

Mercer University **Timely Warning and Emergency Notification Policy**

Overview

In an effort to provide timely notice to the campus community in the event of a substantiated Clery Act crime (defined below) that is reported to campus security authorities or Mercer police, and that may pose a serious or ongoing threat to members of the community, Mercer University, through its Mercer Police Department, will issue Timely Warnings. The University takes its duty seriously to inform students and campus community members of threatening situations and how they can best protect themselves from harm. Information related to crime-related and other potentially threatening situations is provided in an accurate and timely fashion for use by students and other University community members to reduce their chances of becoming victims.

Timely Warning

What Constitutes Issuance of a Timely Warning:

Timely Warnings are specifically related to compliance with the federal Clery Act, which requires colleges and universities to notify students and employees whenever there is a threat that a serious crime is ongoing or may be repeated so that campus community members can protect themselves from harm. The Clery Act identifies specific crimes that require a Timely Warning to be issued when these crimes are reported to officials with significant responsibility for student and campus activities, campus safety, or the local police, and when the reported crime(s) are believed to have occurred on campus, in or on non-campus buildings or property, or on public property contiguous to the campus (as defined by the Clery Act).

Types of incidents or situations that could warrant the issuance of Timely Warnings are all Clery Act Crimes that represent a serious or continuing threat to the person and well-being of students and employees. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Murder and Manslaughter
- Rape, fondling, incest or statutory rape
- Robbery
- Aggravated Assault
- Burglaries (occupied rooms/offices/structures)
- Arson
- Hate Crimes
- Motor vehicle theft
- Dating violence, domestic violence and stalking
- Persons with weapons with intent to use
- Threat of violent crime
- Situations where the suspect is not known

Timing Criteria for a Timely Warning:

The Clery Act does not define what is “timely.” However, the Timely Warning should be issued, without delay, as soon as pertinent information is substantiated by, and available to, Mercer Police because the intent of a Clery Timely Warning is to alert the campus community of continuing threats, especially concerning safety, thereby enabling community members to protect themselves.

Decision Criteria for a Timely Warning:

The decision to issue a Clery Timely Warning is made by the Mercer Police Shift Supervisor or Officer in Charge (“OIC”). The Mercer Police Shift Supervisor or OIC will also decide which campus(es) or segment of a campus need to receive the alerts. The Mercer Police Shift Supervisor or OIC will, without delay, and taking into account the safety of the campus community, determine the content of the initial Timely Warning and initiate the notification system, unless issuing a notification will, in the professional judgment of Mercer Police or other responsible campus authorities, compromise efforts to assist a victim or to contain, respond to or otherwise mitigate the emergency.

The Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff, or the Senior Assistant Vice President for Marketing Communications, will coordinate with Mercer Police on any follow-up communications to the initial Timely Warning, using text messages, emails, radio, TV or the University website. The Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff’s office is responsible for developing the subsequent information to be disclosed and disseminating the information to the larger community.

The issuance of a Timely Warning will be decided on a case-by-case basis in light of all of the facts surrounding a crime, including factors such as the nature of the crime, the continuing danger to the campus community and the possible risk of compromising law enforcement efforts.

Content Criteria for a Timely Warning:

Clery Act regulations do not specify what information should be included in a Timely Warning. However, the Timely Warning should include all information that would promote safety, because the intent of the warning is to enable members of the campus community to protect themselves. Timely warnings do not include personally identifiable information about the victim of the crime.

Generally, the Timely Warning will specify the type of reported crime, the time and location at which the reported crime occurred, and specific advice to the campus community regarding steps to take to avoid becoming a victim.

How Timely Warnings are Issued:

Timely Warnings will be issued to students and employees upon confirmation of a significant emergency, dangerous situation, incident or crime, impacting the campus community and/or the surrounding area and representing a serious or continuing threat to the person and well-being of students and employees.

This information may be disseminated to campus community members through various mediums for communication. Mercer University will use one or more of the following means:

- Text messaging to cell phones of those enrolled in the RAVE emergency notification service.
- Email notifications and desktop alerting through the RAVE system.
- Targeted emails for geographic, academic, social and other specified groups.
- Information postings on the Mercer University website home page.
- Bibb County Civil Defense siren (Macon Campus only).
- Emergency contact lists for administration and academic officials, along with local emergency responders.
- Other methods deemed necessary that may be used in the information dissemination process, which may include notifications that are posted on buildings, social media platforms, and local news.

Emergency Notification

What Constitutes Issuance of an Emergency Notification:

Mercer University uses an Emergency Notification to immediately notify the campus community upon confirmation of a situation that represents a significant emergency or dangerous situation on campus affecting the health or safety of the University campus community. This dangerous situation need not be on the campus at the time of the notification. Some examples of significant emergencies or dangerous situations are:

- An outbreak of meningitis, norovirus or other serious illness;
- An approaching tornado that includes the campus in its possible path, hurricane or other extreme weather conditions;
- Earthquake;
- Gas leak;
- Terrorist incident;
- Armed intruder;
- Bomb threat;
- Civil unrest or rioting;
- Explosion;
- Nearby chemical or hazardous waste spill where fumes present a danger to the campus;

- Situations where a series of crimes have occurred. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Burglaries (unoccupied rooms/buildings/structures)
 - General criminal activity (fraudulent use of credit cards/forgeries)

In the event that a significant emergency or dangerous situation occurs, the University will: (1) confirm the existence of a significant emergency or dangerous situation; (2) determine the appropriate segment or segments of the campus community to notify; (3) determine the content of the emergency notification; and (4) initiate the emergency notification system.

Decision to Issue Emergency Notification--Responsibility:

The decision to issue an Emergency Notification is made by the Mercer Police Shift Supervisor or Officer in Charge (“OIC”). The Mercer Police Shift Supervisor or OIC will also decide which campus(es) or segment of a campus need to receive the alerts. The Mercer Police Shift Supervisor or OIC will, without delay, and taking into account the safety of the campus community, determine the content of the Emergency Notification and initiate the notification system, unless issuing a notification will, in the professional judgment of Mercer Police or other responsible campus authorities, compromise efforts to assist a victim or to contain, respond to or otherwise mitigate the emergency.

The Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff, or the Senior Assistant Vice President for Marketing Communications, will coordinate with Mercer Police any follow-up communications to the initial Emergency Notification using text messages, emails, radio, TV or the University website. The Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff’s office is responsible for developing the subsequent information to be disclosed and disseminating the information to the larger community.

Content Criteria for an Emergency Notification:

Mercer Police will determine the contents of the notification based on each situation. The individual authorizing the alert will compose the message most appropriate to the ongoing situation and address the specifics of the present incident. The goal is to ensure that individuals are aware of the situation and they know the steps to take to safeguard their personal and community safety.

Mercer will employ the **AIR** principle, where the initial message will **Alert**, and subsequent messages will **Inform**, **Reassure**, or **Release**.

Communications Center/Dispatch Operations

After receiving a directive to issue an Emergency Notification from Mercer Police’s Shift Supervisor or OIC, the Dispatcher shall:

- Create the most appropriate message provided by the individual authorizing the message.
- Follow the guidelines for sending out an Emergency Notification or Timely Warning messages and ensure the message is sent in a timely manner.
- Send the Follow Up/Status & All Clear notifications as directed by Mercer Police's Shift Supervisor or OIC.

Mercer's Emergency Preparedness and Response Procedures:

The Mercer University Emergency Preparedness Plan guides emergency preparedness, response, and recovery procedures and goals. The plan applies to a broad range of emergency incidents, which are classified according to their severity and potential impact. Mercer University has developed and tested procedures to activate the Emergency Management Team in the event of a natural or man-made disaster on the Macon or Atlanta campuses. In addition, an Emergency Operations Center has been established on each campus.

The University community cooperates with an established procedure on each campus to promptly report all incidents which present a concern or threat for public safety to the Mercer Police Department.

Once the Mercer Police confirm that a potentially dangerous condition or emergency situation is creating risk for students, employees, and visitors on the campus, an appropriate response plan will be implemented without delay. The entire campus community will be notified when there is at least the potential that a very large segment of the community will be affected by a situation, or when a situation threatens the operation of the campus as a whole. Mercer Police will determine how much information is appropriate to disseminate at different points in time.

This information may be disseminated to campus community members through various mediums for communication. Mercer University will use one or more of the following means:

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The Mercer Police Shift Supervisor, OIC or dispatcher will initiate calls to appropriate local emergency responders and contact appropriate university officials based upon the nature of the emergency. The Mercer University Emergency Management Team's emergency response actions are guided by Mercer's established emergency response goals:

1. To protect life safety
2. To secure critical infrastructures and facilities
3. To resume the teaching and research programs

Mercer University will conduct periodic tests of communication systems at least once per month and will evaluate the results of those tests. Also, the institution may utilize both table top exercises and staged emergency response events to evaluate effectiveness of the emergency preparedness plan. Mercer University will publicize the emergency response and evacuation procedures on an annual basis.