

Media & Communications: In the context of a major emergency in a third-level institution

Mairéad Loughman, *MSc Emergency Mgmt and Risk Manager, UCC*
Dr Peter Daly, *Director, Irish Centre for Emergency Management*
Ann-Marie O'Sullivan, *FPRII, Founder & CEO, AM O'Sullivan PR Ltd.*

A TRADITION OF
INDEPENDENT
THINKING



UCC

University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Six University Emergency / Business Continuity examples



COUNTRY	CRISIS/EMERGENCY	AUTHORS : University
USA	Hurricane Katrina (2005)	Coleman (2009): University of Southern Mississippi
	Hurricane Gustav (2008)	McCullar (2011): Louisiana State University
	Mass shooting (2007)	Wang & Hutchins (2010): Virginia Tech
Australia	Bushfires (2003)	Meehan (2007): Australia National University
	Supercell storm (2007)	Meehan (2008): Australia National University
New Zealand	Earthquake (2011)	Seville, Hawker & Lyttle (2011): University of Canterbury, Christchurch

USA Louisiana State University (LSU) Hurricanes Katrina 2005 and Gustav 2008

Key lessons

- Management to prepare for future crisis situations (Becker 2006) in order to “rebound quicker” (Coleman 2009)
- A better campus crisis plan, prepared after Katrina, stood LSU well when Gustav struck in 2008 (McCullar 2011)
 - Issues regarding keeping track of students and safe evacuation of the campus during Katrina had been resolved by the time Gustav arrived (Mangan 2008, cited by McCullar 2011)
- However, as Gustav hit Baton Rouge directly, LSU, despite an increased level of preparedness, was more severely impacted than during Katrina; a year later had still not recovered fully from the storm (Meaux 2009, cited by McCullar 2011)
- The value of preparation and pre-planning was evident in these two cases, but, while lessening the impact, did not eliminate it completely.

USA, Virginia Tech Campus Shooting April 2007

Key lessons

- Virginia Tech management were severely criticised
 - for their perceived lack of planning and preparedness (Wang & Hutchins 2010)
 - for not communicating with students in time (within 2 hours)
 - for withholding information during the incident
(Adubato 2008, cited by McCullar 2011)
- The US federal government fined Virginia Tech \$55,000 for alleged failure to provide timely warnings to students during the incident; this delay contributed to several more students being killed after the initial two murders (Swaine 2011)
- 8th December 2011: second shooting
BUT this time, students promptly received email and text message alerts and University website and Twitter account alerted the outside world to developments onsite (Swaine 2011)

Australian National University (ANU), Canberra

Bushfires 2003 and Supercell Storm 2007

Key lessons

- Despite bushfires not being among the scenarios rehearsed, ANU's response to the fires in January 2003 was deemed "*relatively effective*" by university management (Meehan 2007)
- The university's response to the storm in 2007 was deemed "*largely effective*" by university management (Meehan 2008)
 - Lessons learned from the bushfire experience (2003) had been incorporated into the updated Emergency/BCP when storm struck in 2007
 - The campus infrastructure was very different to the one destroyed in 2003
 - Two management decisions, in particular, paid dividends in terms of the recovery and return to normal business after the storm:
 - Use of long-term maintenance and cleaning contractors, who prioritised ANU over other businesses after the storm passed
 - The appointment of a University Insurance/Claims manager which prevented the protracted litigation experienced after the bushfires disruption in 2003
- One issue that was not anticipated was the impact of the campus closure on new (including international) students in campus accommodation who were unsettled by the experience

University of Canterbury, New Zealand

Earthquakes September 2010 and February 2011

Key lessons

- The UC report acknowledged the contribution of staff and students to the response and recovery after the earthquake and critically reflected on what aspects worked well and what, in hindsight, could have been managed better
- The report acknowledged benefitting from experiences documented and shared by other universities around the world and, in turn, documents 40 lessons learned from UC's earthquake experience in order "to pass forward the favour and enable others to benefit from the lessons that we have learnt from this event" (Seville, Hawker, & Lyttle 2011)
- However, the report was written soon after the event; many of the adverse impacts were longer-term and not evident when the report was being written
 - Government made up the \$19m/year shortfall in income due to loss of students in 2011 and 2012 but this did not continue from 2013 (The Press 2012)
 - There were also long-tailed staff layoffs, cuts to teaching programmes, negative impact on national and international rankings and much-reduced philanthropy (Matthews 2012)
- Major learnings echoed similar themes as in other cases: the value of planning, the role of BCM leaders and champions, the importance of fostering good relationships with key external agencies and suppliers and appointing an insurance claims officer (Seville, Hawker & Lyttle 2011)

Emergency preparedness and communication amongst university students

- One population left relatively unstudied is post-secondary / university students (Tanner, A. & Doberstein, B. 2015)
 - This group thought to have a lower level of resilience than the general population, in part due to minimal culture of preparedness
 - Need for University management and administration to provide awareness and education about emergency preparedness *and*
 - to recognise the importance of communicate direct and specific information about appropriate emergency actions
- Original research carried out by UCC as part of the EU-funded S-HELP FP7 project has identified that in the 18 to 21-year-old age group, 33% would rely on social media as their initial source of information during a large-scale crisis event
- Need for Psychosocial & Mental Health supports for staff and students

UCC Emergencies

March 2008	CMRC offices destroyed by fire at Haulbowline facility
November 2009	'Big' Flood
October 2017	Hurricane Ophelia
March 2018	Storm Emma ~ "Beast from the East"

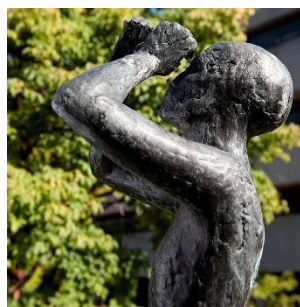
Various RED and ORANGE severe weather alerts and scenario training

Key lessons

- Some emergencies may be managed locally, others need full Emergency Management Team
- Roles of UCC EMT *versus* Principal Response Agencies (HSE, AGS, LA)
- Implications of weather alerts: **RED [Take Action]** and **ORANGE [Be Prepared]**
- Communications with staff and students; involve Students Union
- Plan is never finished, a process of continuous improvement
- Value of University reputation

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SETI

F A G U F

ICEM

Irish Centre for Emergency Management



UCC

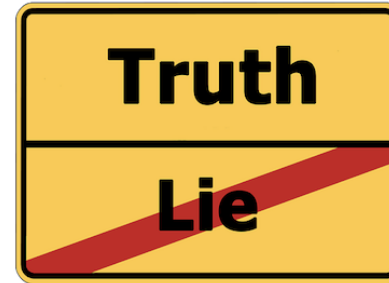
Peter Daly
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Two-parts to Communication



Crisis Communication

So how do we say
a "*complete
disaster*" and
make it sound not
too bad?



Biggest Stakeholder?

It is **NOT** the media



Those who
are affected



A FRAMEWORK FOR MAJOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



Communication Plan

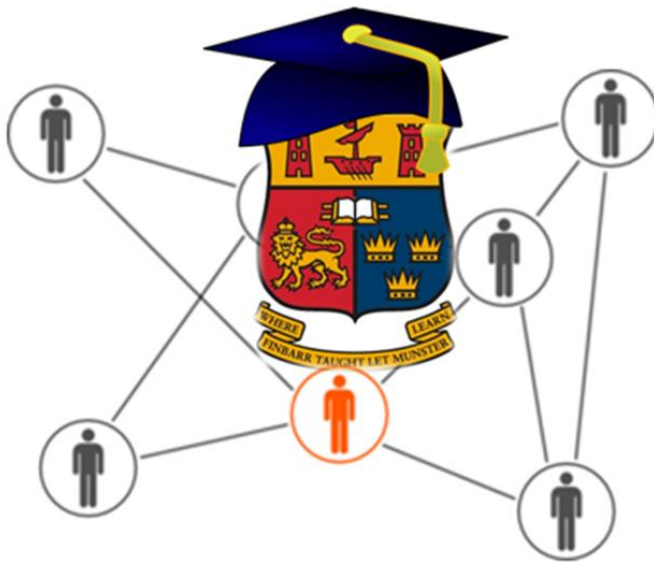
The **key objective** of the *> University <* **Communications Plan** is to deliver accurate, clear and timely advice /information to the public and the media, **so that** the public can feel confident, safe and well informed during a major emergency.

(Emergencies are rare events and, therefore, all opportunities to test preparedness, including preparedness for communicating with the public and the media, should be utilised).

Means of Communication?



Own:



Internal

External

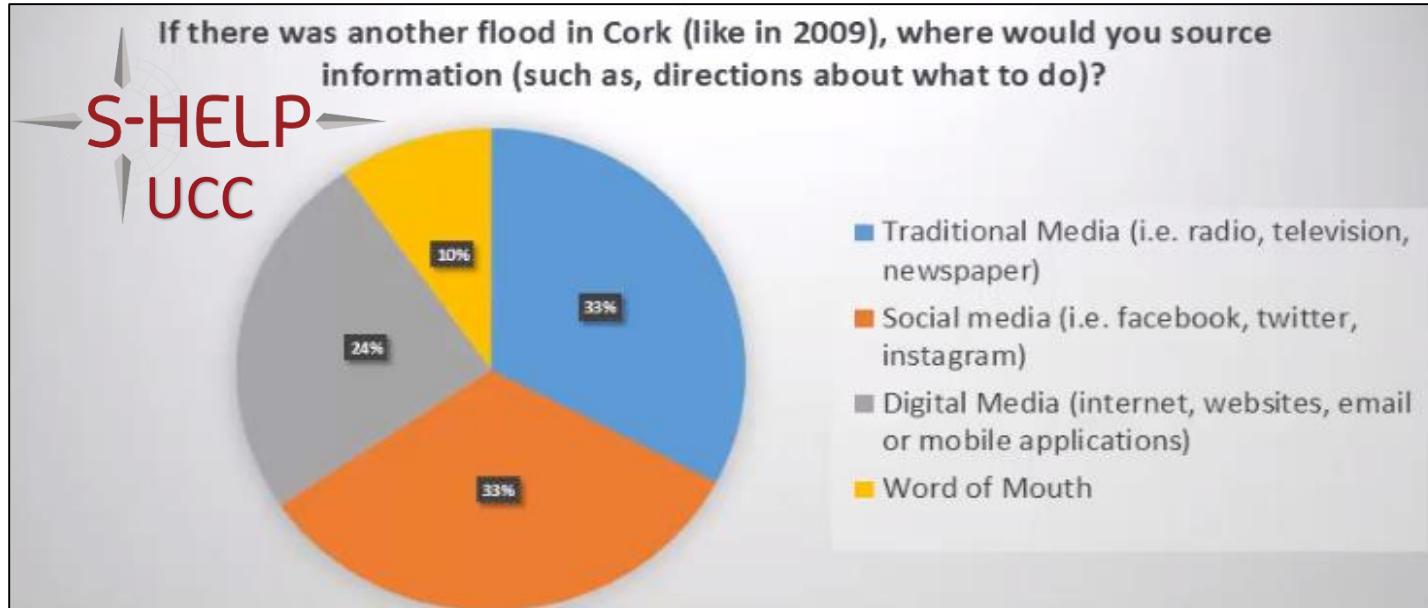
Media:

Who are 'The Media' ?

The media will respond quickly to a large-scale incident and this media interest or presence may extend into days or weeks.



How does 'media' divide?



Does this mean that 57% of the effort in the plan needs to be put into social and digital media?

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Responding to the 'media'

The media will respond quickly to a large-scale incident and this media presence may extend into days or weeks.



Pre-Identification of Personnel



Principles of a crisis communication plan

- **Be First**
- **Be Accurate**
- **Be Consistent**

Most importantly

Be Prepared



Plan, Train and Practice

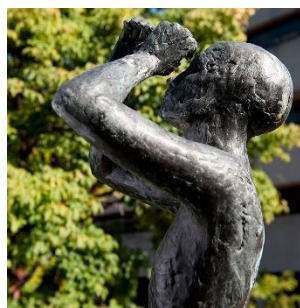


13/06/2019



It's too late to
learn to dance
on the night of
the senior
prom!

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Effective Communications

- A major emergency is a defining moment for an organisation.
- From a communications perspective, the first 24 hours are the most crucial - during this time, credibility is made or destroyed.
- Remember - every action by the organisation in an emergency will say something about the organisation.
- Effective communications is vital to the successful handling of any major emergency.

Media Engagement

- There will be unrelenting pressure from the media which must be planned for and managed.
- You want to manage the release of information and be in control.
- You want the media to depend on you for the story and the updates.
- This will only happen if trust and credibility have been established.
- Always remember that the media are a resource in an emergency situation.

Stakeholder Communications

- One of the most important things about managing an emergency is an organisation's ability to communicate with its stakeholders.
- That information flow can be both outbound and inbound.
- Some organisations forget that you need to listen as well as speak.

UCC Priorities

The main functional priorities for management and staff dealing with any emergency incident are:

- to protect people: staff, students, visitors and others.
- to protect the University's property: infrastructure and facilities.
- to maintain the University's reputation.
- to resume core business activities as soon as possible.

UCC EMT Communications

- Responsibility for managing all aspects of external communication and contact with the media following a University Emergency rests with the Communications Manager, the Media Liaison Person and Social Media Monitoring Person.
- The Communications Manager is a designated role which will have backup from UCC's Media and Communications Office.
- The Media Liaison Person will handle all information flow to print and broadcast media following early consultation with the Communications Manager and EMT.

UCC EMT Communications



The Communications Plan

- An early and clear response from the University is essential to set the tone for subsequent updates.
- The media team should be contacted by the Chair of EMT as soon as possible following the incident so that the basis for an agreed statement can be drawn up for dissemination to all media.
- Where necessary, local radio stations throughout Munster as well as national radio and TV, will be contacted in the event that other forms of communication with students or staff is impossible.
- Regular updates will be carried on the UCC Emergency website and UCC's campus radio, 98FM.
- Only agreed information approved by the EMT will be offered.
- Social media will be used as one of the key communication channels.

Communications Toolkit

- Scenario planning.
- Prepared statements.
- Q&A documents.
- Media monitoring service.
- Webpage to be activated

Types of Campus Communication System

Campus Emergency Communication - Types of Campus Communication System

Emergency Web-Page to take over www.ucc.ie

Campus Texting

Push to Screens

UCC Facebook and Twitter

Loudhailers / Loudspeaker

98fm radio

Campus emailing

CRISIS COMMUNICATION FLOWCHART



Gather

the facts and determine the scale of the incident



Alert

the media monitoring provider



Assess

the threat level of the incident and identify internal and external audiences



Review

holding statement one for the appropriate incident and insert the available information



Issue the first holding statement **within 30 minutes**



Consider sharing information widely with **all key stakeholders**

Agree

a spokesperson to speak on behalf of UCC



It may be necessary to facilitate **media** in the Student Centre, where they can access refreshments, wifi etc.

Work up key messages and a **Q&A document**



Depending on the incident, it may be appropriate to open a Book of Condolence

Issue follow up statements as verifiable information becomes available



Consider posting a 'thank you' message on **Facebook**



Remember it's **people** first, always!

Key Steps to Follow ...1

- 1. Assess the situation and gather the facts.** Ascertain the who, what, when, where, why and how of the incident.
- 2. Determine the scale of the incident as quickly as possible.** This will determine the level of response and resources required and provide focus to the appropriate response.
3. If emergency services or the Gardai are involved, make sure to **open the channels of communication** with their key people as soon as possible.
4. Remember, consider the **PEOPLE FIRST** in any crisis situation. Be extremely sensitive to the needs of next of kin, staff and students.

Key Steps to Follow ...2

5. Consider **legal/statutory obligations** before any official statements are issued.
6. Are there **existing policies/ways of working** that must be adhered to?
7. Issue an initial **holding statement within the first 30 minutes of an incident**. If that is not possible, try to respond within the first hour.
8. **DO NOT** speculate on the cause or potential outcome of the situation.
9. **Notify key people promptly**. Make sure you contact those who **NEED** to know first, rather than those who might **LIKE** to know.

Key Steps to Follow ...3

10. If appropriate, start **working up a Q&A document** with potential questions/answers. This will help to focus and prepare the media spokesperson for media engagement once the timing is appropriate.

11. Issue follow up statements only when verifiable, factual information is available. The timing of follow-up statements will depend on the nature of the incident and the speed at which information can be confirmed.

Key Steps to Follow ...4

12. Consider the wider stakeholder

landscape once next of kin, staff and students have been notified. What can or should the wider group be told?

13. It is worth noting when preparing media statements in a situation where very little can be said, that information about how UCC supporting its students – policies, procedures, counselling, etc. – can be used.

Scenario: Pandemic Flu Outbreak

Statement 1

- University College, Cork (UCC) can confirm that it is liaising closely with the Department of Health and the HSE regarding reports of a Pandemic Flu outbreak. Further updates will be provided as information becomes available.

Statement 2

- University College, Cork (UCC) can confirm that in order to limit the spread of the Pandemic Flu which is impacting the country, a decision has been taken to close the University with immediate effect, until further notice. The decision has been taken following advice from the Department of Health and the HSE. Further updates will be posted on the UCC website and via social media channels.

Scenario: Pandemic Flu Outbreak

Statement 3

- University College, Cork (UCC) can confirm that following a **(insert number of days closure)** due to a Pandemic Flu outbreak, the university will reopen to all staff and students tomorrow, **(insert date)**.
- University management would like to thank the Department of Health and the HSE for their invaluable support and advice over the past **(insert time period)**, and is very much looking forward to welcoming staff and students back on Campus tomorrow.

Scenario: Large fire in an historic building on Campus

Statement 1

- University College, Cork (UCC) can confirm that a fire has broken out on Campus today. The emergency services have arrived on site and are working closely with University management and staff to deal with the incident. Further information will be provided as it becomes available.

Statement 2

- University College, Cork (UCC) can confirm that a fire broke out in the **(insert relevant building/area)** on Campus today at **(insert time)**. The emergency services are working to bring the fire under control, meanwhile all staff members and students have been evacuated from the impacted area. UCC can confirm that all staff members and students are safe and accounted for.

Scenario: Large fire in an historic building on Campus

Statement 3

- University College, Cork (UCC) can confirm that a fire which broke out in the **(insert relevant building/area)** on Campus today at **(insert time)** has now been extinguished. All staff members and students were safely evacuated and accounted for before the fire spread throughout the building.
- Management at UCC would like to pay tribute to the emergency services for their prompt response to today's incident and for their efforts in successfully extinguishing the fire. A thorough investigation into the cause of today's incident will begin shortly, with input from all of the relevant authorities.

October 2017 – Storm Ophelia

UCC Update - Storm Ophelia (Monday, October 16) – 12noon

UCC is monitoring the weather situation and, while it is hoped that the University will resume normal business, including Conferings, on Tuesday (October 17), the situation is an evolving one.

A further update will be provided at 4pm today on the UCC website and on the UCC Facebook and Twitter channels.

October 2017 – Storm Ophelia

UCC Update – Storm Ophelia (Monday, October 16) – Autumn Conferrings to go ahead on Tuesday, October 17

UCC can confirm that all campuses will be open as normal tomorrow (Tuesday, October 17) and lectures will recommence at 12noon.

UCC Autumn Conferrings will take place tomorrow, however, changes have been made to the previously advised timings as a result of Storm Ophelia.

Graduands should note the following changes to the schedule:

- The 10am ceremony has moved to 12noon. Gowns will be available for collection from 10am.
- The 12.30pm ceremony has moved to 2.30pm. Gowns will be available for collection from 12.30pm.
- The 3.30pm ceremony has moved to 5.30pm. Gowns will be available for collection from 3.30pm.

In Conclusion

- A major emergency is a defining moment for an organisation.
- Effective communications is vital to the successful handling of any major emergency.
- UCC has a robust emergency management plan which is tested regularly through desk-top and more extensive exercises.