Emergency Alert System

Office of IT Communications & Training

Emergency Alert System

In the event of an emergency or serious threat, BYU has implemented a system that alerts students, faculty, and employees through three methods of contact: emails, IP Phone messages, and texts. In addition, BYU is currently working toward a fourth alternative: speaker announcements across campus. Emails and IP Phone messages are BYU's default means of communicating with individuals, but to ensure that the largest number of affiliates is reached, BYU has implemented the third option of text messaging. Police Dispatch administers all alerts, which must be approved by an officer of at least lieutenant rank in the BYU Police Department.

Email

BYU can send out mass email messages to all email addresses within the Route Y database. In the case of an emergency, any individual whose email address has been included with his/her contact information on Route Y will receive an emergency email alert. The BYU Police issue these alerts, and have standing permission to use BYU's email address database in case of emergency. To issue an emergency email alert, a designated member of the BYU Police Department composes an alert email and sends it out to university patrons by means of a specific LISTSERV. Unfortunately, if an emergency situation affects BYU campus directly and affects the internal networking system (which controls Route Y and therefore the email database), this method of contact will be lost.

IP Phones

This type of alert sends an audio recording and text message through the telephony servers to all IP Phones on campus. Once an alert has been issued, the LCD screen will display a text message alert and each individual IP Phone handset will ring with a call that has an automated voice message alert.

If an individual is using the phone at the moment the emergency alert is issued, the text message will appear on the LCD screen, and the call will still ring through the handset. Both individuals on the phone will hear a beep, and the message will play through the head set without the owner of the phone answering the call. The owner of the phone will hear the voice message, but the individual on the other end of the call will not.

As with emergency email alerts, if an emergency situation breaks down the BYU network, this method of contact will be lost. (The emergency alert capability does not apply to fax machines or analogue phones.)

Texts

If students, faculty, or employees carry cellular phones, they can enter their numbers into the Emergency Alert Text Message/SMS contact information field found on Route Y's Personal Information page. Doing so allows university patrons to be contacted via text message in case of an emergency. Even if a cell phone number is already listed with BYU, the number needs to be listed again *specifically in the emergency contact field* in order for patrons to receive alerts. Each night an update of added or deleted numbers is sent to a third party company, 3n. In an emergency, the BYU Police Department uses a web application to access 3n's database where registered university cell phone numbers are stored. The Police Department then composes an emergency text message, and sends out a mass SMS Message to the numbers in the database. Because this third party resource is based off-campus, university patrons who have registered their cell phone numbers may be contacted in an emergency, even if the campus network has been disabled. Normal texting fees apply to these messages. Emergency text messaging is currently an optional service as affiliates may or may not have cellular devices, or, if they do, SMS messaging services.

Questions?

Contact the Office of Information Technology at 422-4000 or it@byu.edu for more information about the BYU Emergency Alert System.