Chapter 8  EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Introduction

The following sections provide general safety guidelines and procedures for emergency preparedness. This chapter covers the following topics:

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Elements of Emergency Preparedness

An emergency consists of any situation that poses immediate and extreme danger to people, property, or process. Because most emergencies are sudden, severe, and unexpected, it is extremely important to be prepared for a possible emergency. Proper preparation helps ensure safety and survival. A written emergency response or action plan is the best preparation tool for handling emergencies.

To ensure effectiveness, review and update emergency response plans regularly. Make sure that each response plan includes the following information:

- Procedure for sounding alarms
- Emergency escape procedures and escape route assignments
- Emergency procedures for employees with special needs
- Rescue and medical assistance requirements
- Names of persons or departments to contact for more information on handling emergencies
- Method for reporting emergencies
- Provision for training emergency procedures

Handling Emergencies

9-911

Dialing 9-911 connects you to the City of Odessa 911 operator. Regardless of the type of emergency in progress, you may call 9-911 and/or sound the fire alarm immediately. Remain calm, notify others, and respond to the emergency as appropriate. Do not attempt to handle any emergency situation in which you do not have training (e.g., fire fighting, first aid, spill response, etc.).

IMPORTANT:

Call 9-911 and/or pull the fire alarm whenever a situation poses immediate danger to people, property, or process.
NOTE

If a 9-911 call has been made, also dial 2911 or the University Police Department. Inform the operator of the emergency and that a 9-911 call has already been made.

When you call to report an emergency, provide the operator with the following information:

- Building or area name
- Location
- Brief description of the emergency
- Your name

The following sections offer specific safety guidelines and procedures for handling different types of emergencies.

Bomb Threats

Bomb threats and other threats of violence are serious emergencies that required prompt attention. Although bomb threats are rare, they are most likely to occur during final exams. The following sections offer guidance for handling bomb threats.

How to Handle a Threatening Phone Call

If you receive a bomb threat over the phone, remain calm and act courteous. If feasible, notify another person to listen on a speaker phone. Take notes on the caller's threat, tone, voice characteristics, and background noise. If the caller seems talkative, ask questions such as the following:

- When will the bomb go off? How much time remains?
- Where is the bomb located?
- What kind of bomb is it?
- How do you know about this bomb?
- What is your name?
- Do you know there are people in the building who could be hurt or killed?

IMPORTANT:

If you receive a threatening phone call, remain calm and take notes. Try to find out as much as possible about the caller and threat.

The following form is an example of sounds to note while the caller is on the phone:

- Caller's Identity
  - Male
  - Female

- Approximate Age

- Voice Characteristics
  - Loud Voice
  - Soft Voice
  - High Pitched Voice
Low Pitched Voice
Intoxicated

• Accent
  Local Accent
  Foreign Accent
  Race

• Speech
  Fast Speech
  Slow Speech
  Distinct Speech
  Slurred Speech
  Nasal Speech
  Lisp Speech
  Normal Speech

• Manner
  Calm
  Angry
  Rational
  Irrational
  Coherent
  Incoherent
  Emotional
  Laughing

• Language/Grammar
  Excellent Grammar
  Good Grammar
  Fair Grammar
  Poor Grammar
  Foul Grammar

• Background Noises
  Voices in Background
  Music in Background
  Animals in Background
  Street Traffic in Background

UPD Response to Bomb Threats

The UPD regards all bomb threats as serious. After learning of a bomb threat, the UPD notifies the President and the Vice President for Business Affairs (VPBA) and asks him or her to notify key building personnel. Together, the building personnel and the UPD search the building, including trash cans and restrooms, for anything "suspicious" or "out of the ordinary." After interviewing the person who received the bomb threat, the UPD determines if the threat appears to be a hoax or an actual emergency.

The UPD has the authority to evacuate a building if circumstances warrant this precaution. If the UPD determines that the bomb threat is a hoax, the President and VPBA may still evacuate the building at his/her discretion.

Building evacuations may be conducted by sounding the fire alarm. If a fire alarm is used in response to a bomb threat, the UPD will advise the Fire Department.
Handling Suspicious-Looking Items

If you locate a suspicious-looking item, do not handle the item. Clear the area of personnel and notify the UPD immediately. If necessary, the UPD will call the Bomb Demolition Squad for assistance.

Bomb Threat Observations

For most bomb threats, the caller announces that a bomb is set to go off at a certain time and then hangs up. Because routine bomb threat evacuations may spawn numerous hoax calls, consider the following:

- Most intended explosions have no warning. Usually, after the bomb is detonated, a party claims credit and then explains why the bomb was set.
- In cases where an actual device is located, the caller usually provides specific information for finding the device before the detonation time.
- With few exceptions, bomb threats on campus are hoaxes designed to avoid or postpone an unpleasant task (e.g., exam).

University policy is to use restraint from evacuating buildings based on the following:

- A bomb that is set to detonate at a certain time is either a timed explosive device or a site-activated device. Both devices require considerable expertise to develop.
- Furthermore, a site-activated device, such as a radio-controlled mechanism, must be activated in close proximity of the bomb.
- Unless a bomb contains a large amount of volatile explosive (e.g., C-4 plastic), damage will be limited to the immediate area of the detonation.

Emergency Power

Some buildings on campus provide automatic emergency power during electrical outages. The emergency power only supports essential life safety equipment such as elevators, corridor lighting, fire alarms, and exit lighting. Some new buildings have red emergency power outlets for essential equipment and machinery. Contact the Physical Plant to determine if other emergency outlets are available in your work area.

There are three types of emergency power sources:

- Portable generators
- Building generators
- Battery power packs

Contact the Safety & Health Office for more information on emergency power.

Evacuation Plans

When the alarm is activated, then silenced, then reactivated, it signals a need for evacuation of the building.

1. Faculty and Staff will assist students in an orderly walk to the nearest stairwell to either the ground level or mesa level in the NW and SW stairwells and down the ramp.
2. Faculty and staff will advise students to evacuate to the fields around building. Cars will not be allowed to leave the campus for traffic could delay emergency vehicles or other persons could be injured in the parking lots.

3. Faculty and staff will assist injured persons to EMS points for medical treatment and possible transport off campus.

Conducting Fire Drills and Evacuations

To ensure that building occupants are prepared for an emergency evacuation, fire drills must be conducted annually. A safe and orderly evacuation is more important than a quick evacuation.

Before conducting a practice fire drill, the Office of Environmental Safety & Health will do the following:

1. Notify director of Physical Plant and the Vice president for Business Affairs at least one week in advance.
2. Notify the University Police Dispatcher and the Physical Plant Dispatcher so they do not contact the local fire department.

Practice fire drills should proceed as follows:

- Fire drills should involve all occupants. Everyone should leave the building when the fire alarm sounds. A person may be exempt from a fire drill if it will cause undo hardship (e.g., interrupt an experiment); however, exemptions are strongly discouraged.
- Occupants should close (not lock) doors as they leave the work area. Items that require security may be placed in a locking file cabinet or desk drawer on the way out.
- All building occupants should gather in the preplanned meeting place.
- Upon completion of the drill, Office of Environmental Safety & Health completes a Fire Drill Checklist and forwards it to the Vice President of Business Affairs.

Medical Emergencies

First aid training is necessary to prevent and treat sudden illness or accidental injury. In case of a medical emergency, immediately call both 2911 University Police Department and 9-911 Odessa 911 operator, and the Physical Plant at 2760. These phone calls will result in a paramedic ambulance being dispatched to the location. First aid should then be rendered as it can prevent and treat sudden illness or accidental injury. The primary objective of first aid is to save lives.

Hazardous Spill Response

Shops, labs, and areas with hazardous chemicals should have spill clean-up supplies on hand. Call 2760 and/or the University Police Department (2911) to report potential hazards from oil spills, fuel spills, chemical spills and other spills. Office of Environmental Safety & Health will arrange for the handling of toxic or major spills.

See the Chemical Safety chapter for more information on chemical spill response procedures. See the Biological Safety chapter for more information pertaining to spills of biological materials.

Radiation Emergencies

If a radiation incident (accidental release of spill), or exposure to (personal contamination) any quantity of radioactive material is believe to occurred, call the University Police Department, 2911, immediately and implement the Radiation Incident Response Plan (Appendix B).
Weather Emergencies

Weather emergency concerns for Odessa primarily include high winds, flash flooding, lightning, and tornadoes. Because the Odessa area does not have an early warning system for weather emergencies, a weather emergency radio can be used to monitor changing weather conditions and act accordingly. The following sections provide general guidelines for handling various weather emergencies.

Heavy Rain/High Winds

Heavy rain and high winds provide dangerous driving conditions. Because flooding is a common problem in Odessa, motorists should be aware of local weather conditions and avoid roads that tend to flood in heavy rains.

**IMPORTANT:**

*Do not drive in flooded areas or attempt to cross moving water in an automobile. Moving water can easily capsize a car or truck and drown the victim. Avoid creeks, rivers, ditches, and flooded roads during heavy rains. Keep children from playing in these areas during inclement weather.*

*High winds can topple trees, outdoor equipment, and electrical lines. Avoid downed power lines and notify the utility company of power outages. If an electrical line falls across your car, do not move the car or try to get out. Stay where you are until help arrives.*

Lightning

Lightning is nature's worst destroyer. A typical lightning bolt contains several hundred million volts at 30,000 or more amperes.

- Lightning does not need to strike a person directly to be dangerous.
- Lightning can crash down from virtually clear sky.
- Stay away from open doors or windows during an electrical storm.
- Avoid using the telephone or television set and keep clear of all metal objects such as pipes and electrical appliances during a storm.
- Do not go outside.

If you find yourself caught in a storm away from a protected building:

- Avoid tree lines.
- Stay away from unprotected storm shelters.
- Stay away from flag poles, towers, and metal fences.
- Do not wade, swim, or go boating in a thunderstorm.
- A closed automobile provides a protective metal shell.
- If caught in the open, stay low.

Tornado

Tornadoes produce violent winds that can damage homes, vehicles, people, and wildlife. The primary dangers associated with tornadoes are high winds and flying debris. Severe thunderstorms and hail commonly precede a tornado. A dark funnel cloud or roaring noise (like a train) is evidence of an actual tornado.
A tornado watch is issued when weather conditions are ideal for a tornado to form. A tornado warning is issued when a tornado is actually identified in the immediate vicinity.

If a tornado warning is issued, seek shelter immediately inside an interior room within the building in which you are located or nearest to your location at the time of the warning. Stay away from windows, doors, and outside walls.

- Do not drive to shelter, unless you are already in a vehicle when the warning is issued, then drive to the nearest building or seek shelter in a ditch or ravine.
- Never try to outrun a tornado in your vehicle.
- If you are in a school, hospital, factory, shopping mall, or other public area, go to the designated shelter area. Interior halls on the lowest floors are usually best.
- If you are at a home or in a building, go to an interior room on the lowest level (e.g., bathroom, closet, hall, etc.). Get under a piece of sturdy furniture if possible.

Winter Weather

Even though extreme winter weather is uncommon in this area, people must still take special precautions to ensure safety. Wear appropriate clothing for local weather conditions and keep your vehicle in good working order. If the roads become slick with ice, use extreme caution or avoid driving.

- Slippery streets increase stopping distances. Drive slowly in winter weather.
- Choose shoes that provide the best footing for the weather.
- Clear walkways and steps of snow and ice.
- Use handrails where available.
- Clean snow and ice from all vehicle windows.