

Wednesday, August 20, 2008

OUPD announces text capability, substantial federal grant

The Oakland University Police Department (OUPD) recently launched a text message alert system, designed to provide an additional avenue for notifying students, faculty and staff in the event of a major emergency on campus. The OUPD's emergency dispatch center has also been upgraded to receive text messages, and is one of the only police departments nationwide with this capability. In addition, a U.S. Department of Education grant of \$423,999 was earned by the OUPD for forthcoming campus violence prevention initiatives.

Oakland University has always maintained comprehensive procedures to contact the campus community en masse should a crisis situation occur. The text message alert system engages new technology to add yet another layer to OU's existing crisis communication methods.

"The text message system is designed to quickly alert community members who are not sitting in front of a computer or desk phone," said Oakland University Police Chief Samuel Lucido. "We hope we never have to use the text message alert system, but it is reassuring to have the technology in place."

Any registered student or active employee with an OU e-mail address and Grizzly ID can sign up for the text message alert system by visiting OU's Emergency Preparedness Web site, www.oakland.edu/ready. Only individuals who subscribe via this Web site will receive emergency text messages. Voice alerts are available for those without text messaging capability.

In addition, the OUPD's Dispatch Communications Center is now capable of receiving text message tips and reports through a unique computer system designed by OU's University Technology Services. Text messages may be sent to the OUPD dispatcher at 911@oakland.edu.

Lucido said, "Because our ability to reply to text messages is limited, and to enhance our ability to respond appropriately to emergency calls, we always prefer to receive reports or notifications by voice — 911 from campus phones or (248) 370-3333 from cell phones. However, if you ever find yourself in a dangerous situation and you cannot call or would feel more comfortable texting our dispatcher for assistance, we welcome tips and reports by text."

E-mail messages to the OUPD dispatcher can also be sent to 911@oakland.edu.

To further bolster its capability to prevent and respond to campus emergencies, the OUPD applied for and received a \$423,999 grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant will be used primarily for community safety education, along with some specialized equipment purchases. The OUPD will be announcing programs in the near future.

Oakland University was one of the 13 institutions nationwide — and the only school in the state of Michigan — to receive an Emergency Management for Higher Education grant, a program established in 2008 to fund development and implementation of emergency management plans for preventing and responding to campus violence and natural disasters in order to ensure the safety of the entire campus community.

Full details of OU's emergency preparedness plans and initiatives are available at from the [Emergency Preparedness](http://www.oakland.edu/ready) Web site. In addition to housing the text messaging subscription page, the [Emergency Preparedness](http://www.oakland.edu/ready) Web site shares procedures for official university closings, tornado warnings, psychological emergencies, lock downs, evacuations, bomb threats and hazardous materials incidents, among others.

"Awareness is the key," said Lucido. "Through www.oakland.edu/ready we are able to provide as much information as we can about emergency preparedness at OU. We urge everyone to take the time to look at this important issue."

SUMMARY

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