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OU looks to keep campus in the know with text alert messaging

By **Dave Groves**, staff writer

Though the prospect of a crisis situation can be unsettling, the Oakland University community can rest assured that comprehensive response and communication plans are in place to address virtually any emergency.

An important piece of OU's communication plan is its text alert messaging system, which is capable of sending information to subscribers' cell phones within seconds of a crisis situation developing.

"We have found that in addition to the other methods we have of notifying the campus community of an unfolding emergency situation, the text alert system is an extremely rapid and efficient way of putting important information in the hands of people who need it," said Oakland University Police Chief Samuel Lucido. "This technology has made our already solid communication plans even more effective."

To receive this free text alert service, members of the campus community can complete a quick and easy registration process online. Any registered student or active employee with an OU e-mail address and Grizzly ID can do so at oakland.edu/ready. Only subscribers will receive emergency text messages, and voice alerts are available for those without text messaging capability.

Outside of system tests conducted once each semester, text alerts are broadcast only when it is determined that there is an imminent threat to the health, safety or welfare of people on campus.

For the fall 2009 semester, officials are planning to conduct a system test at about 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 6. Registering prior to this test will allow users not only to learn more about the service, but to see firsthand how valuable a communications tool it is.

Oakland University students who have registered for the service in the past, but who have not had an active oakland.edu e-mail account for a period of more than 12 months, must re-register to renew their subscription. Also, any member of the campus community who has obtained a new cell phone number since they registered for text alert service must update their subscription information online.

"The best response in any emergency situation is an informed one, which is why this service will be vital to students, faculty and staff should such a circumstance arise," Lucido said. "I would strongly encourage anyone with a cell phone to register."

Also helping police respond to and manage emergency situations is the dispatch center's ability to receive text messages. Tips can be sent to 911@oakland.edu if a person is in a dangerous situation and cannot call, or if they would simply feel more comfortable texting. In most cases, however, police would prefer to receive reports by voice at 911 from campus phones or (248) 370-3333 from cell phones.

Complete information on OU's emergency preparedness plans – which cover university closings, tornado warnings, psychological emergencies, lock downs, evacuations, bomb threats, hazardous material incidents and more – are available online at the Emergency Preparedness Web site at oakland.edu/ready.

SUMMARY

The OU community can rest assured that comprehensive response and communication plans, such as the text alert messaging system, are in place to address virtually any emergency.

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