



U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools  
Emergency Management for Higher Education



FY 2010 Final Grantee Meeting ♦ Atlanta, GA ♦ June 23 – 24, 2011

## Lessons from a Tragedy: Emergency Management Lessons Learned

### **Kevin Bennett**

Emergency Management Coordinator  
University of Alabama – Huntsville

### **Laurel Long**

Assistant Vice President,  
Human Resources  
University of Alabama – Huntsville

*Kevin Bennett* is a summa cum laude graduate of the University of Alabama in Huntsville with a B.S.B.A in Management Information Systems. He also has certifications in threat and risk assessment, information risk management, business information continuity, continuity of operations planning, and has completed over 20+ National Incident Management System/Incident Command System courses.

He has over 20 years private sector experience in transportation and logistics to include: OSHA training and compliance, defensive driving training, general safety awareness training, business contingency planning, inventory management, asset management, fleet management, employee relations, project management, and management of enterprise information systems.

He currently serves as the University of Alabama in Huntsville Emergency Management Coordinator and is responsible for development and implementation of the university's campus-level emergency preparedness plans and continuity of operations plans. He provides guidance and assistance to the campus community as they develop and implement their unit-specific emergency action and continuity plans. He serves as the university liaison to the local community emergency management agency. Other responsibilities include emergency preparedness grant proposal writing and he is currently the Principle Investigator for a 2010 FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant awarded for the development of a University of Alabama – Huntsville Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan. He also is the system administrator for the university's on-line continuity of operations plan database, and serves as the IT systems administrator for public safety and facilities information technology systems and applications.

Mr. Bennett is a member of the International Association of Emergency Managers and serves on that group's University and Colleges Caucus workgroup. He is also a member of the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers.

*Laurel Long* is the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. She has worked in financial administration and human resource management for more than 20 years. Ms. Long's first task when she was hired at UAH in 2002 was to design, develop, and implement the University's first Staff Development and Training department. She has taught many courses in employment law, leadership, performance management, conflict resolution, team building and diversity. In 2007, Ms. Long was promoted to her current position. In this capacity, she provides leadership for all of the University's human resource functions.

Ms. Long earned her undergraduate degree in Accounting at Andrews University and is a certified Professional in Human Resources. She is currently completing her Masters in Human Resource Management. Her professional experience includes 11 years in the Miami-Dade County Public School System in Florida, the



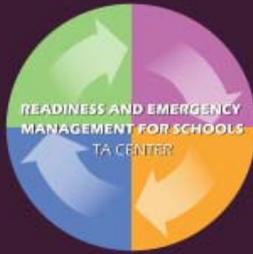
**U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools  
Emergency Management for Higher Education**



*FY 2010 Final Grantee Meeting ♦ Atlanta, GA ♦ June 23 – 24, 2011*

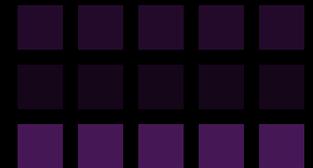
---

nation's fourth largest school district, as Director of Finance and Administration for the school system's public radio and television stations as well as its educational television services and 20 wireless cable channels. After leaving Miami, Ms. Long accepted a position as Vice President for Human Resources at Dominion Video Satellite, Inc. in Naples, Florida where, in addition to her responsibilities as Vice President for Human Resources, she also managed the training, call center and customer service departments.



U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

Readiness and Emergency Management  
for Schools Technical Assistance Center



**EMHE Grantee Meeting**

<http://rems.ed.gov>



**UAHuntsville**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE

# Lessons from a Tragedy: Emergency Management Lessons Learned



Presented by:

Kevin Bennett  
Emergency Management  
Coordinator

Laurel C. Long  
Assistant Vice President,  
Human Resources  
June 23, 2011





# UA Huntsville

The University of Alabama in Huntsville

## A Tragedy Unfolds





**UA Huntsville**  
The University of Alabama in Huntsville

## **Lesson #1**

**Adversity often comes when you  
least expect it, in the place you least  
expect it.**



## **Lesson #2**

# **Prior planning is essential.**

***“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”***



## Lesson #3

**The immediate challenge after the crisis is to understand the emotional needs of the grieving community.**





**UA Huntsville**  
The University of Alabama in Huntsville

**How the organization deals with matters of the heart is an important part of how it will be perceived as handling the overall crisis.**



**People view major issues in a personal way and not all recovery issues are tangible.**

- ◆ Expect fear, anxiety, and other related stress symptoms
- ◆ Provide post-disaster psychological counseling
- ◆ Make resources available to entire campus community



## **After a disaster, employees may be pulled between family and work obligations.**

- ◆ Offer flexible work arrangements where possible
- ◆ Thank employees for their contributions
- ◆ Establish a memorial to remember the event and celebrate the recovery.



**UA Huntsville**  
The University of Alabama in Huntsville

# **Lesson #4**

## **It's not over when it's over.**





**UA Huntsville**  
The University of Alabama in Huntsville

# **Lesson #5**

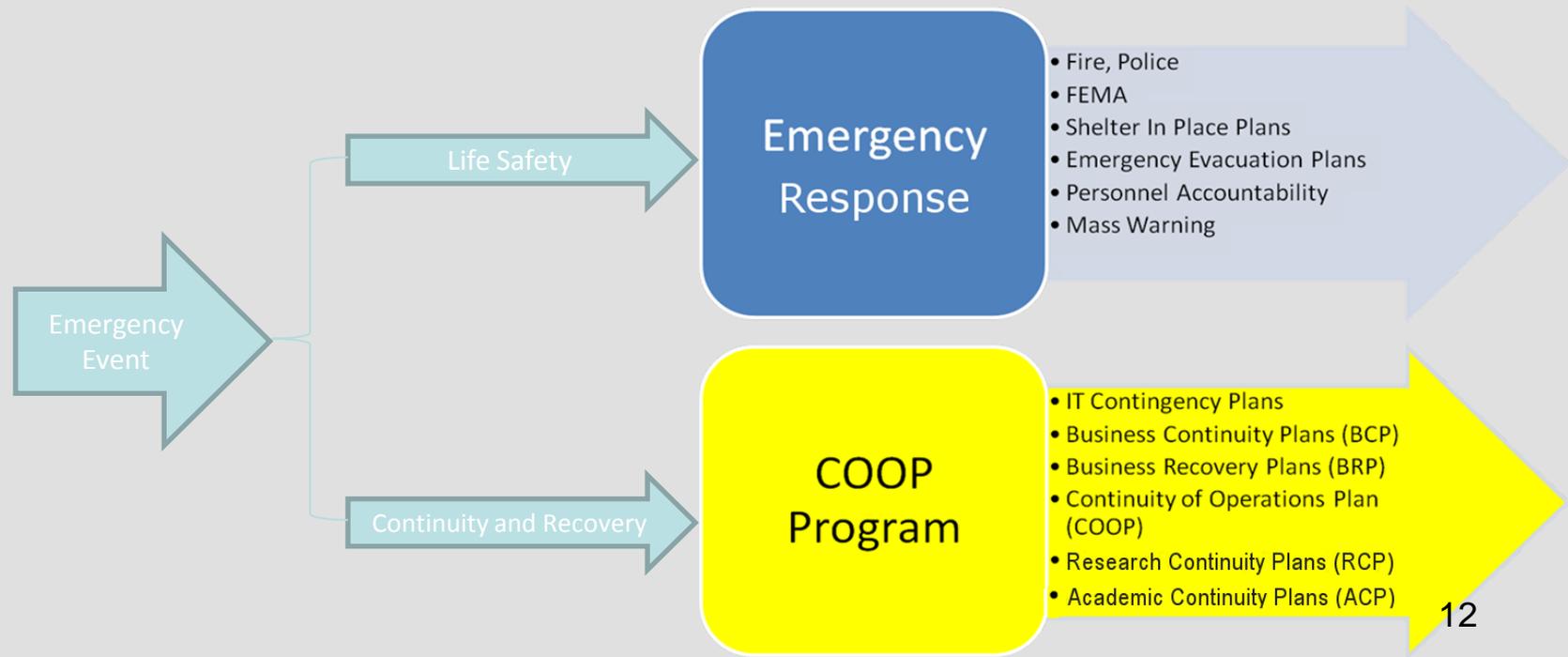
## **Don't let the tragedy define your organization.**





## Lesson #6

### Know the Difference Between Emergency Response Plans and Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plans

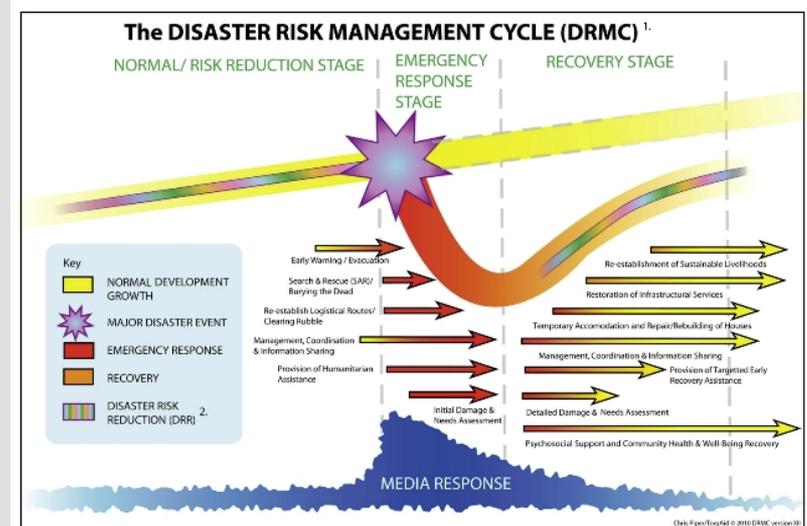




## Lesson #7

### The recovery process begins before the emergency responders leave

- **The crisis management and recovery process begins as soon as the event occurs**
- **Quickly assess the situation and begin reviewing options for disaster recovery and operational continuity**



<sup>1</sup> This mainly applies to a relatively quick onset disaster (such as Cyclone, Flood, Earthquake, Tsunami, Bushfire etc), rather than a slow onset one such as Famine (due to Drought/War)

<sup>2</sup> For details of this see the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) diagram



## Lesson #8

### Have an up-to-date and comprehensive Emergency Management Plan!

- **Lives, business, and careers will depend on it**
- **Top executives should drive and visibly support preparedness efforts**
- **Plans should include both Emergency Response and COOP**





## Lesson #9

### All emergency/crisis management personnel should keep up-to-date emergency contact lists

- **Include cellular, home, office, email, home address, out-of-town contact info**
- **Keep copies in cell phone contact lists**
- **Keep paper copies in automobiles and offices**
- **Keep a copy “in the cloud” that can quickly be accessed from computers and mobile devices (we now use Google Docs)**





## Lesson #10

**Regardless of what your crisis management or disaster recovery plan says, an organization's top leader will be its personification and chief public relations officer following a large disaster**

- **Have a PIO in place but realize that the community will be looking to the top executive first**





## Lesson #11

### **Cultivate working relationships with community responders (police, fire, EMS)**

- **Where possible, participate in joint training exercises**
  - **Our officers participate in active shooter training alongside city and county police**
  - **This facilitated quick integration of teams from multiple agencies**
- **Invite responders to participate in and/or observe and evaluate your exercises**
- **Conduct regular campus tours with responders**
  - **Response agencies should be familiar with the campus, building names & locations, floor plans**

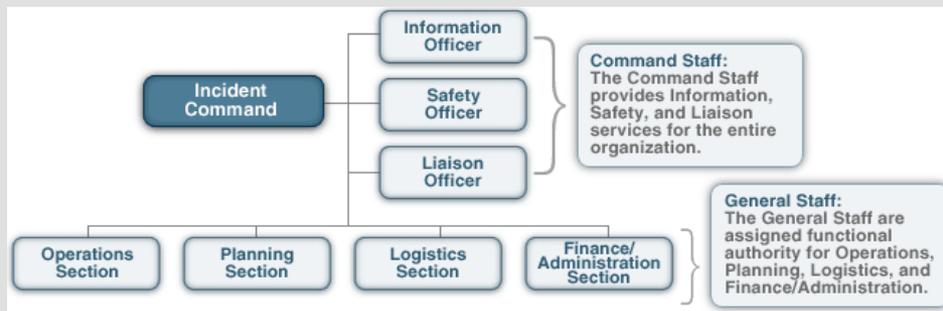




## Lesson #12

### Use the Incident Command System (ICS) – it works

- **Require NIMS/ICS training for all first responders**
  - **Integrating your personnel with external response agencies will be much easier if they know the system**
- **Include NIMS/ICS structure in planning, training, drills, and exercises**
- **Use ICS forms (incident briefing, objections, communications plan, etc.**

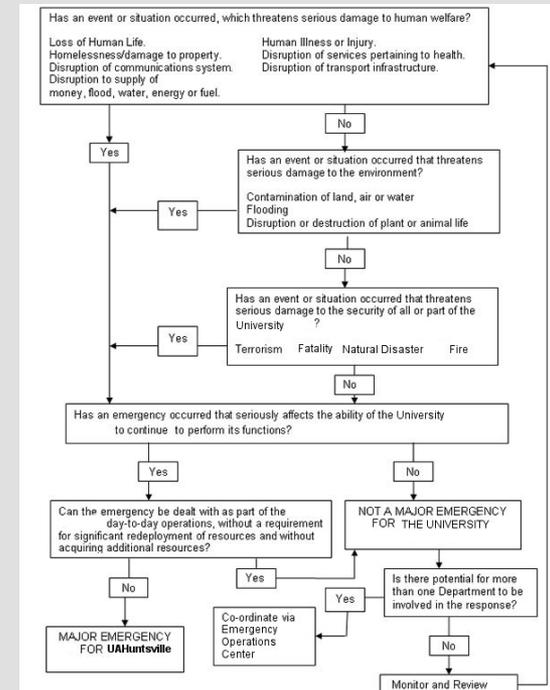




## Lesson #13

### Have pre-determined trigger points for activation of emergency management personnel

- **Critical personnel should know how/when/if to report when a major disaster or crisis event occurs – it should be an automatic response**
- **Include the activation process in your training and exercises**
- **Make certain that critical personnel understand their roles**

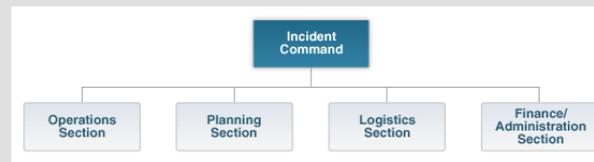




## Lesson #14

### Incident Commander (IC) – Who's in charge?

- **When the police cars, ambulances, and fire trucks are gone, who will be your incident commander?**
  - **Realize that your recovery starts as soon as the immediate threat to life safety is gone**
  - **Your IC should be prepared to immediately step up and start making decisions, often before the first responders are gone**
  - **The IC should have the power to make decisions and delegate tasks to other organizational leaders**
  - **Many plans name someone other than the top leader as IC – this may work for small-scale events but for major disasters top leadership must step up and lead the recovery process**

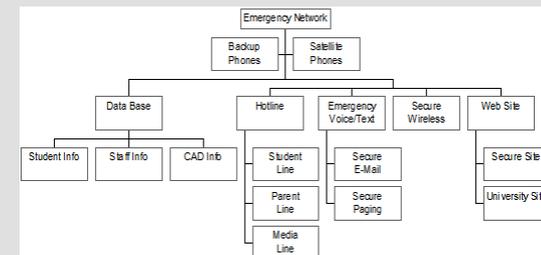




## Lesson #15

### Communicate, Communicate, Communicate:

- **Once facts are gathered and initial recovery plans in place the organization leader should communicate plans and information through mediums that can reach the most people. Include:**
  - **Verified facts and where to obtain up-to-date information**
    - **Avoid speculation and un-vetted information**
  - **Information on where people can go for help, including post-trauma counseling**
  - **Identities of those who will lead each phase of the recovery**
  - **Regular updates on what is happening**
- **Maintain a designated and equipped call center**
  - **Maintain trained personnel to manage and staff the center**



University of Chicago example



## Lesson #16

### **The leader (IC) cannot work (and succeed) alone**

- **Enlist other top leadership and support staff**
- **Delegate, delegate, delegate**
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate**
- **Leaders will face many of the same concerns and stresses that affect their staff**
  - **ICs and other key staff should take advantage of counseling and stress management resources – you're human – don't be afraid to acknowledge this**
- **Be sure the leadership and support staff are familiar with plans and their roles in them – training and exercises are the best learning tools**





## Lesson #17

### Have a pre-designated and equipped Emergency Operations Center . . . and a backup location

- Location does not need to be dedicated to EOC operations but should be capable of being quickly repurposed
- Phones, data connections, whiteboard, proximity to restrooms, controlled access, away from media staging area(s)
- Make sure incident management teams know the location(s) of the EOC
- Have a pre-determined plan for activation of the EOC
- Have a pre-determined threshold for activation of the EOC





## Lesson #18

### Document Everything!

**Clear detailed records will be required to recover losses and expenses through insurance carriers, disaster recovery grants, and other sources.**

- **Keep detailed property records**
- **Videotape and/or photograph damage**
- **Establish a separate chart of accounts for all recovery expenses**
- **Track labor, materials, and service costs related to recovery**
- **Track lost revenues (be prepared to justify your calculations)**
- **Use ICS forms to document emergency operations**

The image shows a thumbnail of an ICS Form, specifically the Incident Action Plan form. The form is titled "INCIDENT ACTION PLAN" and includes sections for "INCIDENT ACTION PLAN" and "ICS Forms". The form is a standard ICS form used for documenting emergency operations.



## Lesson #19

### Have a plan and process for dealing with volunteers

- **In a large-scale incident you will likely have volunteer organizations and private individuals who want to help**
- **Some volunteer organizations must be invited**
- **Many volunteers will self-deploy**
- **Screen volunteers - Not all volunteers will be qualified for the task they wish to help with**
- **Get information quickly to your media partners regarding your needs for volunteers**

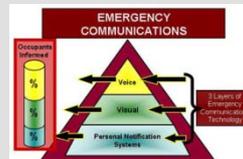




## Lesson #20

### Test your communications infrastructure and plans regularly

- **Do you have an emergency communications plan? Has it been tested?**
- **Can your web servers handle 10,000 hits per hour? 50,000?**
- **Do you have resilient radio communications?**
- **What is your backup if phones are not available?**
- **How many simultaneous calls will your telephone switches support? Will that be adequate? Do you have redundancy?**



Is Your Organization's Communications Infrastructure Ready for Any Situation?



## Lesson #21

### Review your process for scripting, approving, and issuing emergency and informational messages

- **Who has authority to issue emergency alerts? Informational messages?**
- **What communication channels will you use for each?**
- **How long does it take to issue an emergency alert**
- **Include emergency notification system activation in your drills and exercises – you don't have to send a message to everyone every time you drill, but test and time the process to authorize, approve, and issue – the WHOLE process.**





## Lesson #22

**Following a disaster an institution's most important responsibility is minimizing loss of student enrollment**

- **During planning you should identify alternate classroom, laboratory, and office locations and personnel resources**
- **Develop mutual aid agreements with organizations outside the region**
- **University and college systems should encourage cooperation and aid agreements between sister institutions**
- **When business resumes be sure that your employees and the public know you are ready for both returning and new students**





## Lesson #23

### **Don't set recovery goals to simply return to where you were before the event**

- **You will have a small window of time where individuals are willing to set aside personal differences and work together for the common good - capitalize on this opportunity**
- **Look for opportunities to gain support for mitigation and emergency preparedness activities and to advance long-range goals and campus master plans**





## Lesson #24

### **Don't be afraid to ask for help and guidance**

- **Seek advice and guidance from other institutions who have recovered from a similar crisis or disaster**
- **Consult public and media relations specialists**
- **Reach out to your community for aid and resources**
- **Seek support from nearby and/or sister higher education institutions**

*dear friends...*  
**i need help.**



## Summary

- **Expect the unexpected.**
- **Take care of the matters of the heart.**
- **Provide support and counseling for employees.**
- **Move forward. Create a new normal.**
- **Have a formal response and recovery strategy and keep it updated and exercised regularly**
- **Your top executive will be the person everyone looks to after a disaster**
- **Develop strong relations with emergency responders**
- **Communicate regularly with all stakeholders**
- **Planning will help minimize loss of customers and revenue**
- **Keep detailed records of losses and recovery expenses**
- **Seek help and guidance from your community and beyond**



## Questions?

**For more information, please contact:**

**Kevin Bennett**  
**Emergency Management Coordinator**  
[kevin.bennett@uah.edu](mailto:kevin.bennett@uah.edu)  
**(256) 824-6875**

**Laurel C. Long**  
**Assistant Vice President**  
**Human Resources**  
[longl@uah.edu](mailto:longl@uah.edu)  
**(256) 824-6545/6381**