

April 17, 2007

To: University of Tennessee, Knoxville Community
From: Chancellor Loren Crabtree
Subject: Security Measures

As we learn more about the tragic events that occurred at Virginia Tech on Monday, we are understandably getting questions about security procedures at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

We have a comprehensive emergency management plan in place, but we are always looking for opportunities to improve. The horrific events of this week give us such an opportunity.

At UT, we emphasize a proactive approach to security. Our emergency management plan -- which deals with everything from disease outbreaks to natural disasters to criminal activity -- is a necessity in these modern times. Our overriding philosophy in this area is clear -- as public officials we must think of the unthinkable and do our best to prepare and respond to situations as they arise.

Public health and safety drive our decisions, and we are fortunate to have a certified campus police force with 50 officers and another 60 security officers at the forefront of these efforts. Our police force undergoes continuous emergency response training with city and county law enforcement, the FBI, the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

More than that, our police work closely with local law enforcement and emergency management officials. Having this network in place means all of these agencies can mount a coordinated response if an emergency occurs.

We also have an emergency management campus team composed of police, administration, facilities and housing, IT and communications staff. They regularly review and update our emergency plan, test it and conduct tabletop exercises.

As part of our overall security measures, the entrances to the living areas of our residence halls are locked. The halls are staffed 24 hours a day and equipped with communications equipment -- including two-way radios, special phone systems and broadcast intercoms -- that allows us to quickly relay emergency information, if necessary.

Several of our campus buildings are equipped with special security locks that can be remotely activated in the event that a lock-down is required. In those buildings that do not have this equipment, facilities personnel are trained to handle lock-down situations.

As part of our emergency communications network, not only can we deploy e-mail, web-based and cable TV-based communications, but we also can, within minutes, leave voice mail for faculty and staff to relay critical information as needed. No single communications strategy can reach all, but through overlapping and wide-ranging communications efforts, we are prepared to quickly share information across the institution. Also, our police force has outdoor voice broadcasting capabilities in its squad cars. All of these communications tactics are ready to be employed as needed.

One facet of this system that you've probably already seen at work involves notification of criminal activity on or near campus. When the campus community needs to be aware of a dangerous situation, a campuswide e-mail alert to all faculty, staff and students is distributed, media are notified and police post fliers at key locations. Again, we work to be redundant to ensure as much information sharing as possible. In addition, important information and safety tips are posted on the UT Police Web site, <http://web.utk.edu/~utpolice/>

More than 100 blue light security phones are positioned across campus. Each has two buttons -- a large red button that connects directly to the E-911 dispatcher and a smaller black button that contacts the Knoxville Area Transit (KAT) dispatcher in order to request a shuttle ride.

Because of this week's events, UT Police have increased their patrols and will be highly visible in residence halls, parking garages and other pertinent locations. You can expect this heightened security to continue.

We are looking at additional ways to improve our security plan, and we ask that everyone share the responsibility. Stay alert. Adhere to security measures and notify UT Police (974-3114 or 911) if you see anything or anyone you think is suspicious.

As we grieve with our colleagues at Virginia Tech, let's all pledge to be more vigilant for safety on our own campus.