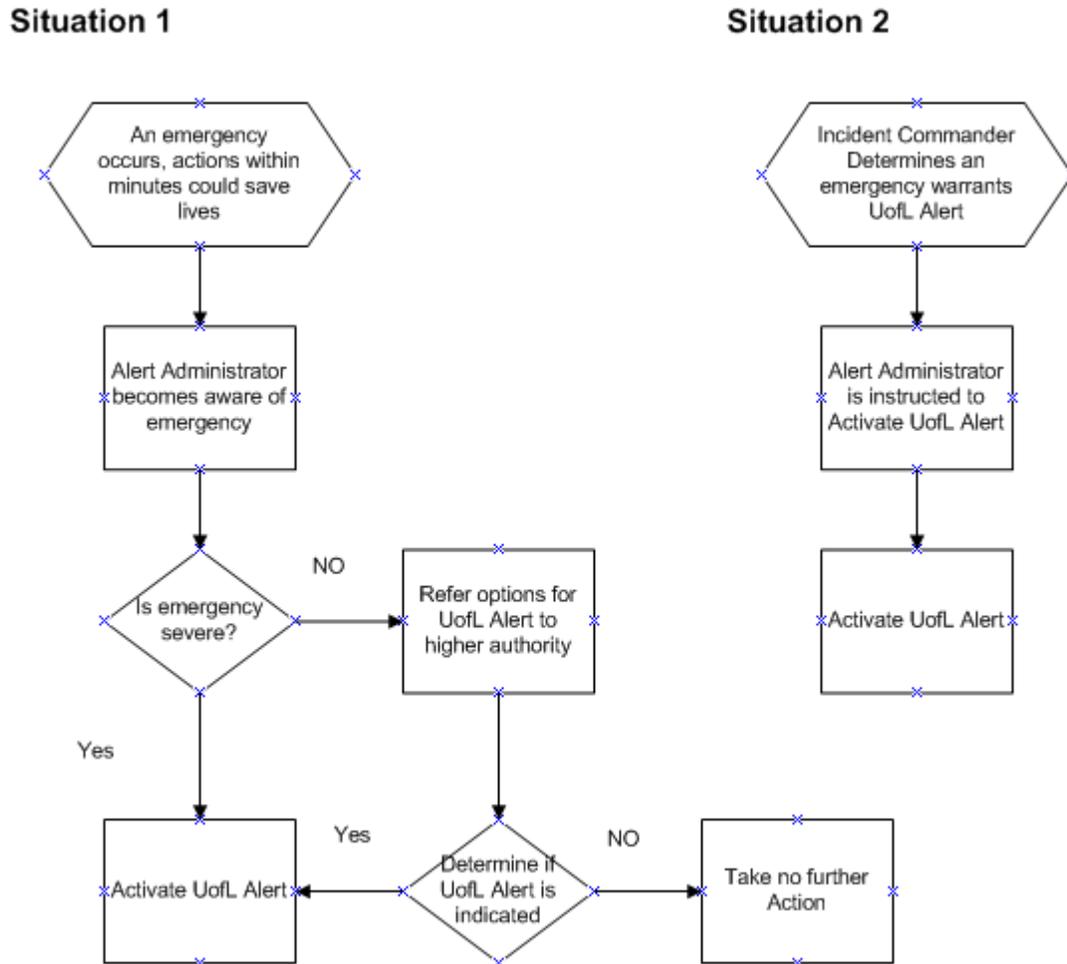
As time allows, a press conference may be scheduled for university leadership to talk to the media and answer questions.

## UofL Alert Activation

UofL Alert can be activated during emergencies in two types of situations:

- Situation 1 – an alert administrator becomes aware of an emergency that requires immediate notification to the campus community in order to save lives or prevent injuries. Once the alert administrator determines that the emergency warrants campus notification, they activate the UofL Alert system.
- Situation 2 – the Incident Commander (IC) on the scene of an emergency determines that a UofL Alert activation is necessary. The IC then directs an alert administrator to activate the system. The alert administrator activates the system and makes the notification as per the directions of the IC.

This process is graphically depicted in the following flow chart:



## Partial System Activation

In the event an emergency or other special announcement affects a specific area that can be delineated easily, the UofL Alert System can be adjusted to notify the affected area only. Informacast and Outdoor Warning Sirens have greater potential to meet this need than other components of UofL Alert.

Also, once an emergency notification decision has been made, the alert administrator can select the modalities that they feel are appropriate. Use of every modality is not required during an emergency alert. An example of a common incident for utilizing only parts of the system is school closure due to overnight snowfall. The only components of UofL Alert typically used for this type of message include; Text Messaging, Email, Web Page and media notification. The rest of the alert modalities are not used.

In both circumstances outlined above, it is the alert administrator's judgment that will guide the area and modality activation.

## **Ensuring that Activation Occurs**

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Once an Alert Administrator becomes aware of an emergency situation where an alert needs to be sent out, he or she is responsible to ensure that the alert is issued. If the Alert Administrator is unable to initiate the alert themselves due to accessibility of computer access, technological failure or other reason, he or she must contact other people identified in Appendix 14a "Back-up Alert Administrators" and request that they make the alert. This process will be continued until the alert is sent out or the length of time has become so long that an alert would not be effective.

## **Approval Hierarchy List**

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The graphic below outlines the Approval Hierarchy List (Figure 2). The decision to take action and initiate a mass communication should be based on the severity of the emergency and the threat to life and safety, as well as the time that is required to communicate with the largest number of people possible. The person initiating the UofL Alert should assume this responsibility after careful consideration of the emergency and the threat to human life and safety.

The individuals designated to activate the UofL Alert system fall into the following groups:

- Department of Public Safety Telecommunications Specialists
- Office of Communications and Marketing Personnel
- U of L Police (Chief, Asst. Chief and Majors)
- Department of Environmental Health and Safety (Director and Assistant Director)
- Vice President for Business Affairs ( Vice President, Technology Coordinator, Planning Coordinator)
- Information Technology (System Analyst and VOIP Network Administrator)

For example, a tanker truck leaking a hazardous gas vapor that is moving onto a campus requires immediate action to provide enough time for people outside to take shelter inside of a building. This type of emergency and the need for rapid notification requires that individuals who learn of the emergency in its early stages must take action as quickly as possible.

A *potential* release of a hazardous gas does not have the immediacy of a release and the threat to life safety is less severe. The people who are initially notified would be able to move up through the Approval Hierarchy List to a decision-maker who would determine the appropriate time and method for initiating UofL Alert.

Depending on the time available, if UofL Alert is implemented, the following personnel shall be notified as soon as possible.

- President
- Provost
- Executive Vice President for Health Affairs
- Executive Vice President for Research
- Vice President for Business Affairs
- Vice President for information Technology
- Vice President for Student Affairs
- Vice President University Advancement – Communications and Marketing
- Associate Vice President for Communications and Marketing
- Associate Vice President for Facilities
- Director of the Department of Public Safety
- Director of the Department of Environmental Health and Safety
- Director of Communications and Marketing
- Assistant Director of Environmental Health and Safety (Emergency Manager)
- Assistant Chief Department of Public Safety

## **Louisville Metro Government Emergency Notifications**

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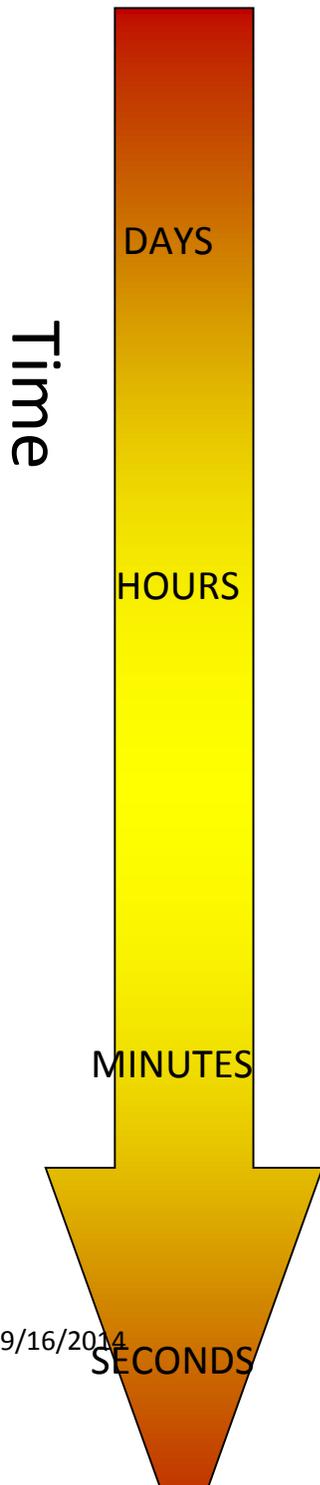
In the event an emergency occurs off campus and the Louisville Metro Emergency Management Agency determines that the emergency may impact the University, they will contact the University to request that we implement UofL Alert. This notification will be made by MetroSafe via a phone call to the Department of Public Safety Communications Center (852-6111). Upon receipt, the DPS dispatcher will typically initiate the Rave and InformaCast; Communications and Marketing will typically send out the Bulk E-Mail and activate the Web Page Messages.

## **Appendices**

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The Appendices include the specific procedure for activating each type of UofL Alert and the scripted messages that should be used as appropriate.

1. Rave
2. InformaCast
3. Bulk E-Mail
4. Webpage Message
5. Outdoor Warning Sirens/Public Address
6. NOAA Weather Radio
7. 1610 Am Radio
8. Trimarc Signs
9. Media Advisories or News Release
10. Scripted Messages
11. Drills
12. Notifying Selected buildings
13. Notifying Selected “Electrical Loops”
14. Current Alert Administrators



## Figure 1

### Methods of Mass Communications Hierarchy

Press Conference

News Release - TV, Radio

Trimarc Signs  
1610 Am Radio  
Weather Radio

Outdoor Warning Sirens / Public Address

Web Page

**Figure 2**  
**Approval Hierarchy**

