



 WHITE PAPER

Protecting the Campus Community with Critical Event Management



Institutions of higher education (IHEs) continue to take active measures to protect their community both on and off campus after a long-term response from a global pandemic. As students, faculty, staff, and visitors return to campus, security remains a top priority.

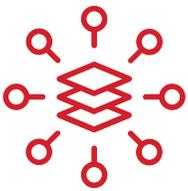


As threats become increasingly complex each year and new threats emerge every day, processes should include how threats are identified and managed simultaneously.

A path to critical event management (CEM) will provide the community with a positive sense of protection when managing critical events especially to those keeping their guard up after being distant from campus and incidents continuing to occur over the globe. A recent Inside Higher Ed magazine / College Pulse survey of 2,000 college students, found that most were ready for a return to normalcy in regards to in person classrooms. When asked to “Choose A Statement That Best Fits” their “Post Pandemic Learning Desires”, over 80% responded that they are “either anxious to get back in person or never want another zoom class ever.”

As students return to campus and attend classes, social events, and sporting events, plans should be reevaluated by keeping in mind the lessons learned from the recent pandemic to help the community feel safe. An unsafe campus makes it difficult to manage critical events and continue the daily functions to keep operations running. As threats are becoming increasingly complex each year and new threats emerge every day, processes should include how threats are identified and managed simultaneously.

Creating and maintaining a positive, more innovative version of campus safety will help establish credibility with different audiences early in the planning process. Before, during, and after a critical event, the campus community and various stakeholders want to be informed on what actions to take as well as current operational status. While emergency management departments focus on mitigating against, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from all types of critical events, we must keep in mind our entire community and their involvement. The campus community is composed of four main groups: students, faculty and staff, parents, and executive leadership. Each part of CEM affects these groups differently; this white paper will outline questions you should ask when evaluating your capabilities relative to each group's needs.



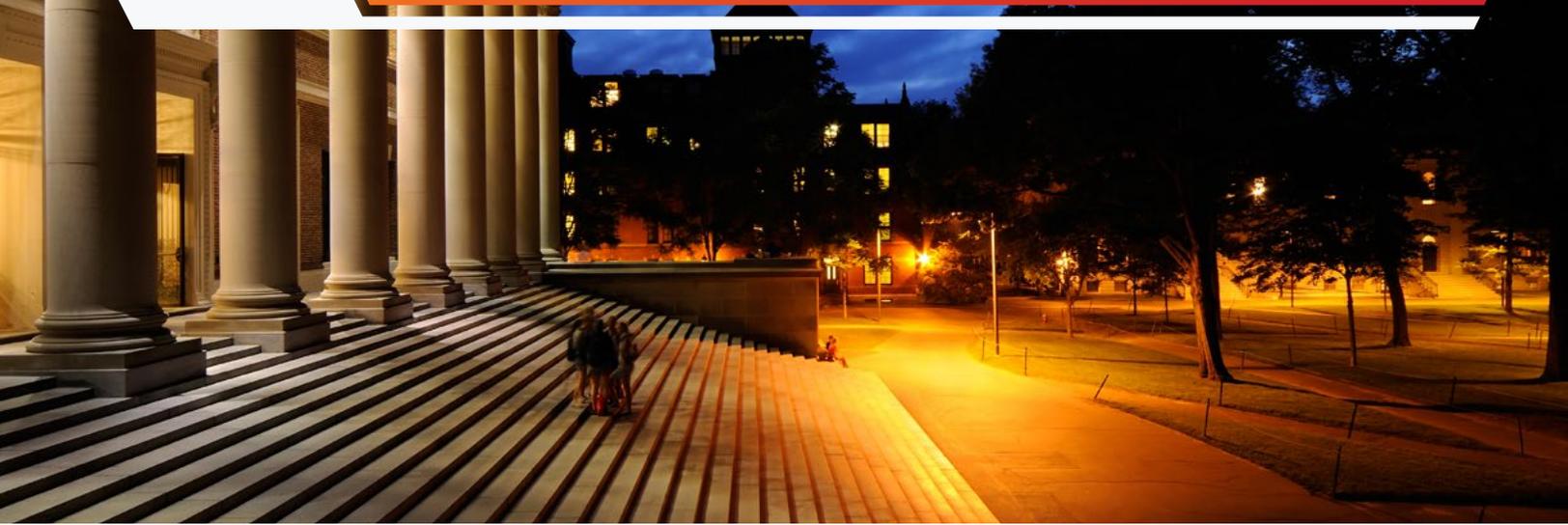
Information comes from numerous sources making it difficult to absorb large amounts of data.

Understanding Threats to Campus

Over the past two years, there have been 188 major disaster declarations in the United States. A major disaster declaration is when, “the President can declare a major disaster for any natural event, including any hurricane, tornado, storm, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, or drought, or, regardless of cause, fire, flood, or explosion, that the President determines has caused damage of such severity that it is beyond the capabilities of state and local governments to respond”. Any of these events can affect your IHEs and understanding your threat landscape is important when protecting the campus community. Disasters and common weather events based on your region can disrupt special events, impact critical infrastructure, daily operations, and more. Not only will natural disasters affect campus operations but campus violence, protests, and cyber threats.

Information comes from numerous sources making it difficult to absorb large amounts of data. Having a solution that can collect data (including the deep and dark web where many campus threats occur) and catch misinformation being spread online will save time, resources, and prevent the community from receiving incorrect information that can potentially put them at risk.





Planning is the first step to maintaining a safe campus environment for your community but how are you informed of potential threats?



Identifying risks and vulnerabilities common to the geographical area of IHEs helps minimize the impact of disasters and potentially reduce the loss of life and property.

Critical events have become so common that they must be planned for and considered at all levels. If a critical event occurred, what impacts would those threats and hazards have on your campus community? Based on those impacts what capabilities should your campus community have? Understanding threats and hazards is only the beginning when working to establish credibility with one's audience early on in a catastrophe.

Identifying risks and vulnerabilities common to the geographical area of IHEs helps minimize the impact of disasters and potentially reduce the loss of life and property. Emergency management is a campus-wide function and is the lead coordination group to bring together various departments, executives, students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Emergency management identifies which threats will cause the greatest impact and risk to the campus community all while building community resiliency. How is mitigation viewed from the surrounding community? What does the community need to be aware of in preparation for a critical event?

Creating a disaster-resilient campus is a complex problem that requires collaboration, coordination, and communication from the entire university. Students may consider the following questions (Figure 1.1) when it comes to their safety before a physical or digital threat, and it is the role of emergency management and IHEs to provide them with the knowledge needed to protect themselves to help reduce the impact.

General preparedness information can be valuable to student safety but how can that information be shared?

Community-wide Awareness

Institutions have always communicated to students to increase awareness and provide information. However, the information received must be compelling for all audiences to be informed and engaged. Whether the information is passive to priority, dynamic and visual tools will grab students' attention that will inspire engagement and help them learn about potential threats, best practices, or general emergency preparedness. If there are no awareness campaigns or attempt to provide information to the community it could potentially cause greater impact when an incident occurs.

Collaboration

Having strong relationships with the executive leadership team well before a critical event will help build a disaster-resilient campus. Many emergency management departments tend to be buried within higher educational organizational structures but with an ever-changing threat landscape over the past few years, some executives may wonder about some of the following questions (Figure 1.1), especially after the lessons learned from the global pandemic. Emergency management departments tend to be underfunded and understaffed but they are subject matter experts when it comes to mitigating hazards that can potentially freeze campus operations. Emergency management must find where they fit within IHE's leadership structures and outline the value of campus emergency management programs. Implementing the right tools to help digitize plans that can be shared across the team and utilized during a disaster can provide better collaboration before, during and after the event.

Coordination

Communities often aren't aware of emergency management department's purpose or existence and different terminology can make it hard to align institutional priorities. Early coordination with the entire campus community and external stakeholders is required to build a disaster-resilient campus. Campuses posed many new challenges with accompanying risks over the past year and a half which led to implementing effective mitigation strategies with the whole community. FEMA defines a whole community approach as, "a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best way to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests." Building out a system that allows for situational awareness with internal and external partners creates a network effect allowing a unified message to be shared through a single platform. This ultimately prevents false information or miscommunication between different groups during the response but establishing the process early will lead to success.

FIGURE 1.1 What threat analysis means to the campus community

Students
What types of potential threats should I be ready for on/off campus?
What actions can I take now to limit the effect before a threat?
Is there any training available that will help me be better prepared?
Executive Leadership
How do we mitigate disruption to essential functions? Building construction?
How can we bring awareness to the community about cyber security to mitigate attacks?
What is the return of investment on threat identification?
Faculty and Staff
What are my roles and responsibilities when our institution is disrupted from a critical event?
Is there any training available for the role I will serve during a critical event that will help me?
What does a critical event or potential threat mean to campus operations? Classes?
Parents and Visitors
What type of safety or security does the university provide?
What does the campus security report show?
What crime prevention features are in place?



A well-managed response when a critical event occurs can enhance an institution's image and how emergency alerts are received is a key factor.

Responding in a Timely Manner

As risks and hazards to IHEs are identified for a campus or multiple campuses, how will the whole community be notified? Frequent communication is key throughout a critical event and two-way communication is even more important when an individual is in danger on or off campus. Ensuring that alerts reach students, faculty, staff, and visitors along with knowing how to receive messages is essential to keeping campuses safe. A well-managed response when a critical event occurs can enhance an institution's image and how emergency alerts are received is a key factor.

How are community assets such as people, facilities, and equipment being protected when something bad happens? How are you able to identify who is at risk? What types of resources should be deployed? Where is the closest resource? To keep the campus community safe, not only should security teams be equipped with the technology needed to manage the entire incident lifecycle but powering students, faculty, staff, and visitors with the right technology to create an alert as well as automating specific data to keep leadership informed.

Emergency Alerting

Excessive messages that are repetitive can cause alert fatigue throughout the community. Implementing best practices within your standard operating procedures (SOPs) for communications will help reduce alert fatigue. Utilizing different modalities to send messages will allow the campus community to receive information based on their preferences. There should be a way for students, faculty, staff, and visitors to distinguish between community alerting and emergency alerting. Information sharing about a social event with the community should not be shared the same way as when an emergency is happening on campus. Understanding the difference and when certain messages will be received and how helps the community respond and take appropriate actions in a timely manner.

Operational Efficiency

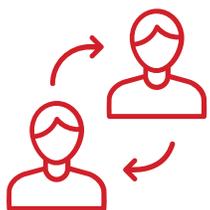
When addressing today's campus security challenges, platforms must be scalable, adaptable, and flexible. IHEs are like small cities with their own infrastructure that needs to be secured and protected. Creating a common operating picture provides situational awareness when operating 'business as usual' and for special events such as concerts, ceremonies, or sporting events that can bring many people on campus. Communication, while very important, is the beginning of managing an incident and is needed throughout the entire incident lifecycle. SOPs and workflows should be pre-defined and configured to ensure there's no hesitation when communicating and responding to campus violence, protests, or a disaster. With so many facilities and buildings on campus equipped with disparate and inefficient systems, it can be difficult to form a common operating picture. When integrating those systems, for example, CCTV cameras, access control, gunshot detection, intercoms, smoke detection, etc. into a single pane of glass with workflow automation your team will be able to reduce costs through improved efficiency and accurate intelligence. Operational efficiency will help keep the campus community up and running as quickly as possible keeping in mind the safety of students, faculty, and staff.

Plan Implementation

Having plans established well before the response phase will help higher education teams with their roles and responsibilities during the actual incident, especially if the plans are trained and exercised. In times of crisis, it can be difficult to locate plans on a shelf, skim through numerous pages to find the right information, and share the exact responsibilities of each role. Creating playbooks for various positions and digitizing role responsibilities and tasks will help streamline how teams respond. Digitized plans will help automate processes and transfer SOPs into various workflows that will help decrease the amount of time to respond to incidents. Paper playbooks should always be available and up to date due to an increase in cyber threats and possible system failures but having digitized plans provides for easier team collaboration, especially when updating senior leadership teams. Data and analytics automatically flowing into dashboards and reports makes it easy to share information. It's also important to understand the safety and security of the solutions being utilized and whether digitized plans are accessible offline.

FIGURE 1.2 What response means to the campus community

Students
How will I receive emergency alerts or be notified if something bad happens on campus? Off campus?
What if I am in trouble or feel threatened? How can I alert campus safety?
If I need to evacuate campus or if there's an active shooter on campus, what do I do?
Executive Leadership
How are we protecting individuals, facilities, infrastructure, business, academic, and research?
How are we identifying which resources should be dispatched when a student is in danger?
How will I receive reports or visualize dashboards with current incident status information?
Faculty and Staff
How can I locate the most up-to-date plans for an emergency?
How will I be notified of campus closures due to an incident?
What actions do I need to take prior to being released due to a campus closure?
Parents and Visitors
How will the college communicate with students and parents in an emergency?
As a visitor on campus will I be able to receive emergency alerts?
Are evacuation procedures and shelter locations identified?



Two-way communication plays an important role in the recovery process as many students, faculty, staff, and family members will try to connect with the higher educational institution and vice versa.

Campus Continuity

Many IHEs are in the recovery phase after a long-term response from a global pandemic and students, faculty, and staff returned to a blended/hybrid learning experience as leadership continues to implement policies to ensure further prevention. Whether an environment of uncertainty remains or excitement to return to campus for others, most educational institutions are without standard rules or guidelines. Bringing together various stakeholders, such as local public health departments, to discuss and implement SOPs will help ensure safe operations for the campus community and bridge the gap to full recovery. This remains to be a high priority throughout the pandemic and continues in preparation for the next critical event.

Other threats and hazards don't stop when dealing with an already challenging incident. Severe weather events can easily cause class cancellations and evacuations. Such events may involve repairing infrastructure such as damaged roofs and cleaning up debris. Monitoring threats, identifying areas of improvement, and incorporating what went well helps to ensure continuity of operations when critical events occur. Having a team to manage the recovery process is essential to bringing campus operations back to normal but it requires robust communication and coordination with local agencies especially when resources are limited.

Throughout the recovery phase, IHEs should be flexible and work to assist students and employees who were most impacted. A campus community in crisis will most likely need staff and volunteers to assist, especially those most severely impacted. Two-way communication plays an important role in the recovery process as many students, faculty, staff, and family members will try to connect with the higher educational institution and vice versa. Having key partnerships established, pre-scripted communication templates, and key metrics identified that can be shared for a common operating picture is instrumental when operating recovery efforts.

FIGURE 1.3 What continuity and recovery means to the campus community

Students
How will I know when it's safe to return to class?
Are any accommodations available for students with access or functional needs after a disaster?
Are there opportunities for students to help after a disaster?

Executive Leadership

How will I be updated on operational statuses? How can we determine community well-being?

How can we keep students on track during critical events?

What is needed to return campus to normal operations?

Faculty and Staff

If I am impacted from a disaster would the university be flexible to assist my current needs?

What roles do faculty and staff have when recovering from a major disaster?

Are procedures in place for faculty to continue operations remotely?

Parents and Visitors

How can family members of students, faculty, and staff receive information?

How long will a student need to be away from campus?

Will students be able to attend classes remotely during a campus shutdown?

Conclusion

When it comes to building a disaster-resilient campus and maintaining various compliances to ensure a safe learning environment for students, faculty, and staff it's important to take an inside look at what the campus community cares about to meet their needs. Safeguarding IHEs against many different types of critical events is a great responsibility and a big challenge that requires campus-wide collaboration. Challenges will be faced to include new policies, new strategies, and new regulations that a single platform will need to adapt and grow with the community. Having the right tools in place to manage the entire incident lifecycle from awareness, threat identification, incident communication, coordination, planning, and incident management will improve IHEs reputation that has taken years to build.



Let's Talk

If you would like to discuss more about how a CEM platform will help your institution of higher learning, please reach out. We are here to help with any questions you may have. [Get in touch](#) or just call us at +1-818-230-9700 to learn more.

About Everbridge

Everbridge, Inc. (NASDAQ: EVBG) is a global software company that provides enterprise software applications for automating and accelerating an organizations' operational response to critical events in order to Keep People Safe and Organizations Running™. During public safety threats such as active shooter situations, terrorist attacks, a global pandemic or severe weather conditions, as well as critical business events including IT outages, cyber-attacks or other incidents such as product recalls or supply-chain interruptions, over 5,800 global customers rely on the Company's Critical Event Management (CEM) Platform to quickly and reliably aggregate and assess threat data, locate people at risk and responders able to assist, automate the execution of pre-defined communications processes through the secure delivery to over 100 different communication modalities, and track progress on executing response plans. Everbridge serves 8 of the 10 largest U.S. cities, 9 of the 10 largest U.S.-based investment banks, 47 of the 50 busiest North American airports, 9 of the 10 largest global consulting firms, 8 of the 10 largest global automakers, 9 of the 10 largest U.S.-based health care providers, and 7 of the 10 largest technology companies in the world. Everbridge is based in Boston with additional offices in 25 cities around the globe.

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