



# North Idaho College

## CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

Prepared by the Communications  
and Marketing Department

To be used in conjunction with the  
NIC Campus Emergency Response  
and  
Crisis Protocol Handbook

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# NIC Crisis Communication Plan

## Communications and Marketing Department

### Introduction

This Crisis Communication Plan describes how the college will communicate vital information to key publics in the event of an emergency or crisis.

This plan is a guideline focused on communication only and is intended to supplement NIC's Emergency Response and Crisis Protocol handbook. Each crisis or emergency will require a unique response depending on the nature of the crisis.

A crisis is defined as a significant disturbance in the college's activities which results in extensive news coverage and public scrutiny and/or interest. It has the potential to cause campus disruptions and long-term public relations damage.

### Communication Guidelines

1. All emergencies on campus are reported immediately to Campus Security at (208) 769-3310.
2. Employees should direct all inquiries from the media or public to the Chief Communications and Government Relations Officer.
3. Communications and Marketing is authorized to gather and verify information in a crisis and is the only department authorized to release information. The office also must be kept apprised about the crisis as new information becomes available.
4. Time is of the essence in communicating crucial information. The first response team must be assembled as quickly as possible.

### Objectives

1. To assess the situation and determine what type of communications response is warranted.
2. To identify constituencies that should be informed.
3. To communicate verified facts.
4. To monitor and minimize rumors and facilitate the flow of information.
5. To communicate to the public what programs are in place to ensure safety and what will be done to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

## Procedures

### 1. Notification

- A. As specified in the NIC Emergency Response and Crisis Protocol Handbook, the Campus Security Office will notify members of the President's Cabinet when a crisis occurs in the following order:

President  
Vice President for Finance and Business Affairs

Rick MacLennan  
Chris Martin

Vice President for Student Services	Graydon Stanley
Vice President for Instruction	Lita Burns
Chief Communications and Government Relations Officer	Laura Rumpler
Chief Information Officer	Ken Wardinski
Director of Athletics	Al Williams
NIC Foundation Executive Director	Rayelle Anderson
Assistant Director of Facilities Operations	Garry Stark
Security Supervisor	Pat Murray

B. The President or designee will determine a Crisis Response Team leader. (Emergency Response and Crisis Protocol Handbook pg. 14.) The Chief Communications and Government Relations Officer will be a member of the Crisis Response Team, relaying information back to the Core Communications Team for tactical implementation of the crisis response plan.

C. The Core Communications Team (CCT) comprised of the following individuals will work with the Crisis Response Team to formulate specific communication messages from the earliest onset of the emergency. The CCT will include at a minimum:

Chief Communication and Government Relations Officer	Laura Rumpler
Director of Communications and Marketing	Stacy Hudson
Communications Coordinator	Tom Greene

## 2. Assessment

A. The Chief Communications and Government Relations Officer, with input from the Crisis Response Team, will determine what type of initial response is necessary based on input from the Crisis Response Team and first responders.

## 3. Initial Response

A. At the bare minimum, an immediate alert should be disseminated to applicable audiences to alert them to the emergency situation, (possibly) instruct them to shelter in place, and point to the emergency website for further information.

Example text/Alertus alert:

"Shots fired on campus. All students and employees lock down and shelter in place until further notice. [www.nic.edu/emergency](http://www.nic.edu/emergency)"

If necessary, the Core Communications Team (CCT) will activate the Emergency Notifications website either as an orange box or as a webpage on the homepage to begin a chronological listing of emergency communications. All entries will be marked with a date and a time with the most recent notification on top. All other modes of information dissemination will point back to [www.nic.edu/emergency](http://www.nic.edu/emergency):

- Summary statement of the situation and background information if necessary, customized for various different communication modes.
- Analyze information with respect to the public's right to know and FERPA regulations.
- Approved by the President or designee and made available to the President's Cabinet.
- Time stamped and updated as needed.
- Approved by the President or Chief Communications and Government Relations Officer.

B. The Communications Coordinator will notify the Switchboard Manager of the emergency and provide them with the initial response statement and the fact sheet. The Switchboard Manager will direct inqui-

ries to the Emergency Messaging page online at [www.nic.edu/emergency](http://www.nic.edu/emergency) or to the emergency hotline or homepage if the emergency is of great enough magnitude to have put these steps in place.

- C. The Switchboard Manager will update the switchboard voicemail recorded message and the Closure Hotline message using the initial response statement.
- D. The Chief Communications and Government Relations Officer will designate a spokesperson.
  - The spokesperson should be the Chief Communications and Government Relations Officer in most cases or the vice president with the most direct knowledge of the crisis.
  - In cases of a significant crisis, the President or the highest-ranking college official should take the lead in conveying the administration's response to the crisis.
  - Communications spokespersons who deal directly with the media on a day-to-day basis may also be designated.

#### 4. Determine and Notify Key Constituencies

- A. The Core Communications Team, in consultation with the Crisis Response Team, will determine who the key constituencies are for communication purposes and will assign members of the team or others to alert them.

Groups to consider are:

Trustees	Employees
Students	Education partners
Neighbors	Public
Media	Public officials
Alumni	Law enforcement agencies
Friends of NIC (Foundation Board, etc.)	Agencies related to the crisis

#### 5. Disseminating Information

- A. The Core Communications Team and the Communications and Marketing staff will utilize the initial response statement and the fact sheet to communicate the details of the incident, what action is requested, as well as the college's intended response. All members of the Communications and Marketing Team will participate in message dissemination as directed by the Communications and Marketing Director.

**Methods of communication could include the following, depending on the situation:**

- Alertus Emergency Notification System - computer screens and beacons
- Cardinal Contact - email, text, and/or phone message to employees and students
- Direct Personal Contact
- Cardinal Mail Student Email
- NIC Now to employees
- NIC Homepage Emergency Communications Box
- NIC Emergency Messaging Webpage
- NIC Emergency Communication Webpage as Homepage
- MyNIC Portal
- Social Media
- Press Room
- Recorded Messages on Switchboard Lines
- Switchboard Operator (during working hours)
- News Releases
- Fliers
- Dedicated Phone Number (hotline)
- Student News (portal, mobile app, Blackboard)
- Readerboards (Mullan and Northwest Boulevard)

#### 6. Notifying and Working with the Media

While many of NIC's communication tools are effective at reaching key audiences, utilizing the media is one of the most effective ways to inform the general public about the crisis and the status of the crisis recovery and will be utilized heavily to assist the college with communicating relevant and accurate information.

1. The Core Communications Team will determine the most viable way to reach the media (press conference, news release, press room, social media, etc.).
2. If holding a press conference, the Communications Coordinator will work with the Chief Communications and Government Relations Officer to determine location, time, speakers, and talking points. In the case of a prolonged crisis, determination will be made if a Joint Information Center and/or a news briefing location should be utilized. A JIC should be used when the flow of information needs to be coordinated between departments or agencies.
3. The Communications and Marketing staff will arrange for information from news briefings to be captured in an audio or visual format for later use.
4. The Communications and Marketing staff will arrange for news coverage to be monitored for accuracy and arrange for significant inaccuracies to be corrected if needed.
5. The Core Communications Team will welcome reporters and work with Campus Security to arrange for access if possible while maintaining the integrity of the incident scene and protecting privacy.
6. The Core Communications Team will prepare and distribute materials throughout the crisis as needed for the media.
7. The Communications and Marketing staff will arrange for archiving of all stories and clips.
8. The Communications and Marketing staff will compile a list of all questions (and answers) asked at the news conference for future distribution.
9. The Communications and Marketing staff will assist with doing research on items related to the crisis to provide as background material in communication messages.

## 7. Release of Information

In the case of ANY emergency, NIC will adhere to FERPA guidelines regarding the release of information. Only information that is classified as "directory information" may be released and checks must be performed with the Registrar's Office for privacy holds. No additional information should be released to the media or public. Confirmation that someone is NOT a student may be made. General confirmation of injuries is recommended (Example: 20 students and two faculty members suffered injuries).

## 8. After-Emergency Follow Up

It may be necessary to update audiences for days, weeks, even months after a crisis, depending upon its severity. Within a week of the incident, the Core Communications Team will meet for a debriefing.

## Attachments

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| Appendix A: | Instructions for Information Dissemination          |
| Appendix B: | Preferred Press Conference Locations                |
| Appendix C: | Go Kit Contents                                     |
| Appendix D: | Emergency Communication Action Checklist            |
| Appendix E: | Communication and Marketing Department Cell Numbers |