

Policy and Procedures for Issuance of University Alerts

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1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to define responsibilities and procedures for preparing and issuing university alerts to inform the university community about threats to their health and safety. University officials issue four types of university alerts: A) Crime Alert/Timely Warning; B) Crime Alert; C) Emergency Notification-TrojansAlert; and D) Community Safety Advisory.

2. Definitions

Campus Security Authority -- Under the Clery Act, a crime is “reported” when it is brought to the attention of a campus security authority, which includes the institution’s police department or campus safety office, or to local law enforcement personnel by a victim, witness, or other third party. A campus security authority is a Clery Act specific term that encompasses four groups of individuals and organizations associated with an institution. At the University of Southern California (USC) this includes:

1. Any member of the USC Department of Public Safety;
2. Any individual or individuals who have responsibility for campus security but who are not members of the USC Department of Public Safety;
3. Any individual or organization specified in the University’s statement of campus security policy as an individual or organization to which students and employees should report criminal offenses; and
4. An official of the University who has significant responsibility for student and campus activities, including, but not limited to, student housing, student discipline and campus judicial proceedings.

Official -- Any person who has the authority and the duty to take action or respond to particular issues on behalf of the University.

Clery Act Crimes (Clery Crimes) -- Types of crimes that, when reported, might be required by the Clery Act to be disclosed annually to the University community, including: criminal homicide (murder and negligent/non-negligent manslaughter); sex offenses (rape, fondling, statutory rape, and incest); robbery; aggravated assault; burglary; motor vehicle theft; arson; hate crimes (certain criminal offenses that are motivated by specific types of bias); dating violence; domestic violence; stalking; and arrests and referrals for disciplinary action for any of the following: (a) liquor law violations, (b) drug law violations, and (c) carrying or possessing illegal weapons.

Clery Reportable Location -- Property that is considered by the Clery Act to be (1) on campus, (2) public property within or immediately adjacent to campus, or (3) non-campus buildings or property that the University owns, controls, or leases; is frequented by students; and is used in support of educational purposes.

Update and/or Incident Resolution Notice — A follow-up message to update the university community about a previously issued alert or inform them about the resolution of an incident.

3. Alert Categories

- A. Crime Alert/Timely Warning** – an alert required by the Clery Act that is issued about a Clery Act Crime, occurring within a Clery reportable location, which represents a serious or continuing threat to members of the campus community.
- B. Crime Alert** – a discretionary alert issued about an incident that does not meet the criteria of a Clery Act Crime occurring in Clery Reportable Location but constitutes a serious or ongoing threat to members of the campus community.
- C. Emergency Notification** — a notification required by the Clery Act that is issued immediately upon confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation occurring on or near campus that poses an immediate threat to the health or safety of members of the campus community.

TrojansAlert — an emergency notification system used by the university to send Crime Alerts, Timely Warnings, and Emergency Notifications via text message and email to all current students, faculty and staff and any other individual who has registered for the TrojansAlert system on the DPS website. The university issues updates for active incidents and incident resolution notices via the TrojansAlert system.

- D. Community Safety Advisory** — a discretionary alert for the purpose of advising the campus community about important, non-urgent incidents or situations that may or may not be related to crime. Community safety advisories provide information enabling individuals to make informed decisions about their health or personal safety.

4. Policy

This policy supports the university's efforts to inform and advise its campus community members about crime or other incidents that may represent a threat to their safety. University alerts provide information to the campus community so that they can make informed decisions and act to protect themselves.

DPS will issue Crime Alert/Timely Warnings and Emergency Notifications to the campus community pursuant to the requirements of the Clery Act. The department also may issue Crime Alerts and that are not required by the Clery Act, for crimes and incidents that occur in USC's greater patrol and response area, if the crime or incident is determined to represent a serious or ongoing threat to the campus community. The department will issue Community Safety Advisories, in consultation with relevant campus partners, to advise the campus community about important, non-urgent incidents or situations that may or may not be crime-related.

The Office of Fire Safety and Emergency Planning (OFSEP) and USC Student Health also may issue Emergency Notifications, Community Safety Advisories and/or alert updates about safety matters within their areas of responsibility.

5. Procedures

Due to the need to issue Crime Alert/Timely Warning and Emergency Notifications in a timely manner, DPS members are responsible for immediately notifying the on-duty supervisor or Watch Commander upon learning of an incident or situation that may meet the criteria for either alert as set forth in this policy. The supervisor or Watch Commander will ensure DPS command staff is notified immediately. Only designated DPS members are authorized to issue an alert for the department.

In other university departments that can issue an Emergency Notification, employees who become aware of an emergency situation that may meet the criteria for an alert are responsible for immediately notifying their on-duty manager and the Department of Public Safety. If it is determined that a department other than DPS will issue the alert, only designated senior staff in that department is authorized to do so.

A. Crime Alert/Timely Warning

DPS will issue a Crime Alert/Timely Warning for Clery Act Crimes considered to be a serious or continuing threat to members of the campus community that occur in a USC Clery Reportable Location. DPS will issue the Crime Alert/Timely Warning as soon as sufficient information is available. The Crime Alert/Timely Warning will contain specific details about the crime that occurred and other relevant information intended to aid the recipients of the alert in avoiding the threat.

The university will make a determination about the issuance of Crime Alert/Timely Warnings in accordance with the Clery Act for the below identified crimes that occur on USC's Clery Reportable Locations, as described above. USC's Communications team may assist in writing the Crime Alert/Timely Warning if time permits. The Clery Act crimes that would be the subject of a Crime Alert/Timely Warning are as follows:

- 1) Murder
- 2) Non-negligent manslaughter
- 3) Aggravated assault
- 4) Arson
- 5) Burglary
- 6) Robbery
- 7) Motor vehicle theft
- 8) Rape
- 9) Fondling
- 10) Incest
- 11) Statutory rape
- 12) Domestic violence
- 13) Dating violence
- 14) Stalking
- 15) Hate crimes

B. Crime Alert

DPS will issue a Crime Alert for crimes that do not require a Crime Alert/Timely Warning because they did not constitute a Clery Act Crime and/or did not occur in a Clery Reportable Location, but they occurred in the DPS patrol and response area and are considered to be a serious or continuing threat to members of the campus community. DPS will issue the Crime Alert as soon as sufficient information is available. The Crime Alert will include specific details about the crime that occurred and other relevant information intended to aid the recipients of the alert in avoiding the threat. The Clery Act does not require Crime Alerts as defined in this policy.

Decision to Issue Crime Alert or Crime Alert/Timely Warning

Upon receiving a report that may meet the criteria for a Crime Alert or Crime Alert/Timely Warning, DPS command staff will analyze the incident and determine whether to issue an alert. DPS considers several factors in determining whether to issue a Crime Alert or Crime Alert/Timely Warning, including the type of crime, location of occurrence, whether there is a serious and continuing threat to the campus community, and the possible risk of compromising any law enforcement investigation. The department may consult with LAPD and with other university departments to determine the content of the Crime Alert or Crime Alert/Timely Warning.

Content of a Crime Alert or Crime Alert/Timely Warning:

The following information is typically included in a Crime Alert or Crime Alert/Timely Warning if available:

- 1) A statement of the incident, including the nature and severity of the threat and the persons or locations that might be affected;
- 2) Any connection to a previous incident(s);
- 3) Physical description and/or composite drawing of the suspect (racial, ethnic, skin tone descriptors will not be used unless they are unique enough to distinguish the suspect from the general population);
- 4) Date and time of the incident;
- 5) Other relevant and important information (e.g., gender of the victim, student/non-student, etc.);
- 6) Appropriate safety tips.

Crime Alerts or Crime Alert/Timely Warnings will not include the names of victims.

C. Emergency Notification

DPS or other appropriate university departments will issue an Emergency Notification when a significant emergency or dangerous situation occurs on or near campus that poses an immediate threat to the health or safety of campus community members. Emergency Notifications can be triggered by a broad range of threats, including but not limited to the following:

- Active assailant/armed intruder
- Explosion
- Bomb threat or suspected explosive device
- Civil disturbance/riot
- Terrorist incident
- Fire
- Significant law enforcement activity
- Hazardous materials spill
- Gas leak
- Earthquake
- Approaching storm or other extreme weather conditions
- Outbreak of serious contagious illness (e.g., coronavirus, meningitis, norovirus)

Decision to Issue Emergency Notification

DPS receives reports about dangerous situations or other emergencies that may pose an immediate threat to the health and/or safety of the University community. DPS will assess the credibility of the reports received and evaluate the urgency and nature of the threat. If time permits, DPS will confer with the OFSEP to analyze relevant available information, identify segments of the campus population threatened, and determine the appropriate course of action. DPS and OFSEP also may consult with other university departments and/or outside agencies to help assess the level of threat and inform the university's response.

Upon confirming a situation exists that meets the criteria for an Emergency Notification, DPS or

OFSEP will issue the notification via TrojansAlert. Supplemental communication methods will be used as needed (see Distribution of University Alerts section below).

The University will issue an Emergency Notification without delay unless, in the professional judgment of first responders, issuing the alert may compromise efforts to assist a victim or contain, respond to, or otherwise mitigate the emergency. As soon as the condition that may compromise response efforts is no longer present, the University will issue the Emergency Notification.

Content of an Emergency Notification

The university department responsible for issuing an Emergency Notification (usually DPS) will determine the contents of the notification, in concert with university and local first responders as needed. The university has developed a wide range of template messages in TrojansAlert addressing various types of emergencies. The individual authorizing the alert will select the template message most appropriate to the current situation and modify it to address the specifics of the incident.

In cases where there are no relevant template messages available, the individual authorizing the alert will develop a succinct message in TrojansAlert to communicate the appropriate information to the community. The goal is to make individuals aware of the situation and convey actions they should take to safeguard their personal safety until the situation is resolved.

University staff who may be involved in the development and issuance of an Emergency Notification are:

- DPS Public Safety Dispatchers
- DPS Watch Lieutenants and Sergeants
- Executive Director/Chief, Department of Public Safety or designees
- Director, Fire Safety and Emergency Planning
- Associate Senior Vice President, Administrative Operations
- Senior Vice President, Administration

USC's Communications team may assist in issuing Emergency Notifications.

D. Community Safety Advisory

DPS and other appropriate university departments may issue a Community Safety Advisory to advise the campus community about important, non-urgent incidents or situations that may or may not be crime-related. Community Safety Advisories provide information enabling individuals to make informed decisions about their health or personal safety. The Clery Act does not require Community Safety Advisories as defined in this policy.

Criteria for Community Safety Advisory

A Community Safety Advisory may be issued about any incident or situation that is not an emergency but is related to crime, other personal safety issue, or a public health concern. The advisory should provide relevant information that enables individuals to make informed decisions about how to protect themselves; reduce the possibility of becoming a victim; increase the ability to be an informed witness; or improve opportunities to receive assistance from law enforcement or university resources.

Decision to Issue Community Safety Advisory

Upon receiving information that may meet the criteria for a Community Safety Advisory, the university department responsible for issuing the advisory should consult with relevant university authorities to determine whether to issue the alert and the appropriate distribution method. USC's Communications team or other university departments involved may assist in developing the Community Safety Advisory.

6. Authority to Issue University Alerts

Authorization to issue university alerts is limited to the following designated DPS members and other University staff:

- A. Crime Alert/Timely Warning - Executive Director/Chief of Public Safety or designee.
- B. Crime Alert – Executive Director/Chief of Public Safety or designee.
- C. Emergency Notification – DPS Public Safety Dispatchers; DPS Watch Lieutenants and Sergeants; Executive Director/Chief of Public Safety; Director, Fire Safety and Emergency Planning; Associate Senior Vice President, Administrative Operations; Senior Vice President, Administration, Associate Vice Provost for Student Health.
- D. Community Safety Advisory –Executive Director/Chief of Public Safety designee.

7. Distribution of University Alerts

The department will distribute university alerts to the campus community through any means appropriate for the situation. Primary and secondary methods used to send each type of alert are as follows:

- A. Crime Alerts and Crime Alert/Timely Warnings are issued via the university's mass email notification system to all current students, faculty and staff, and are posted on the DPS website for 60 days. If necessary, Crime Alerts and Crime Alert/Timely Warnings will be distributed by posting flyers at relevant campus locations. Incident Resolution Notices are distributed in the same manner as the initial alert.
- B. Emergency Notifications are issued as a TrojansAlert text and email to all students, faculty and staff, and posted on the USC emergency information page on the [USC Safety website](#). Additional methods to notify individuals on site may be used when necessary, such as building public address systems, DPS vehicle PA systems and bullhorns, and setting up physical barriers and/or signs around the impacted area(s).
- C. Community Safety Advisories are issued via the university's mass email notification system to all students, faculty and staff, and posted on the DPS and/or other university websites for 60 days. Other methods, such as the Mobile Safety App (LiveSafe) or posting flyers may be used to target segments of the campus community when appropriate.

Update and or Incident Resolution Notice

Following the issuance of a university alert, the university will distribute additional notifications to keep the campus community informed as appropriate. Generally, the department that issued the initial alert will issue any updates. A follow-up to a Crime Alert and Crime Alert/Timely Warning may have more details about the incident discovered during the law enforcement investigation that would aid individuals in taking additional steps to protect themselves. An Incident Resolution Notice may be issued when the threat to the community has ended, such as due to the arrest of the perpetrator.

After an Emergency Notification is issued, the University will send alert updates as long as the threat to the campus community continues. The content of the follow-up messages may vary, e.g., to remind individuals to continue avoiding the area impacted; to advise that the threat has expanded to additional areas; or to provide updated health and safety guidance as necessary. Once the threat has ended, a notification will be issued stating the emergency has concluded.

8. Documentation

Each Crime Alert, Crime Alert/Timely Warning, Emergency Notification, and Community Safety Advisory is assigned a reference or tracking number. Incident Resolution Notices are also assigned reference numbers. The Clery Compliance Coordinator will maintain a copy of each alert issued for a minimum of seven years.

A Crime Alert/Timely Warning decision matrix form will be completed for all Clery Act reportable

crimes to document the analysis of risk associated with a crime and to memorialize the determination regarding the issuance of a Crime Alert/Timely Warning. A copy of the decision matrix form will be maintained within DPS and will be retained in accordance with the [Record Management policy](#).

9. Responsible Office

Department of Public Safety

<https://dps.usc.edu/>