

Section III- Incident Response & Communications Protocol (rev of 1-2025)

A. PURPOSE:

The Robert Morris University Incident Response & Communications Protocol establishes responsibilities in the event of an emergency or disaster affecting the University, its students, faculty or staff, including procedures for managing communications during and immediately following such situations. The overall Emergency Response Plan provides a framework for appropriate responses to various types and levels of emergency situations that may arise at any of RMU's locations – the Moon Township campus, Yorktown Hall, Island Sports Center, and/or other operating locations. This protocol also serves in situations that arise in the outside community, but may pose a threat to the University.

It should be noted that a poorly handled response to the media during a crisis can often result in misleading or adverse publicity about an organization. Such publicity can be costly in terms of reputation and credibility, as well as potential legal and financial liability. For these reasons, the task of formulating and disseminating information to the public in times of crisis is equally important and complex.

University Communications Philosophy

The University will be as open and forthright as possible with its public communication as coordinated by the Chief Brand Officer. The desired outcome is to maintain a trust in Robert Morris University by disclosing facts, answering questions truthfully, and communicating pertinent public information in a timely manner. Where possible, the University will also address public concerns caused by misinformation.

B. KEY DEFINITIONS:

1. Crisis vs. Issue: To better understand the Incident Response & Communications protocol, it is necessary to differentiate between a crisis and an issue.
 - a. Issue - A problem that could potentially become a crisis, and can be characterized by terms such as ongoing, brewing, or unfolding. An issue during its initial stage requires attention, but an emergency type response may not be necessary. Issues include a wide range of problems that have the potential to impact the University and/or its constituents, but which may not involve a major threat to the University. Like a crisis, issues require persons or a team to gather facts to determine what, if any, response is needed.
 - b. Crisis - An immediate and major threat to life safety, University property, and/or the integrity of the institution. In a crisis, an immediate response is required and strategies are required to enable the University to gather and disseminate information effectively. A crisis can pose a serious threat to the University's reputation and requires a trained and prepared response team for managing public communication.

Examples of a crisis might include:

- Natural disasters such as fires and floods.
- Incidents such as violent crimes, riots, or demonstrations.
- Controversial statements/actions of University-related persons.
- Sudden death of student(s) or employee(s).

Potential crises at Robert Morris University may also include, but are not limited to:

- Violent or sexual crime.
- Sexual harassment/racial discrimination.
- Suicide.
- Demonstrations/strikes.
- Plane crash.
- Significant health threats such as avian flu or meningitis.

2. Incident Response Center: The Incident Response Center is the designated area/room/location in which the Incident Response Team may meet to direct operations during an actual or potential crisis as defined above. The location of the Incident Response Center will be the Facilities Services Center Building, unless determined otherwise.

3. Emergency/Severity Levels:

Level 1: Minor or contained emergency – Any incident that affects one department without serious impacts on other departments or that has a low-level potential to impact overall functional capacity of the university (such as a snow storm), excluding closure of the university. This includes individual non-contagious health emergencies that may require the assistance of an EMT but present no risk to other students or employees. In most instances, the Chief of RMU Police or his designee will serve as the on-scene commander for these situations.

Level 2: Major emergency – Any potential or actual incident or situation that may disrupt the overall operations of multiple departments or buildings, but usually not campus-wide. Major support from internal maintenance and/or other campus services will likely be necessary in these situations, and outside emergency personnel may also be required. While a potential risk to life and/or property could exist, closure of the University is unnecessary. Depending on the severity of the emergency, the University's Incident Response Team (or specific members of the Team) may be assembled at this level.

Level 3: Disaster – Any event or occurrence which seriously impairs or halts the operations of the University campus-wide, which may include mass injury to students and/or employees and/or severe property damage. Both University and outside emergency response services are required. The Incident Response Team will be activated and may be summoned to the Incident Response Center.

C. PROCEDURES - WHEN AN ISSUE ARISES OR AN EMERGENCY OR CRISIS OCCURS:

1. General / Crisis Guidelines

- a. When should you contact senior administration? When you see or hear of an issue or crisis that may or will affect the overall safety and/or well-being of either a segment of or the entire RMU community.
- b. What is the first thing I should do when I see a potential crisis? **Call the RMU Police Department at (412) 397-2424**, followed by your department head or a senior-level administrator (regardless of the time of day). You should call all available numbers until you reach the person you are calling. This includes office, mobile, and, if necessary, home numbers.

2. Process, Authority and Chain of Command - Preliminary notification and situational assessment:

Any internal and external emergency situations, disasters affecting the institution, or life-threatening situations must be reported to the RMU Police Department at the 24-hour emergency number **(412) 397-2424** and then to your immediate department head/supervisor. RMU Police Department will typically act as the scene incident command and will perform an assessment of the situation in order to determine the situation's severity level.

The nature of many incidents may originate from conditions associated with the physical environment or from situations that are political/social/media in nature. **As such, a team that includes; the RMU Chief of Police (or designee), RMU Safety Officer, and RMU Chief Brand Officer will convene to assess and determine the severity of the emergency.** A member of this team will act as a "communication liaison" and provide upward communications to RMU's senior administration - General Counsel, Vice President/Department Head (listed on the below IRT), and/or University President. To maintain organized and efficient communications, information should flow from the scene to senior administration via this communications pathway.

The authority to declare a campus state of emergency rests with the President or designee (Incident Response Team – VP/Department Head). For a step-by-step summary of the incident response protocol, please refer to the Emergency Management Checklists in Appendix A and B of this protocol.

3. Incident Response Team

The Incident Response Team (IRT) is responsible for identifying mitigation actions relating to severe Level 2 emergencies and all Level 3 disasters. When necessary, the IRT or a subset of the IRT will convene (in person or remote) to; assess the incident and put into motion necessary aspects of the Emergency Response Plan, ensure potential life safety concerns are addressed, protect property and equipment, determine the necessary outside agencies and other community organizations to contact, coordinate recovery and restoration activities, and follow up on documentation, administration and logistics. The IRT consists of the following members or their designated representatives (note: the President may serve on the IRT as he/she so chooses):

Primary Members:

- Provost & Vice President, Academic Affairs
- General Counsel & Vice President, Legal
- CFO & Vice President, Business Affairs
- Dean of Students
- Chief Facilities Officer
- Chief Brand Officer
- RMU Safety Officer
- RMU Chief of Police

Back-up Members:

Vice Provost, Academic Administration
Assistant University Council
Chief Accounting Officer/Controller
Chief Experience Officer
Senior Director, Maintenance/Plant Engr.
Director, Digital Strategy
Specialist, Capital Projects/Safety
Sergeant

Either the VP for Legal or VP, Academic Affairs will preside over the “IRT” throughout the crisis.

The IRT will be augmented on a case-by-case basis depending on the nature/scope of the emergency/crisis, but is likely to include representatives from various departments, including but not limited to:

- Human Resources (Office of People & Culture)
- Academic Affairs/Administration
- Student Affairs/Residence Life/Counseling Center
- Athletics
- Business Operations & Insurance
- Admissions/Enrollment
- Information Technology
- Facilities

4. Communications During an Emergency or Crisis:

In case of an emergency of major proportion, it can be expected that the media (reporters, photographers, and radio and television personnel) will appear on the scene. At such times, RMU becomes particularly vulnerable in its handling of the media. What any employee or student says to the media will become critical because reporters will call any employee a “Robert Morris University spokesperson.” Only the Chief Brand Officer or their designee are authorized to communicate with the media. Students should be advised to follow this same process. In some instances (i.e., news conferences), the University President or another administrator may serve as a spokesperson for limited periods of time, but only in consultation with the Chief Brand Officer.

The IRT will be responsible for crafting messages that will be shared by the Chief Brand Officer with the media and key constituencies in the event of a crisis, including the time frame and context of the messages that will be shared. In addition, the IRT will compile a list of all RMU constituents affected by the crisis, which may include students, parents, employees, vendors, the Board of Trustees, donors, alumni, friends of the university, and union leadership. The President or a designated representative(s) will correspond directly with these constituencies through written and/or verbal communications relating the facts, conveying concern, and describing what is being done to correct the situation. At all times, the IRT should share information at the highest level of transparency needed to ensure the safety of the campus community and the integrity of the institution.

The Brand Department will advise and work with the IRT to implement the communication activities that need to occur internally to students, employees, or externally to the media. Brand Department staff will consult with outside public relations counsel as needed.

Communications activities during a crisis may include:

- Utilizing the RMU Alert system and other communication channels, including email and voice, to notify the RMU community.
- Recording and making arrangements to continuously update information on the main University phone line (412) 397-3000 and/or designated media phone line (412) 397-5291, as well as the University website and social media channels.
- Notifying all receptionists, operators, administrative assistants, and maintenance staff of designated contacts for inquiries (Chief Brand Officer in the case of inquiries from media and Dean of Students in case of calls from parents/students, etc.).
- All inquiries should be logged and reported to the Chief Brand Officer.
- In the event of a large-scale crisis, a Communications Center (different from Incident Response Center) will become necessary to hold regular news conferences. Room #230 of the Athletic Building (Joe Walton Stadium) will serve as the designated location for news conferences and dissemination of information as it becomes available. Representatives from RMU’s Information Technology Department will assist in equipping the Communications Center. The

Brand Department will assemble press kits with fact sheets addressing the crisis and coordinate and officiate the news conferences. The spokesperson will be available to the media throughout scheduled news conferences.

Phones and Two-Way Radios: Provided by IT

Computers: Provided by IT

Fax: Provided by IT

Food: Provided by Parkhurst, from RMU Dining Services

The IRT will designate alternate sites as deemed necessary, and computers, phones, and fax machines will be moved to the appropriate place or provided by IT. Cell phones will be used in the case of a power outage.

Additional actions to consider and communicate in website postings and other communications, depending upon the nature of the crisis, may include:

- Special phone lines set up to accommodate incoming calls
- Review of relevant academic and financial policies 24-hour escort service
- Meetings with student organizations/student leaders
- Grief counseling
- 24-hour on-site counseling in residential community
- Emergency housing (free housing) on campus throughout the crisis
- Cancellation of sporting events, social events and similar activities
- Increased security
- Support from Campus Ministry Association

The Brand Department will monitor press clippings and broadcast coverage. The Academic Media Center will be responsible for recording all television coverage and providing the Brand Department with broadcast segments as they become available.

Rumor Control: Information may be regularly updated on the main University phone line (412) 397-3000 and/or a designated phone line, as well as posted at www.rmu.edu. All official University statements, chronological facts sheets and updated materials may be made available to members of the working media. Internal dissemination of information, including memos or emails from the designated spokesperson for the University, an official statement, and updated fact sheets, may be made available to all employees. This will keep the entire campus community aware of the situation and avoid rumors.

Crisis Communications Media Kit Contents (as relevant to situation):

- Robert Morris University fact sheet
- Chronological Fact Sheet Detailing the Crisis Situation
- Prepared Statement Regarding Crisis
- Crime Statistics
- Area Hotel Information with Telephone Numbers and Directions
- Campus Map

Designated Spokesperson: In the event of an emergency, the Chief Brand Officer or designee will serve as the University's spokesperson and will determine any information that is to be released to the media. The current designated spokespersons are:

Brian Edwards
Chief Brand Officer

Jordan Piltz
Director, Brand Department

(See Appendix C for contact information)

The decision-making process of the information to be released will be discussed with the core members of the IRT, also including the University President when appropriate.

In addition to the primary and secondary spokespersons, individuals who may serve as technical resources or advisors include:

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| 1. Police/Crime | Chief of RMU Police |
| 2. Financial and Facilities issues | CFO & VP of Business Affairs |
| 3. Student issues | Dean of Students |
| 4. Faculty/Academic issues | Provost & VP of Academic Affairs |
| 5. Staff issues | VP of People & Culture (HR) |
| 6. Athletics | VP & Director of Athletics |
| 7. Legal issues | General Counsel & VP of Legal |
| 8. Health issues | Chief Wellness Officer & UPMC MyHealth RMU Reps. |

D. RECOVERY FROM AN EMERGENCY OR CRISIS

Once an end to the emergency is foreseen, a recovery plan is in order. Restoration to normal operations may include:

- The decision to reoccupy a building or multiple buildings. This authorization will come through the Chief of RMU Police (or scene commander).
- Debriefing of administrators, staff, faculty and student leaders.
- Internal communications or a public statement from the President of the University, as deemed necessary, provided by the Brand Department.
- A review of the crisis situation with the IRT following the event. At this time, the entire crisis plan should be reviewed and any improvements should be made to the plan.
- Counseling for the campus community through outside agencies and/or the University's on-campus Counseling Center, arranged by the IRT in a Level 3 disaster or by a Vice President or their designee for a Level 1 or 2 emergencies. Coordination of counseling for the community may be offered as a result of a Level 3 emergency in cooperation with outside agencies.
- An update to the University's legal counsel for potentially litigious situations.
- The Chief Brand Officer may send thank you notes to the working media. Other methods of communicating appreciation should come from the President's Office or designated member(s) of the IRT.