Tornado Drill 2012 Survey

More than 137 faculty and staff responded to the online survey following the March 2012 tornado drill. Providing the most feedback were staff members. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents were aware that the drill was taking place and seemed pleased with the CUAlert notification timeliness. However, several suggestions for drill notification and shelter locations enhancements were made. Outlined below are those suggestions with feedback from the all-University Crisis Committee. Suggestions included:

- The CUAlert system should call office land lines and classroom red phones first; cell phones should be called second. Many office and red phones were ringing up to 20 minutes after the drill was over.

  The CUAlert system is designed to deliver emergency notification to all devices in the quickest manner possible. That being said, once a text message is sent, it is up to the cellular providers to process and deliver the message to their customers in a timely manner. Creighton has no influence on how quickly the cellular providers send out their messages. Creighton land line phones (office phones and classroom red phones) are typically the slowest at receiving calls because we throttle the amount of calls that are sent to these devices so that we do not overwhelm the phone equipment with incoming calls with the intent to allow some capacity for outgoing calls. In a real emergency we must ensure that we are able to communicate with 911 service and local fire and police, the throttling of inbound calls assures the availability of outbound call capacity.

- Can the alert message include a reminder of major campus shelter locations for those who may have forgotten?

  CUAlert relies on phone, email and text messages to deliver the message. There are not enough characters in the text field to include this information. However, the committee will proactively communicate shelter locations throughout the year.

- The CU Alert system needs to send out an “all-clear” signal so that people know when they can leave the shelters.

  Under some scenarios the University will send out an “all clear” message, however, not all situations allow for a timely “all clear” message. In a real emergency, the University will attempt to notify campus of ongoing and continual threats and in some situations an “all clear” message may be sent when there is assurance that everything is safe and the campus can resume normal operations. Every emergency will be evaluated separately and communicated in the most efficient and effective way possible.
The best sources of an “all clear” for tornado events are the national weather service and local weather forecasters. Community members are advised to monitor television and radio broadcasts from their respective shelter areas for accurate and timely condition updates by the professionals. Severe weather is frequently unpredictable and threatening conditions can recur quickly. Decisions to leave a shelter area are best made by the individual after receiving up to date input from the professionals.

- Respondents would like to see an alarm system installed in every building to support the siren system which is not often heard and CUAlert. Suggestions include a flashing light similar to fire alarms, along with tornado siren sound.

The Committee has shared these thoughts with Facilities Management. These systems are expensive but are being evaluated. In the meantime, weather alert radios for individual departments are available at cost from Public Safety. These units, in conjunction with personal cell phones linked to our CU Alert system, will effectively notify personnel of an emergency event.

- Enforcement needs to be improved as many staff and faculty members saw students sitting on the mall, or simply walking outside with no one telling them to move to a shelter location.

Everyone has a role to play in emergency preparedness. It is important that people focus on their personal safety plan. Every person should have their own plan for survival and follow the plan they have developed for themselves to ensure their own survival.

However, the Committee pledges to work with CSU and other student organizations to reinforce the importance of these drills.

- Many buildings, with new renovations, found that shelter locations place them in more danger, with some hallways now lined with glass windows, or glass display cases.

The Committee will review shelter locations and update the list on the emergency preparedness website. Individuals are reminded when in doubt to go to the lowest level of the building away from windows into an interior room.

- There were also situations of a bottle neck at major staircases to access shelters. Perhaps designated routes could be designed.
The Committee believes in a real emergency people will use the most expedient pathway to the shelter.

- Many found that the shelter locations were not able to accommodate the number of individuals in the building looking for shelter, and some shelter locations required individuals to go outside to reach the designated shelter location.

Individuals are reminded when in doubt to go to the lowest level of the building away from windows into an interior room.

The All-University Crisis Committee plans to review the emergency shelter locations listed on the emergency preparedness website. Additional communication efforts will be made during the year especially with students on why these drills are critical to safety. The Committee is also exploring developing a campus app with safety information.