



Campus Safety: Are You Prepared?

Does your college have formalized and written plans to adequately address an emergency situation? Are you prepared? A crisis such as fire, terrorism or natural disaster can occur with little or no warning. Colleges need to have written and organized plans to prepare them to survive a disaster, limit financial losses and avoid business interruption. The **worst** time to think about emergency preparedness is after an emergency situation occurs.

All too often, committees convene within colleges after a problem has already happened. We must learn from some of the significant campus disasters that have recently occurred – such as the Seton Hall University fire that killed three and injured dozens; or the 100 million dollar loss at CSU (Ft. Collins, CO) from a flood; or the very recent and local shooting incident at Weston High School in Cazenovia. While not all disasters can be prevented, it certainly makes sense to prepare and plan for such emergencies. Many things can be done prior to a disaster! Safe practices and common sense dictates that an organization should not wait until a crisis adversely affects a business operation before emergency preparedness is considered.

Your emergency plans depend on the size of your operation. Obviously, the larger the college, the more elaborate the plans must be. It is important that smaller colleges and remote campus locations consider the creation of emergency plans as well.

The primary element of a good emergency plan or procedure is that it is well written and easy to understand. A “recipe” type format is ideal for most procedures. A description of the problem, what to do and how to do it is essentially the formula to use. It is recommended that emergency plans be created for the following emergency situations:

- Fire Alarm Activation (no smoke or fire present in the building)
- Fire (smoke or flames in the building)
- Severe Weather Conditions (thunderstorms, tornados, floods, etc.)
- Civil Disturbance, Terrorism or National Emergency
- Chemical Spills and Leaks
- Evacuation and Relocation
- Utility Interruptions (gas, water, electricity, etc.)

Occupants of campus buildings, especially the faculty and staff, need to know what to do during a potentially dangerous situation. Life-safety can only be reasonably assured during a crisis if a plan of action is in place and practiced on a regular basis. In today’s modern and uncertain times, nothing can be left to chance.

It is essential that your plans are designed to protect your college and its most important components - the people that work for you and your students. We learned in September of 2001 (and last month in Cazenovia) that anything can happen, even the unimaginable. Again, time to ask this question, **are you prepared?**