

Reynolds Community College Critical Communications Plan

I. Purpose

The Reynolds Community College Critical Communications Plan provides a general framework for coordinating communications within the college community, as well as with the media and the public, during an emergency or other critical incident. The plan outlines the roles, responsibilities, and procedures of key Reynolds officials and departments to ensure the prompt and accurate dissemination of information to all stakeholders.

Events may be categorized as:

- Life-or-death situations
- Urgent matters affecting the college's operating status
- Situations causing significant distraction to staff and students
- Statements or responses to current events

Examples of such events include fires, bomb threats, natural disasters, pandemics, or major crimes. They may also involve police investigations, protests, or other occurrences requiring a public response.

II. Objectives of the Plan

1. Assess the situation to determine the appropriate response and type of communication required.
2. Assemble the Critical Communications Team to establish a plan of action.
3. Implement immediate actions to:
 - Identify key audiences and stakeholders.
 - Communicate accurate information with one unified voice.
 - Restore order and confidence.
 - Minimize misinformation and rumors.

III. Procedures

Part I: Event Assessment and Notification

Assessment of Event

Any individual who becomes aware of a potential event should, if possible, collect accurate information and immediately contact the Department of Police at 65-5911 or (804) 523-5911. Certain events may require immediate action from the Police Department (e.g., life safety emergencies). The necessity and form of communication will be evaluated using the Emergency Notification Communication Decision Tree (Attachment A).

Event Notification

The Chief of Police (or designee) will notify the Vice President of Finance and Administration and the Director of Communications. When possible, the College President will be informed prior to the release of any communication. The Vice President of Finance and Administration will notify the Executive Cabinet regarding communication release to the broader college community and designated constituency groups.

Clery Reporting Requirements – Timely Warning

The Chief of Police (or designee) will determine if a Clery Act timely warning is required for specified crimes.

Parties/Groups to Notify:

- Students
- Internal college community
- College Board
- Foundation Board
- VCCS
- Other VCCS community colleges
- Law enforcement

Emergency Communication Responsibilities and Methods:

- **Department of Police:** Text Alerts, Alertus Beacons
- **Communications/Marketing Team:** Web alert banners, mass emails, social media
- **College President:** Communications to external partners, College Board, Foundation Board

Follow-Up Notification

The Reynolds Department of Police and the Office of Communications will jointly issue all follow-up and “All Clear” messages.

Part II: Assembly of the Critical Communications Team

The nature of the incident will determine if and when the Critical Communications Team is assembled. The Vice President of Finance and Administration is responsible for assembling the team and establishing the meeting logistics.

Typical Events Triggering Team Activation:

- Life-or-death situations
- Events affecting college operations (e.g., tornado, gas leak)

Core Team Members:

1. College President (Executive Cabinet)
2. Vice President of Finance and Administration (EC)
3. Director of Organizational Development and Special Assistant to the President for Strategic Initiatives (EC)
4. Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the College Foundations (EC)
5. Vice President of Academic Affairs (EC)
6. Vice President of Student Affairs (EC)
7. Vice President of Community College Workforce Alliance and Credential Attainment (EC)
8. Associate Vice President Research, Planning and Grants (EC)
9. Associate Vice President, Office of Human Resources

10. Director of Communications/Public Information Officer and Special Assistant to the President
11. Director of Facilities Management and Planning
12. Chief of Police
13. Chief Technology Officer

Additional members may be included depending on the nature of the event.

III. Plan of Action

Once assembled, the Critical Communications Team will assess the situation and execute a plan of action, which may include the following steps:

1. **Gather Accurate Information**

The Director of Communications (or designee) will collaborate with the Department of Police, relevant college leaders, and external agencies to gather essential information (who, what, where, when) and prepare a concise, accurate fact sheet for the College President and Critical Communications Team. This sheet should consider public perception, and employee/student privacy and security.

2. **Identify Key Constituencies/Audiences**

The team will determine which groups need to be informed. These **may** include:

- Reynolds faculty and staff
- College Board
- Foundation Board
- General public
- External/state agencies (e.g., law enforcement, VDEM)
- Mass media
- Students and their families
- VCCS leadership

3. **Disseminate Information**

The Office of Communications will lead dissemination efforts, selecting appropriate channels in consultation with the team. Channels **may** include:

- College external website
- College intranet
- Blackboard landing page
- Electronic smart signs and internal flat screens
- College-wide email
- Targeted emails to boards, agencies, and groups
- College Information Center Hotline: (804) 371-3000
- Official College social media accounts
- Emergency text alerts, distinct from initial police alerts

4. **Designate Media Spokesperson and Determine Media Strategy**

The Director of Communications, in consultation with the President or senior leadership, will appoint an official media spokesperson. They will determine whether to issue a press release and/or hold a news conference. Logistics, such as location, timing, media coordination, and speaker assignments, will also be planned.

5. **Establish Joint Information Center (JIC), if Necessary**

In major incidents, the Director of Communications may establish a JIC to coordinate

messaging among Reynolds Police, external law enforcement, and designated spokespersons. Potential JIC locations include:

- **Downtown Campus:** 700 E. Jackson St., Richmond, VA – Community Room
- **Parham Road Campus:**
 - Burnette Hall – Room 103
 - Georgiadis Hall – Conference Room 238
 - Massey LTC – Meeting Room 138
 - Workforce Development & Conference Center – President’s Conference Room
- **Goochland Campus:** 1851 Dickinson Rd., Goochland, VA – Community Room
- **The Kitchens:** 2500 Nine Mile Rd., Richmond, VA – Board Room

IV. Post-Incident Communications

Following the initial response, the College must maintain a consistent and unified voice. The Director of Communications, in coordination with the President and relevant team members, will develop and implement a communication plan to:

- Reassure and inform stakeholders
- Express empathy for those affected
- Highlight response efforts
- Communicate next steps

If necessary, support and referrals will be provided to victims:

- **Employees:** Associate Vice President, Office of Human Resources
- **Students:** Vice President of Student Affairs

After-Action Review

Within ten (10) working days of a critical incident, the Critical Communications Team will convene to evaluate the response, assess operational effectiveness, and revise the plan as needed.

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Emergency Communication Decision Tree

