

Missouri Southern State University Crisis Communications Plan

The Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) Crisis Communications Plan serves as a central component of the university's broader Emergency Management Response Plan. Its purpose is to establish clear protocols for communicating promptly, accurately and consistently in the event of a crisis affecting the campus community. Because emergencies often unfold without warning, the plan is intentionally flexible, enabling the university to respond to a wide range of incidents, such as weather-related hazards to threats to public safety or disruptions that could affect operations or the university's reputation.

For the purposes of this plan, a crisis is defined as any significant emergency, dangerous situation or unexpected event with the potential to jeopardize university functions, endanger students or employees, or negatively impact the institution's standing with the public.

Missouri Southern will follow the Alert, Inform, Reassure (AIR) framework to guide communication during emergencies:

- **Alert:** Notify campus and, when appropriate, the public of an incident that requires attention or action.
- **Inform:** Provide factual, verified information about what is known, what steps are being taken and what individuals should expect next.
- **Reassure:** Offer clarity and guidance, acknowledge concerns and reinforce the university's commitment to resolving the situation as quickly and safely as possible.

Crisis Communications Team

The Crisis Communications Team (CCT) is responsible for managing and coordinating all official messaging during an emergency. Core members include the university president, the director of communications, the director of emergency management, the chief of university police, the director of human resources and the director of university relations and marketing.

When a crisis occurs, the director of communications will immediately consult with the president and the director of emergency management. The director of communications serves as the primary spokesperson and media coordinator for the university. To maintain accuracy and consistency, all official information released to campus, the public or news media must come from either the president or the director of communications. The emergency manager will communicate and coordinate with law enforcement and first responders.

Once a message is drafted and approved, it will be disseminated through university communication channels, including but not limited to campuswide email, social media, press releases and emergency alert systems.

All colleges, divisions, and administrative units must coordinate any crisis-related communications with the director of communications before distributing information to their respective audiences. In lieu of creating new content, units should share posts from Missouri Southern State University's flagship social media accounts. This approach ensures consistent messaging and helps prevent the dissemination of conflicting or incomplete information.

Emergency Alerts and Messaging

For urgent or life-threatening situations, such as severe weather, active shooter incidents, fires or other immediate hazards, the university will issue Rave alerts as quickly as possible. Rave is Missouri Southern's official emergency notification system and is designed to deliver critical information rapidly to students, faculty and staff.

Authorized personnel who may issue Rave alerts include the director of emergency management, director of communications, chief of university police and other trained officials.

When an incident has been resolved or the immediate threat has passed, the university will issue an "all clear" via Rave to notify the campus that normal operations may resume.

Students and employees may register or update their contact information by visiting the Rave platform at getrave.com and logging in with their Lionet username and password. Users should ensure their cellphone numbers are included to receive text message alerts.

Communication Channels

The university will use a combination of communication tools during a crisis to ensure timely and targeted information reaches the appropriate audience. The CCT will determine which channels are most effective based on the nature of the incident, the urgency of the message and the needs of students, employees, families, media and the public.

- **Rave Alerts:** Deliver rapid notification via text, email, Facebook post and Twitter post.
- **Mass Communication System:** Broadcasts emergency messages through loudspeakers in designated campus buildings.
- **Social Media:** University accounts will share official updates. To minimize the spread of misinformation, comments will be disabled during active crises.

Scheduled or unrelated content will be paused or removed. Staff will monitor false or misleading posts.

- **Email and Web Updates:** Provide more detailed information and ongoing instructions as the situation develops.
- **Media Engagement:** The university maintains a media contact list for distributing press releases and statements. All media relations will be coordinated by the director of communications.

Key Term Definitions

Shelter in Place

Shelter in place involves immediately moving indoors to remain safe from an external hazard, such as a chemical spill, radiological event, or active threat, rather than evacuating. This includes securing doors and windows and remaining inside a room until official “all clear” instructions are provided, typically for a short duration.

Lockdown

Move immediately to an interior room within the facility, preferably one with no or minimal windows. Secure the space to protect occupants from an external threat such as an active shooter or other dangerous situation. Lock all doors and windows, move out of sightlines, turn off lights, remain quiet, and stay in place until an official “all clear” is given.

Seek Shelter (Weather Warning)

Proceed to the nearest designated tornado shelter area within the building, typically located on the lowest floor. These areas are designed to provide near-absolute protection from tornadoes and hurricanes by withstanding extreme winds and flying debris.

Evacuate

To immediately leave a specific area due to an imminent threat to life or property. An evacuation is a lawful order, and the affected area is generally closed to public access. Compliance is critical to ensure personal and public safety.

Location for Media Coordination

If a crisis disrupts or disables normal communication systems, including cellular or internet services, the director of communications will report to Plaster Hall, if conditions allow. Members of the media will be asked to meet the director there to receive official updates and verified information.

Succession of Responsibilities

- If the president is unavailable, the provost will assume responsibilities.
- If the director of communications is unavailable, the director of URM will assume responsibilities.
- If the emergency manager is unavailable, the deputy emergency manager will assume responsibilities.
- If the chief of university police is unavailable, the police sergeant will assume responsibilities.

The director of communications will review the Crisis Communication Plan annually and make any necessary updates or revisions.

The most recent update was completed on February 12, 2026.