# Bellevue College
# Crisis Communications Plan

Created by Public Safety and Marketing and Communications
Updated December 2024

## 1.0 Executive Summary

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a consistent communication flow for Bellevue College key staff in the case of a crisis or when a disaster or hazard threatens the safety and security of the college community. This plan provides guidelines for communicating within the campus community, as well as to the media and the public, in the event of an emergency or crisis, (see 2.1 Assess), such as an extended campus closure, natural disaster, or active shooter scenario, etc.

### 1.2 Scope

This plan details processes, roles, and responsibilities for the college's Crisis Response Team and may be used in conjunction with the college's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).

Priorities for all emergency response activities at Bellevue College are as follows:

1. Protection of life; includes students, faculty, staff, and the general public.
2. Stabilization of the event; includes isolating the incident and securing the area, then determining a course of action.
3. Assessment of damages; includes evaluation of buildings and grounds.
4. Protect college property and the surrounding environment; includes preventing further damage to Bellevue College property, assets, and the surrounding environment.
5. Restoration of operations; includes establishing priorities and implementing continuity of operations plans to return to normal operations.

## 1.3 Training, Review, and Update of the Crisis Communications Plan

The Bellevue College Crisis Communications Plan will be evaluated annually to ensure personnel are aware of response actions and plan changes. Key staff will participate in exercises to improve skills, evaluate plans, and provide recommended changes for plan improvements. Following emergency events, After Action Reports will be developed by the college's emergency manager in consultation with the Public Information Officer (PIO) to determine areas of necessary training and edits to the Crisis Communications Plan.

# 2.0 Procedures

## 2.1 Assess

People who become aware of a potential crisis or emergency must contact Bellevue College Public Safety at 425-466-9365 (24/7). Public Safety may invoke this plan and convene the Bellevue College Crisis Response Team for all incidents on campus that could have an impact to operations or safety. In the event of imminent threat of danger, it is advised that 911 is called prior to Public Safety.

## 2.2 Timeliness

Timeliness is essential in communicating crucial information to the college community and the news media. The Crisis Response 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 or virtually. Any member of the Crisis Response Team may convene the group and should be led by the highest ranking or most knowledgeable personnel.

## 2.3 Imminent Danger

In the event of an imminent threat, determined by the Public Safety Department, to the campus community, the Crisis Response Team activation may be skipped, and a BC Alerts campus notification will be sent out to the campus community to provide emergency instructions or information. Table 1.1 details the types of scenarios and emergency messages that may be sent. In the event BC Alerts is unable to be sent, alternative communication methods may be used, including but not limited to: collegewide emails, News and Stories posts, a homepage banner, social media, Canvas alerts, faculty communication, printed flyers, and the

Big Bird Warning System (see 4.1 Appendix A: Communication Tools).

## 2.4 Campus Disruption

All incidents, emergencies, or crises that may cause disruption to normal campus operations or have a high-level impact on Bellevue College may prompt the activation of the Crisis Response Team and be documented appropriately.

## 2.5 Conferencing

The Crisis Response Microsoft TEAMS group will be used by the members of the Crisis Response Team to communicate and coordinate actions internally to manage the incident. Virtual meetings and document sharing will be accessible through this method. A member of the Crisis Response Team, usually the Director of Public Safety, the PIO or designee, will initiate a briefing to collect and exchange information regarding the incident and determine further action.

## 2.6 Messaging

It is important to remember that people will seek and believe other sources of information (e.g., news reports, rumors, word of mouth) in the absence of official communication. Effective communication will help to quell rumors, maintain morale, and ensure public safety. Refer to 2.6.4 Roles and Responsibilities table and Appendix A for a description of the communications tools, their possible applications in a crisis, and who can operate them.  Key constituents include:

- Staff/Faculty
- Students
- Parents
- Board of Trustees
- Public Officials (Governor, Legislators, Mayors)
- Community Partners (Police, Fire, EMS, Metro)
- Neighbors
- General Public
- News Media

### 2.6.1 Fact Sheet/Talking Points

As soon as possible, after the stabilization of the incident, a fact sheet may be prepared. The pertinent facts will be collected by the Director of Public Safety or designee, in collaboration with the PIO to supplement communication with key constituents and information provided to reporters by the designated spokesperson(s). It will be approved by the Vice President of Administrative Services or their designee and checked for accuracy by those with direct knowledge of the crisis.

## 2.6.2 Alerting the Media

If warranted, the PIO or their designee should decide on the best way of reaching the news media. In cases where a crisis is likely to be prolonged and/or particularly complex, the PIO may create a Joint Information Center at the Emergency Operations Center or online via the Crisis Response Microsoft Teams site. Bellevue College will establish a media briefing center in parking lots 1B, 7, or 14 to coordinate the information flow and ensure that the right people are involved in collecting and disseminating information. The PIO may coordinate with the responding police and/or fire department, hospital, or other outside agency's PIO to ensure that messaging is consistent, accurate, and concurrent. Consideration should be given to appropriate media staging locations that can accommodate vehicles such as satellite trucks.

- Communication with the media must occur frequently, as new information is known.
  - Efforts will be made to monitor news coverage and correct any significant inaccuracies, either in those media reports themselves or in material distributed by the college.
- In general, the college will welcome reporters and allow them as much access as long as it does not interfere with the investigation or create a safety issue. PIOs will facilitate access to key individuals and respond quickly to requests, if possible.
- If the media contacts the PIO, the PIO will direct them to the pre-determined media staging areas or work with the reporter to set up an interview. Media requesting access to specific areas of campus may reach out to the PIO or their designee at [mediarelations@bellevuecollege.edu](mailto:mediarelations@bellevuecollege.edu).

## 2.6.3 Social Media

BC Alerts (see 2.6.5 Roles and Responsibilities Table and 4.1 Appendix A) are the primary mode of official communication in the event of an emergency. However, social media can be a supportive tool for mass communications and should be utilized when there is a significant impact to the campus community, such as an unexpected campuswide closure, lockdown, or emergency (including inclement weather, natural disaster, etc.). Soon after a BC Alert is sent and received, the social media manager or their designee will work in coordination with the PIO

to create a post on all official Bellevue College social media accounts. The post should communicate the details from the BC alert and the impact on the college campus.

Official social media accounts must postpone any scheduled posts unrelated to the incident during an emergency or crisis. Any messages provided via social media should only include information from official communications made by the BC Alert system, the President's Office, or Institutional Advancement. This ensures consistency and transparency of details related to the incident, emergency, or impact on the college.

Sharing information found online or not approved by the college may lead to false or confusing information.

During an active event, the PIO and/or social media manager will participate in active "social listening." The social media manager will compile information about what is being said on social media from the college community in one report, make it available to leadership, and proactively address common themes of feedback, concern, or questions either through public comments or additional social media posts. This allows the college to correct misinformation and rumors, gauge the community's positive or negative perception, and better understand the entire impact of the incident.

## 2.6.4 Website

Although BC Alerts automatically get pushed to the bellevuecollege.edu website (News and Stories, Emergency Alerts, and the website homepage banner), there may be a need to create a single webpage. Depending on the emergency, the webpage may consist of a collection of resources (Counseling Center, EAP, food banks, warming centers, etc.), a centralized place for communications (collegewide emails made available to the public), and contact information for people who have questions or concerns. The webpage will be linked from the college's homepage and should be easily accessible. It may be archived or removed when the incident is no longer active.

## 2.6.5 Roles and Responsibilities

Depending on the situation, the following table may be used to indicate roles and responsibilities for communicating with key constituents.

| Message | Timing | Method | Driver | Support and input | Note |
|---------|--------|--------|--------|-------------------|------|

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Clery Timely Warning** | Immediate | BC Alerts - Rave (text, email & desktop), web banner Social media (Not required) | Public Safety, VPAS | Pres. Office, PIO, Student Affairs | Clery crime committed that presents a serious or ongoing threat to the campus - all stakeholders. Must include prevention and safety tips |
| **Clery Emergency Notification** | Immediate | BC Alerts - Rave (text, email & desktop), web banner Social media (Not required) | Public Safety, VPAS | Pres. Office, PIO, Student Affairs | When there is an immediate threat to the health and safety of the campus community |
| **Emergency Alert** | Immediate | BC Alerts - Rave (text & email) | Public Safety, VPAS | Pres. Office, IA, Student Affairs | Police or fire department activity that may present a safety concern |
| **HR message** | ASAP closed campus confirmed | Email | HR/Payroll | Pres. Office, VPAS | Clarify suspended operations, etc. |
| **Media message** | ASAP after info is confirmed by Public Safety and/or other agency | Email, news post, verbal (phone) Possibly social media | IA | Public Safety, Crisis Response team, Pres. Office | Initial message followed by interactive media engagement and inquiries |
| **Care and concern message** | ASAP | Email, news post, social media, web page | President's Office | Crisis Response Team (HR, SA, DEI, IA) | Internal stakeholders share resources |
| **Detail message** | Once facts are confirmed and course of action clear | Email, possibly social media & web page | IA | Public Safety, Crisis Response team, Pres. Office | President Office signatory |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Emergency Notification - All Clear** | Directly after situation resolved | BC Alerts - Rave (text, email & desktop), web banner | Public Safety, VPAS | Public Safety, Pres. Office, VPAS, Crisis Response Team | Notice of reopening etc. |
| **Timely Warning - All Clear,** if appropriate | Directly after situation resolved | BC Alerts - Rave (text, email & desktop), web banner Social media (Not required) | Public Safety, VPAS | Public Safety, Pres. Office, VPAS, Crisis Response Team | not necessary in most situations |
| **Reassurance message** | Post all clear | Email | Provost | IA, Pres. Office, HR, DEI, SA | President Office signatory |

# 3.0 After Action Reports

The Crisis Response Team, with other responding parties, will assist in the debrief. This will occur within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays, of the incident or crisis. Following the conclusion of the incident and the debrief, the Public Safety Department will use the Bellevue College After Action Report template to create the report, and the report will be sent to the Vice President of Administrative Services or designee upon completion to share with appropriate parties.

# 4.0 Appendices

## 4.1 Appendix A: Communication Tools

### 4.1.1 BC Alerts

BC Alerts is Bellevue College's official emergency notification system used to communicate with students and employees during campus emergencies. BC Alerts is a licensed service Bellevue College pays for to offer the quickest and most reliable communications possible. This system is used only during campus emergencies that pose a safety concern for the community.

This communication tool is used to send emails, text messages, desktop notifications, RSS posts, and updates to the college's homepage. The alert system is hosted offsite, so it is not impacted by a network or power outage on campus. This alert system requires individuals to sign-up for text and email messaging. The communication system allows Public Safety to deliver notifications in an efficient manner to those who may be impacted by emergency incidents. Message templates, which include information on available resources, are available for use.

### 4.1.1.1 AppArmor

AppArmor is an application that is part of the BC Alerts notification tools. There will be a small AppArmor icon (  ) on the task bar of all campus computers indicating the application has been installed by the ITS department. When a BC Alert is sent and the AppArmor feature is enabled, each campus computer will receive a visual and audio alert on the desktop, with the notification alert.

## 4.1.2 "Big Bird" Warning System

This public access system uses two large megaphones mounted on building rooftops and facing inward, allowing Public Safety to transmit voice messages to the campus.

## 4.1.3 "EM Talk" Radio Channel

Many departments at Bellevue College use radios to communicate among themselves for day-to-day operations. In the event of an incident, the "EM Talk"- channel 5 may be used to broadcast messages. This channel is used regularly by Bellevue College Safety Leads.

## 4.1.4 Social Media

Bellevue College maintains official social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. A team member within Institutional Advancement, most likely the social media manager or their designee, manages these accounts.

## 4.1.5 Website

Bellevue College maintains the website bellevuecollege.edu. A team member within Institutional Advancement, most likely the Web Editor in Chief or their designee, manages the college's core site.