Emergency and Crisis Communication Policy

I. Introduction

When a crisis strikes, UCEAP must take immediate action and communicate promptly, accurately, professionally, and confidently as the situation unfolds, and in the hours and days that follow. Many UCEAP constituents must be reached with specific information.

Additionally, the University of California image can be positively or negatively impacted by public perceptions of how an incident is handled. Listed below are UCEAP communication steps to be followed during an emergency or crisis that can potentially impact UCEAP operations. This document and those listed under Section VI - Related Documents, provide information about effective communication protocols for all UCEAP representatives. This policy may also apply to extraordinary situations that require specialized communications and/or coordination of multiple activities.

The emergency and crisis communication policy helps coordinate internal and external communications within the UCEAP community in California and overseas, and between UCEAP and the University of California, the media and the public in the event of an emergency or other critical event. This policy provides guidelines for addressing a range of situations, for assembling a crisis communication plan, and for factually assessing situations and determining whether communications responses are necessary and the urgency of the notification. It also helps ensure that UCEAP representatives and those acting on behalf of UCEAP in California and overseas are familiar with procedures and with their roles, particularly during an emergency.

II. Scope

This Policy applies to all UCEAP representatives in California and abroad, including parties acting on behalf of UCEAP.

III. Definitions

Communication strategy – Within the context of this policy, the term communication strategy refers to the event-specific communication ‘plan’ that is devised by the Regional Director (RD) and the Health, Safety & Emergency Response Director (HS&ER) at the onset of an occurred or impending crisis or emergency.

Crisis or Emergency - Within the context of this policy, the words crisis and emergency (real or perceived) are used interchangeably in reference to any situation that:

- requires immediate and coordinated action, and/or
- will have a significant impact on the operation or reputation of UCEAP.

External constituent – A member of a group not associated directly with UCEAP or the University of California that has an interest or stake in the outcome of the events. Ex. parents, the media, the general public.

Internal constituent – A member of a group associated with UCEAP or the University of California that has an interest or stake in the outcome of the events. E.g., UCEAP or UC campus staff, UCEAP students, UCEAP or UC officials.
**Timely warning** – Within the context of this policy, ‘timely warning’ refers to the ethical and legal obligation of UCEAP representatives to provide a warning to UCEAP students at risk when a serious crime occurs that may pose a continuing threat to others.

**UCEAP emergency level 3** – Incidents that require a coordinated response involving three or more UCEAP Crisis Management Team (CMT) members, or an escalation of any of level 2 incident.

**UCEAP emergency level 4** – Crises that put the immediate well-being of students, faculty or staff at risk, or that create a significant drain on University of California resources.

Refer to the document *Student Incidents and Emergency Levels* for additional emergency severity level definitions and examples of student incidents falling into each category.

**IV. Emergency & Crisis Communication Policy**

**A. Key Responsibilities**

1. The lead UCEAP representative abroad, which may be a Study Center Director (SCD), Liaison Officer (LO), Visiting Professor (VP) or other designated individual, should:
   a. inform the RD and HS&ER Director immediately if there is an emerging crisis in proximity to their geographic area,
   b. monitor the situation with a local, on-the-ground perspective, and
   c. assist the HS&ER Director to determine the current threat level and potential for escalation.

2. The Health, Safety & Emergency Response (HS&ER) Director has primary responsibility for liaising with UCEAP representatives abroad, third-party security providers, government agencies and other resources to assess the reliability of information received about the crisis.

3. Depending on the severity of the emergency, the Regional Director/regional team (RD) and/or the HS&ER Director will take on the overall responsibility for the content of official messages. They will also oversee the dissemination of official UCEAP messages delivered to internal and external constituents.

4. UCEAP staff in charge of external/media relations will serve as the primary media contact for UCEAP about the crisis and UCEAP’s response. They will advise on designating a spokesperson, proactively release verified information about the impact of the crisis on UCEAP to the public and press, and provide ongoing assistance in controlling the flow of information.

5. Critical functions of the identified spokesperson:
   a. communicate with key UC campus and relevant UCOP officials (e.g., Public Affairs & Media Relations office),
   b. communicate with reporters,
   c. field questions from the broad community.

6. The UCEAP Marketing and Communications (M&C) Department will disseminate approved messages via official UCEAP social media outlets, monitor coverage of the situation in the social media and correct misinformation as quickly as possible.

**B. Developing the Communication Strategy**

The RD and HS&ER Director are responsible for devising the appropriate communication strategy.
1. Components of the communication strategy include:
   a. Identification of the internal (including UC and partner institution officials) and external (parents, the media, the public) constituents to be included, and prioritize them. The UC and UCEAP community will always be the highest priority
   b. Communication methods to be used with each constituency group (e-mail, phone, text message, social media)
   c. Frequency of communications for each constituency group
   d. Identification of the appropriate UCEAP spokesperson(s)  
      \textbf{Note:} in some instances, the spokesperson will be an official from the UCOP Public Affairs & Media Relations office.

2. Criteria to be considered when determining the appropriate communication strategy include:
   a. Threat Type
      - What is the threat? (fire, shooter, bomb threat)
      - What is the potential impact to UCEAP operations (minor, major, catastrophic)
      - Is the situation stable, or is it likely to worsen?
   b. Safety Assessment: What is the potential for
      - death?
      - serious injury?
      - minor injury?
      - damage?
      - disruption to UCEAP operations or the academic program?
   c. Urgency
      - How soon does the message need to go out? (minutes, hours, days)
      - How much time is there for review and approval?
   d. Audience
      - Who needs to be alerted? (UC officials, faculty, staff, students, parents, media)
      - How many need to be alerted? (dozens, hundreds, thousands)
   e. Capabilities/Limitations
      - What are limitations of the selected communication methods? (limited audience, lengthy delivery time, inaccurate contact info, potential to cause mass panic)
      - What are back-up communication methods if those selected aren’t effective?
      - How quickly will the information be received, and can receipt be verified?

\textbf{C. Delivering Official UCEAP Messages}

Crises are chaotic. To avoid confusion, reduce uncertainty, and help ensure that all information being released is factually accurate and consistent with information released by the UCEAP Systemwide Office and the UC Office of the President, Public Affairs & Media Relations office, all UCEAP representatives should adhere to the following communication policies during a crisis:

1. All actions and messages should be coordinated through the RD and HS&ER Director.
2. UCEAP representatives abroad should resist providing messages to UCEAP constituents, including parents, until information accuracy can be verified and an official response can be developed by the appropriate UCEAP officials.

3. UCEAP official messages communicated to internal and external constituents, including the public, should be accurate, professional, consistent, relevant, and empathetic.

4. UCEAP communications should comply with confidentiality laws and be sensitive to the privacy of UCEAP students and employees. See FERPA Student Information Release Matrix for more information.

5. Only authorized UCEAP spokespersons should speak to U.S. or international news media. They should always respond to the media quickly and fairly.

6. UCEAP representatives should recognize that any communication being delivered by a UCEAP representative may be construed as an “official” UCEAP message, regardless of whether it is communicated verbally, via e-mail, via social media, or otherwise.

7. Any plans by UCEAP representatives to share other information in private or public conversations must first be discussed with the RD, HS&ER Director and others at the UCEAP Systemwide office responsible for external communications.

8. During the early stages of major emergencies, the UCEAP Worldwide Alerts web page (www.eap.ucop.edu/911) will serve as UCEAP’s primary tool for providing updated information to the UCEAP community, the media and the public. The HS&ER Director is responsible for content accuracy.

9. UCEAP will use the official Facebook and Twitter accounts and other social media, as needed, to reach UCEAP constituents to update them about unfolding issues.

   Depending on the situation, the UCEAP Facebook page, in particular, may be used as a space for UCEAP to post crucial public information and provide a central location for individuals to share information and support. Ideally, any social media message will be reviewed by the M&C Editor for content and copy-edits before it is posted. Information provided will be drawn from UCEAP Worldwide Alerts page or, when needed to respond quickly to vital Facebook or Twitter posts, from the appropriate UCEAP unit.

10. UCEAP social media sites will be monitored by the UCEAP M&C Department for misinformation or matters that need to be shared with the Regional Director and HS&ER Director. All UCEAP representatives should assist in managing rumors and misinformation by following this policy and by alerting the UCEAP Marketing Department of misinformation posted on the web or via social media.

D. On-Going Communication

1. The HS&ER Director and the Regional Director/regional team will update internal constituencies about changes to or additional details of the situation via available methods of communication (voice mail, e-mail, phone contact, social media, letters, newsletters/other publications) as per the communication strategy they developed.

2. The HS&ER Director and Regional Director/regional team will continually evaluate the effectiveness of the devised communication strategy and will revise as necessary by adding constituency groups, revising message content, changing the frequency of communications, etc.
3. M&C staff will monitor coverage of the situation in social media and correct misinformation as quickly as possible throughout the crisis lifecycle.

4. The RD may instruct the Operations Specialist to update campus staff and other UCEAP constituents, as necessary.

5. Depending on the situation, the RD or the HS&ER Director will be the primary, on-going contact with the lead UCEAP Representative Abroad (ex. SCD, LO, or VP).

6. The AVP&ED will provide updated status reports to the the UC Office of the President and the UCSB Executive Vice Chancellor, as necessary.

7. News releases, media advisories and other means of media and public communications can be used as UCEAP operations begin to return to normal.

V. UCEAP Crisis/Emergency Communication Protocol

A. Step-by-step Protocol

1. The HS&ER Director, Inés DeRomaña, will continually monitor, assess, and disseminate relevant information, consulting official sources, UC experts, colleagues with programs in the country/region, US Department of State, Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), IJET Intelligent Risk Services, and other sources.

2. Once an occurred or impending emergency or crisis is assessed by the HS&ER Director and RD as warranting an emergency response, the following should happen:
   a. The following individuals should be immediately notified: SCD/LO/VP, HS&ER Director, RD, Operations Specialist, HS&ER Assistant.
   b. The UCEAP SCD/LO/VP should activate the appropriate emergency response as instructed in the Study Center Emergency Response Handbook.
   c. The HS&ER Director will convene appropriate members of the Crisis Management Team (CMT) to devise an event-specific communication strategy.

3. The HS&ER Director will upload confirmed information to the Worldwide Alerts web page, even if not all key elements are available.

4. Once posted to the UCEAP Worldwide Alerts page, the UCEAP Marketing & Communications (M&C) Department will push out via social media.

5. Members of the Emergency Response Team at the location abroad and members of the UCEAP Systemwide CMT will initiate appropriate elements of the Emergency Response Plan as well as the communication strategy as devised in step ‘2c’ above.

6. The SCD/LO/VP should designate a member of the Emergency Response Team at the location abroad to maintain regular contact with UCEAP Systemwide if the SCD/LO/VP is unable to perform that function themselves because they are handling the emergency response efforts.

7. If the incident is serious, reporters may call the UCEAP Systemwide office to get details. There may be numerous requests for information from local, regional, national or international media. The challenge of managing large numbers of requests for information, interviews and public statements can be overwhelming. In such a situation, the following should occur:
   a. A spokesperson should be designated
b. requests for information should be tracked on a contact log and prioritized for response

c. the following communications should be developed, ideally before requests for information start:
   • an official UCEAP statement, including background information, for press releases;
   • pre-scripted talking points and responses to expected questions from reporters and the public;
   • instructions for UCEAP staff and representatives who may be approached by reporters, parents, other program students, or the public.

8. After consulting with the RD/regional team, the HS&ER Director will prepare updated information for the UCEAP Worldwide Alerts website. The HS&ER Director will share all critical information with the SCD/LO/VPs, UCEAP AVP&ED, UCEAP Systemwide staff, UC Campus Administrative Directors and UCEAP Advisory Council, by alerting them to important information updates on the UCEAP Worldwide Alerts website.

9. The HS&ER Director will alert the UCEAP regional team about updated information, and designated staff will relay that information to the campus EAP advisors with any additional program-specific information that may be appropriate.

10. All UCEAP representatives should consult and work closely with UCEAP regional team and the HS&ER Director on all communications before sending anything about these matters to UCEAP constituents, including students, parents, UC officials, or other public venues.

11. Only authorized UCEAP spokespersons can speak to reporters. UCEAP staff will receive information explaining that it is best to speak with one informed voice and identifying the spokesperson. This person will be prepared with talking points so he/she can speak clearly and effectively in terms that can be easily understood. The spokesperson should follow UC protocols when sharing sensitive information about students and/or the program. Depending on the severity and extent of the emergency or crisis, the University of California Office of the President (UCOP) Public Affairs & Media Relations will be briefed by the HS&ER Director, and they will become the UCEAP spokespersons.

12. As the situation unfolds, the RD will provide regular updates to the UCEAP AVP & ED, and other UCEAP CMT members will be brought in as needed. (For example, if the incident becomes public, the HS&ER Director will coordinate with UCOP about media response, etc.)

13. For some significant events (e.g. severe accidents or large-scale, high-impact emergencies during UCEAP operations abroad), the AVP & ED will brief the UC Office of the President as well as the UCSB Executive Vice Chancellor.
B. Depiction of Protocol

Reliable communication is a key factor in the successful management of any crisis. Procedures may vary slightly depending on the circumstances. The RD and HS&ER Director will work closely together to define the best communication strategy to fit the situation. However, coordination of communications with the UCEAP Systemwide office concerning statements to be made to internal groups (other program students or UC officials) and external groups (parents or the press) is essential to meeting crisis/emergency communication goals.

Table 1: First Notification: Individual student crisis level 3 or level 4

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<tr>
<th>First Notification Protocol</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cc: SCD, Ops Spec, HS&amp;ER Asst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H&amp;S Dir</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regardless of where the notification of a level 3 or level 4 incident initiates, it is critical that the following people be notified immediately:

1) Regional Director, 2) HS&ER Director, 3) Operations Specialist, 4) HS&ER Analyst

Table 2: First Notification: Large-scale, high-impact event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Notification Protocol</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cc: RA, Ops Spec, HS&amp;ER Asst</td>
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<tr>
<td>H&amp;S Dir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cc: RA, Ops Spec, HS&amp;ER Asst</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Regardless of where the notification of a large-scale, high-impact event initiates, it is critical that the following people be notified immediately:

1) Regional Director, 2) HS&ER Director, 3) Operations Specialist, 4) HS&ER Analyst
### Ongoing Communication Protocol

*During the management of the crisis, it is important that everyone stays ‘in the loop.’ However, to minimize misinformation, it is critical that those trained in incident management and communication (the RD and PA) are the ones that provide it to key constituents, such as the AVP&ED, parents and the media.*

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**VI. Related Documents**

Please reference the following related documents for a full understanding of this policy:

1. **FERPA Student Information Release Matrix** – this matrix assists in defining the circumstances under which information about a student can be released to third parties, including the student’s parents.  
   http://www.eap.ucop.edu/Documents/_forms/Data_access_chart.pdf

2. **Incident Reporting Policy & Guidelines** – this policy identifies the information that should be shared with the UCEAP Systemwide office, appropriate timelines for conveying incident information, and different types of incident reports.  
   http://www.eap.ucop.edu/Documents/EmergencyResponseAlerts/Student_Incident_Reporting_Policy.pdf

3. **Student Incident Report** – this form defines the information needed by the UCEAP Systemwide HS&ER PA for incidents with a severity level 2 and above.  
   http://www.eap.ucop.edu/Documents/_forms/Safety_Incident_Form.pdf

4. **Student Incidents and Emergency Levels** – this document describes the incident severity categories and outlines the overall incident response actions that should be followed for incidents in each severity category, including incident reporting and communication.  
   http://www.eap.ucop.edu/Documents/EmergencyResponseAlerts/EMERGENCY_LEVELS.pdf

5. **Study Center Emergency Response Handbook** – This handbook outlines UCEAP’s emergency response plan in the event of many types of hazards and threats. To be an effective tool in an emergency, the handbook must be customized with localized information including local emergency phone numbers, current student contact information, and location-specific risk assessments and planned responses. *This document is password protected.*  

6. **UCEAP Worldwide Alerts** web page ([www.eap.ucop.edu/911](http://www.eap.ucop.edu/911)).

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Revised August 13, 2013 - *This document will be reviewed and updated annually.*