

# West Chester University of Pennsylvania

## Official University Mass Communication Methods

### Scope

This policy covers official West Chester University mass communication methods to ensure effective and efficient communication and provide accurate and timely information to the campus community and the general public during emergencies, weather-related events, and/or situations concerning personal safety and security.

This policy also covers the distribution of non-emergency general announcements and communications.

### Policy Statement

This policy covers all internal electronic mass communications to West Chester University faculty, staff, and students. Mass communications are those electronic messages that are sent without self-subscription or opt-out capabilities. All internal mass communications will refer only to official business or official activities of West Chester University.

West Chester University must exercise appropriate control over electronic communications in order to properly maintain network performance, but most importantly to limit the number of unsolicited email messages. ***As a result, the use of the WCU All Employees email distribution list will be limited to those announcements categorized as major emergencies, safety-related, or important announcements via the WCU Emergency Alert Systems or service providers.*** This restriction will provide the focus needed to guide the campus community, but more importantly will avoid the desensitization of the campus community.

In order to employ consistent procedures for notification and processing of mass electronic mailings to WCU constituencies such as faculty, staff (academic and non-academic), students, and those retirees/alumni with WCU accounts, the University requires anyone sending mass electronic mailings to any or all of these constituents to do so in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document.

Note: This policy does not limit or prohibit the use of other methods of email dissemination. Communications not covered by this policy would include electronic messages from central service providers about a service they provide (e.g. WCU Information Services notifying email users that the system will be shut down for maintenance.) Also exempt from this policy are email distribution lists that are created or typically considered “opt-in,” such as discussions groups, committees and project teams, etc.

The Vice President for Information Services, or his/her designee, will make any final judgment call in cases where this policy does not clearly apply or in cases when the protocol changes as the emergency situation unfolds.

Any individual who is deemed in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with University rules.

## Responsibilities

West Chester University faculty, staff, and students must activate and maintain regular access to University-provided electronic mail accounts.

West Chester University faculty, staff, and students are responsible for accessing electronic mail to obtain official University communications.

Failure to access the electronic mail account will not exempt individuals from associated responsibilities and liabilities.

Departments that supervise employees or students with limited or unavailable computer resources are responsible for providing alternative notification systems for these employees and/or students.

West Chester University offers a text messaging subscription service for all faculty, staff, and students to receive notification of major emergencies on campus and strongly encourages subscribing to this important service. There is no cost to register; however, some cell phone providers may apply a small cost per text message sent or received. Subscribers will receive text messages on any device that accepts text messaging (SMS) through cellular service, such as cell phones, text pagers, BlackBerrys, and some wireless PDAs. In addition, there is an option to have messages sent to a personal email address. The University offers this service to warn the campus of major emergency notification and/or safety threats. In addition, there is an option to receive weather-related cancellations as well. Subscribe to receive text messages of campus emergencies and/or weather-related cancellations at <http://www.wcupa.edu/e2campus/>

## Categories – Mass Communication

West Chester University of PA employs four categories of mass communication:

- **PRIORITY 1 EMERGENCY ALERT – MAJOR EMERGENCY**
- **WEATHER-RELATED ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- **SAFETY-RELATED AND IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- **NON-EMERGENCY – GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS**

## Category Definitions and Distribution Methods

### **PRIORITY 1 EMERGENCY ALERT - MAJOR EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

This message category involves any potential or actual incident or extraordinary circumstance(s) that poses an immediate threat to life, property, research, or other extraordinary circumstance affecting an entire WCU building or buildings, a major portion of

campus, or the entire campus. Examples – armed or dangerous criminal at large on campus, major facility emergencies or evacuations, large scale gas leak, bomb threats, fire, or hazardous material spill occurring either on campus or near enough to campus to cause a credible threat to members of the campus community.

This level of emergency will seriously impair or halt University operations, may require the evacuation of all or part of the University population, and will most likely require assistance from outside emergency agencies. *This message category is only used in urgent or extraordinary circumstances.*

Assessment and response to and recovery from major emergencies will be conducted within the framework of the WCU Emergency Operations Plan.

**Primary Communication Distribution Methods:** During events categorized as Priority 1 Emergency Alert, the University will communicate key information as quickly and to as many people as possible. WCU’s primary methods of communication will be:

- Text message to e2Campus subscribers
- Mass emails to faculty, staff and students (WCU-assigned email accounts)
- Posted on WCU’s homepage at <http://www.wcupa.edu>
- Recorded message on WCU’s Information Line - 610-436-1000

**INITIAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS WILL BE SENT IMMEDIATELY AND WILL CONVEY ONLY THE MOST CRITICAL INFORMATION. DETAILS WILL BE CARRIED ON THE UNIVERSITY’S HOMEPAGE, WHICH WILL BE UPDATED AS CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE.**

Because WCU- assigned email addresses for employees and students will be used as the primary channel of communication for Priority 1 Emergency Alerts, employees and students are required to use their WCU-assigned email accounts/addresses.

The University strongly encourages all students, faculty, and staff to subscribe to receive emergency text message information. This communication channel has been setup to distribute major emergency announcements (Priority 1 Emergency Alerts) and Weather-Related Notifications to any device that accepts text messaging (SMS) through cellular service, such as cell phones, text pagers, BlackBerrys, and some wireless PDAs. The subscription is free; however, some cell phone providers may apply a small cost per text message sent or received.

*SUBSCRIBE TO RECEIVE TEXT MESSAGES OF CAMPUS EMERGENCIES AND/OR WEATHER-RELATED CANCELLATIONS AT [HTTP://WWW.WCUPA.EDU/E2CAMPUS/](http://www.wcupa.edu/e2campus/)*

**Secondary Communication Distribution Methods:** In a major emergency, secondary communication methods may be activated as circumstances dictate. Examples:

<b>Communication Channels</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>
Posting to Blackboard and Webmail opening screens	Information Services Division
Activate a recorded message for those using WCU voice mail functionality	Information Services Division
Activate University’s emergency public address system, sirens, and blue light stations	Public Safety Division
Request Reverse 911 telephone message via the Chester	Director of Public Safety

County Emergency Services system	
Request Reverse 911 telephone message via the Borough of West Chester system	Director of Public Safety
Contact selected news media (radio and TV stations) including WCU's radio station WCUR AM 91.7	Director of Public Relations
Announcements via electronic bulletin boards in Anderson Hall, Sykes Union Building, and external kiosk at Ruby Jones Hall	Information Services Division for Anderson Hall; Sykes Union Director for the Sykes Building and Ruby Jones external kiosk
Announcements via police cruiser public address systems, bullhorns or digital sign boards	Public Safety Division
Announcements via individual building public address systems	Residence Life Staff – including The Village and University Hall
Announcement on football scoreboard/Farrell Stadium	Athletic Director
Telephone Trees or Phone Chains – many campus departments have incorporated phone chains into their procedures to notify individual personnel. In addition, person-to person or paper communication in residence halls, academic/administration buildings, including Library and food service centers, etc. In most cases, electronic communication is preferable to paper communication but paper communication may be used as the situation deems it.	Deans, Building Administrators, Assistant Building Administrators, Student Affairs Division personnel

**Post Emergency Communication:** The University will issue an “all clear” message to convey the University’s return to normal operations to all faculty, staff and students via University-assigned email accounts, the WCU homepage, and text message via e2campus subscribers. Details regarding the incident will be communicated on the University’s homepage.

### **WEATHER-RELATED ANNOUNCEMENTS**

This message category is used to transmit University class delays or cancellations due to general or typical weather-related events.

However, severe weather events that may require those on campus to take shelter will be categorized as a Priority 1 Major Emergency. Assessment and response to and recovery from major emergencies will be conducted within the framework of the WCU Emergency Operations Plan.

**Communication Distribution Methods:** When storm conditions affect the operation of the University, announcements for class cancellations and/or delays are made via:

- Text message to e2Campus subscribers
- Mass emails to faculty, staff and students (WCU-assigned email accounts)
- Posted on WCU’s homepage at <http://www.wcupa.edu>
- Recorded message on WCU’s Information Line - 610-436-1000
- Broadcast on many radio and TV stations

### **SAFETY-RELATED AND IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

This message category involves any potential or actual incident that is local in nature and with limited impact. This level of emergency will not seriously affect the overall functional capacity of the University and can usually be handled using University resources. Examples - unscheduled changes to campus procedures or services, Safety Alerts, outbreak of illness on campus, service disruptions to buildings, etc.

## **A. Safety Alerts**

The Department of Public Safety will issue notifications to the campus (students, faculty, and staff) of any criminal activity it is aware of that may present a continuing threat. This notification includes any incident that poses a serious threat to the campus community reported to the University, whether the incident occurred on campus or at an off-campus location. Information contained in the Safety Alert will appear on the Public Safety webpage as well. Based on circumstances, Safety Alerts may be upgraded to Major Emergency status.

### ***Communication Distribution Methods:***

Safety Alerts will be sent via mass emails to faculty, staff, and students via the WCU-assigned email accounts. In addition, all Building Administrators post paper copies of the Safety Alerts in their buildings. All active Safety Alerts are maintained electronically on the Emergency Preparedness website.

## **B. Other important and/or building-related safety announcements**

Announcements regarding other important, building-related, or safety announcements, such as unscheduled changes to campus procedures or services, service disruptions to buildings, outbreak of illness on campus will be broadcast as quickly as possible, with as much detail as possible.

### ***Communication Distribution Methods:***

- Mass emails to faculty and staff (WCU-assigned email accounts)
- As circumstances warrant, mass emails to the student distribution list (WCU-assigned email accounts)
- As circumstances warrant, other University communication channels may be used.

## **NON-EMERGENCY - GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

This message category is used for general announcements or communications of interest to the University at large.

**With the adoption of this policy, the use of the WCU All Employees email distribution list will be restricted to announcements categorized as major emergencies, safety-related, or important time-sensitive announcements.**

Exceptions: On an occasional basis, Information Services and/or the Facilities Divisions may have to issue time-sensitive communication regarding outages or disruptions via the WCU All Employees and WCU All Students lists. In addition, the President's Office will continue to use the All Employees email distribution list to convey messages of importance, FYI Bulletins, or time-sensitive information.

***Distribution Methods:*** Because the use of **All Employees** email list for this message category is discontinued, distribution of non-emergency announcements/communications will follow one of three tracks:

1. Email messages via individually-maintained or University-maintained group email distribution lists
2. Public Relations weekly event notification
3. Human Resources Homepage - News Update Section

(1) University-maintained group email distribution Lists

The utilization of specific distribution lists for targeted groups is advised for non-emergency or general announcements. However, use of these distribution lists is restricted to official business or official activities of West Chester University, and as an example, cannot be used for solicitation purposes external to the University.

Individual divisions or departments can still email their announcements or information using their own distribution lists or the following selected WCU-maintained distribution lists.

To avoid any confusion, email users transmitting general announcements should not use the words **Urgent, Urgent Notice, Important, or Important Notice** in the subject line of their email messages. In addition, email users should also avoid highlighting their messages with an **exclamation mark** unless the messages are very high priority.

West Chester University maintains the following group email distribution lists, which are located in the Global Address book. **These distribution lists are accessible to all employees and are the preferred method for distributing general, non-emergency announcements.**

Distribution List Name	Maintained by:
WCU Academic Department Contacts	Rebecca Hook – Provost’s Office
WCU Administrative Department Contacts	Darlene Laverty – Information Services
WCU All Faculty	Rebecca Hook – Provost’s Office
WCU All Managers	Scott Sherman – Human Resources
WCU Chairs Distribution List	Rebecca Hook – Provost’s Office
WCU Deans Council	Rebecca Hook – Provost’s Office
WCU Departments Distribution List	Darlene Laverty – Information Services
WCU President’s Cabinet	Gail Haney – President’s Office
WCU President’s Council	Gail Haney – President’s Office
WCU President’s Council Support Staff	Gail Haney – President’s Office

(2) Public Relations - Weekly News Bulletin

Every Friday, WCU’s Public Relations Office issues a mass email to all faculty and staff publicizing the upcoming week’s University events, both those events **open only to the campus community** and those events **open to the general public**. This weekly notice replaces the numerous individual e-mails that have been sent in the past to all campus employees regarding university events and other announcements.

The *Public Events* section is used primarily to announce events that are open to WCU employees and students, as well as to the general public. Such events include, but are not limited to, theatre and music performances, athletic events and camps, gallery exhibits, seminars and colloquiums, and graduation ceremonies.

The *Campus Community Events* section will announce newsworthy items related to upcoming University programs, activities, and events for WCU faculty and staff. This section will also carry announcements and pertinent links regarding software training and “Investing in Employee Excellence” training. In addition, “Mark Your Calendar” dates and information will carry details regarding future events for planning purposes.

Student-related announcements and events are publicized on the *myWCU* homepage Announcements section.

Sports schedules or information, including information on post-season play-offs, will be available on the University's athletic website - [www.wcupagoldenrams.com/](http://www.wcupagoldenrams.com/)

Those wishing to submit information for the weekly Public Relations bulletin should submit the date, time, location, cost, a brief description of the event, indicate whether the event is public or a campus community only event, and include a campus extension number or university website for more information to [publicrel@wcupa.edu](mailto:publicrel@wcupa.edu). Examples of event listings can be viewed on the University's homepage titled This Week at WCU. The deadline for submitting event information is Thursday at noon. Submissions must be timed to include only information on events taking place Monday through and including Sunday of the following week. Submissions must be accurate as no additional information on University events, such as corrections, will be emailed to all faculty/staff until the following week.

Note: Individual divisions or departments can still e-mail their announcements or information to selected distribution lists, but not to the entire campus.

### (3) Human Resources webpage - News Update

This News Update section in the Human Resources webpage will be used as a repository for personnel-related announcements that in the past would have been sent using the All Employees email distribution list. Exceptions will be made for time-sensitive announcements such as employee bereavement notices or pertinent labor-relations information that will require the use of the All Employees email list.

While use of this Human Resources News Update is preferred, individual divisions or departments may still e-mail their personnel-related announcements or information to selected distribution lists, but not to the entire campus via the All Employees distribution list. To avoid any confusion, email users transmitting personnel-related announcements should not use the words **Urgent, Urgent Notice, Important, or Important Notice** in the subject line of their email messages. In addition, email users should also avoid highlighting their messages with an **exclamation mark** unless the messages are very high priority. Examples: Search Committee announcements/schedules, hires/appointments, retirements/resignations, employee transfers, etc.

Those wishing to submit information for the posting on the Human Resources News Bulletin should contact [HumanResourceServices@wcupa.edu](mailto:HumanResourceServices@wcupa.edu).

## Effective Date - Supersedure

This policy is effective January 15, 2008 and supersedes all previous All Users policies.

In addition to the adoption of this mass communication policy, the WCU emergency alert systems were modified to add options that allow authorized senders to post announcements on the WCU homepage, send messages to all-students and all-employees, and initiate text messaging from the same location for major emergencies and weather-related issues.

As such, the use of the WCU All Employees and WCU All Students email distribution lists will be restricted to those announcements categorized as major emergencies, safety-related, or important announcements. This restriction will provide the focus needed to guide the campus community, but more importantly will avoid the desensitization of the campus community.

Exceptions: On an occasional basis, Information Services and/or the Facilities Divisions may have to issue time-sensitive communication regarding outages or disruptions via the WCU All Employees and WCU All Students lists. In addition, the President's Office will continue to use the All Employees email distribution list to convey messages of importance, FYI Bulletins, or time-sensitive information.

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