Crisis Communication Protocol

Office of Emergency Management and Safety

NOVA Police

Office of Communications

The mission of the Office of Emergency Management and Safety (OEMS) is to provide guidance, direction and training to the College and its faculty, staff, students and visitors in the prevention, protection, response and recovery from all incidents or events.

Effective Date

January 1, 2022

Crisis Communication Protocols Statement

NOVA has developed an Emergency Operations Plan and Continuity of Operations Plan in compliance with VA Code 23.1-804.

NOVA conducts emergency exercises each year, which may include seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises, drills, functional exercises and full-scale exercises (in accordance with the Department of Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP)). The exercises also include testing of emergency equipment and readiness assessments.

NOVA Police and the Office of Emergency Management & Safety staff have received training in incident command protocols and coordinate with local and federal agencies during an emergency. NOVA police officers are normally first to respond, followed by local law enforcement and fire/emergency medical services (EMS) personnel from the municipality of the impacted campus. When multiple agencies respond, they work together to manage and contain the event.

Upon confirmation of an incident that creates a serious threat at any NOVA location, NOVA will immediately notify the College or affected campus community. The Crisis Communication Protocols described in this document detail how NOVA manages communications during an event or emergency.

Change Record

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9/30/2012	001	Initial Document	William Flagler
4/9/2013	002	Updates to Version 001	William Flagler
9/27/13	003	Updates to Version 002	William Flagler
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10/11/16	005	Updates to version 004	Thomas Mayhew
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1 Introduction

A crisis or emergency can happen at any time on a Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) campus or NOVA-controlled location. It may affect one individual, a single building, a campus or the entire NOVA College system and surrounding community. Since stress and confusion are to be expected during a crisis, thorough planning and efficiently implemented crisis communication protocols can foster a clear sense of direction, clearly define lines of responsibility and ensure key officials and administrators have the information they need to communicate a clear and consistent message. In any crisis situation, the primary goals are to minimize the possible threat to individuals and properties during an emergency by providing clear updates and instructions and to provide accurate updates to the general public and community when possible.

The *Crisis Communication Protocols* (CCP) provide information on NOVA's crisis communication practices and procedures. However, NOVA recognizes that individual circumstances or events not anticipated by these protocols may occur. These protocols are intended to provide guidelines for best practices; therefore, it cannot be assumed that all plausible scenarios are contained in this document or that other additional measures may not be required.

1.1 Purpose

The CCP are the primary tools for internal and external communications during crisis situations. They provide guidance to NOVA officials who are responsible for delivering effective, efficient, timely and comprehensive information to the NOVA community – as well as to the media and the public – before, during and after an emergency.

All authorized NOVA officials should become familiar with these protocols since effectively communicating during a crisis requires an informed NOVA community, familiar with proper emergency communication procedures and notification systems.

1.2 Definition of Crisis

A crisis is when an unexpected act or occurrence—whether accidental or intentional—creates a disturbance in NOVA's activities involving students, faculty or staff. These incidents require the institution to respond with the safety and well-being of all community members as the top priority. A crisis or emergency has the potential to significantly impact NOVA operations, and depending on the nature of the crisis, it could cause a serious threat to life and/or loss of property. If not handled effectively, these situations can also result in damage to public confidence and trust.

1.3 Emergency Notifications, Timely Warnings and Follow-up Communication

- Emergency Notifications: NOVA is required to immediately notify the campus community upon confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation on a campus or NOVA-controlled site that poses an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or employees. An emergency notification is triggered by an event such as a fire or weather event that is occurring on or is imminently threatening a campus.

- Timely Warnings: NOVA is required by the federal Jeanne Clery Act to alert the campus community to certain crimes in a timely manner and in a way that will aid in the prevention of similar crimes. The warning is intended to enable people to take precautions and protect themselves. Timely warnings are triggered by crimes that have already occurred but may still represent an ongoing threat. The warning will be issued as soon as pertinent information is available.

- Follow-up Communication: Any communication following up on an emergency notification or timely warning will be coordinated by the Office of Communications, in conjunction with the Vice President of Strategy, Research and Workforce Innovation, the Office of Emergency Management and Safety and NOVA Police.

1.4 Objectives of the Protocols

The objectives of the Crisis Communication Protocols include:

- Assessing situations and determining whether communication responses are necessary.
    - If communication is necessary, the college's internal conversations will determine if and when information needs to be shared externally with other local jurisdictions' emergency management teams and/or police personnel.
- Activating the Emergency Communication Team (ECT) to make recommendations on appropriate responses. The ECT includes:
    - The Office of Emergency Management and Safety
    - NOVA Police
    - The Vice President of Strategy, Research and Workforce Innovation
    - The Office of Communications (led by the Director of Communications, and including others such as the Associate Director of Internal Communications, Public Information Officer (Acting Crisis Communications Specialist), and the social media team as needed)

    - College Web Services
    - and the Call Center.
- Ensuring the ECT establishes a line of communication and shares information about the incident until the emergency is over. This may include:
    - A dedicated email chain for the Director of Communications and all relevant communications team members to ensure continuity of information sharing (especially in the case of a long-duration event that requires rotating 6-hour shifts).
    - A dedicated email chain for the entire ECT to be used for timely and efficient dissemination of updates.
    - A dedicated email chain for NOVA Communications staff to coordinate with law enforcement agencies or public service agency communications counterparts.
    - A dedicated email chain for NOVA Communications to brief leadership and strategize when and how to most effectively share embargoed or non-embargoed information.
- Defining any necessary immediate actions by identifying internal and external audiences that should be informed about the emergency, communicating facts and updates as the emergency evolves, providing protective action guidance as appropriate and providing timely and appropriate information.

1.5 Emergency Communication Team (ECT)

Emergency communication officials and offices that handle emergency communication include:

- NOVA Police
- Office of Emergency Management and Safety
- Vice President of Strategy, Research and Workforce Innovation
- Office of Communications

Typically, Police Dispatch will notify either the Director of Emergency Management and Safety/designee or the Chief of Police/designee. They will then alert the Director of Communications (acting Crisis Communication Specialist) and College Web Services to activate and lead all follow-up emergency communications. These individuals will determine the appropriate communication response that is needed based on the identified priority levels (See *Emergency Operations Plan*).

1.5.1 Office of Emergency Management and Safety

The Office of Emergency Management and Safety (OEMS) provides guidance and direction to NOVA and its faculty, staff, students and visitors in the protection, response and recovery from all incidents or events. The department manages training of NOVA's multi-layered notification systems, coordinates resources throughout the response of an incident and assists in the recovery and mitigation after the event.

1.5.2 NOVA Police

The NOVA Police Department is a full-service agency. NOVA Police strives to ensure the safety and security of College students, faculty, staff and visitors through proactive crime prevention and immediate response to incidents of a criminal nature. With a 24/7 Police Dispatch Center, open 365 days a year, NOVA Police officers and/or security officers patrol all six NOVA campuses and NOVA-controlled property and are available to respond to calls at any time.

1.5.3 Vice President of Strategy, Research and Workforce Innovation, Office of Communications

Reporting to the Vice President of Strategy, Research and Workforce Innovation, the Office of Communications is responsible for all official communication from the College to the NOVA community, media and general public. The department coordinates with NOVA Police and OEMS to create and disseminate communications during and after an emergency.

1.5.3.1 Public Information Officer

The Public Information Officer (acting Crisis Communications Specialist) works in coordination with and under the direction of the Director of Communications who reports to the Vice President of Strategy, Research and Workforce Innovation. If the situation warrants, the Crisis Communication Specialist and/or the Director of Communications will be dispatched to the campus while a Public Information Officer or designated communications team member will be assigned to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). This is to ensure simultaneous dissemination of the most current information to various parties.

1.5.3.2 Web Services and Digital Media

The Director of Communications coordinates the posting of important crisis-related information to the College website and social media channels. Under the direction of the Director of Communications and/or NOVA Police or OEMS, Web Services and the social media team receive~~s~~ the written and approved messages from a member of the ECT and, depending on the emergency, posts them through the most appropriate communication channels. The social media team also has draft templates for relevant platforms to inform timely social media posts.

In the event of a severe emergency that may last for a prolonged period, Web Services may enable a dark site, which is a website with crisis-specific information that is prepared in advance and ready to go "live" in the event of a crisis. It includes key information, press releases, updates and contacts related specifically to the crisis. It is a fundamental source for stakeholders during a catastrophic emergency.

1.5.3.3 NOVA Call Center

The NOVA Call Center is the main point of contact for students, parents, staff, faculty and the community who are attempting to call the College for information.

During a crisis, the Call Center may receive a large volume of calls asking for information. The Director of the Call Center is part of the ECT and receives information that is approved for dissemination to the media and the public. The director will collaborate with the ECT and the Director of Communications on approved language to disseminate to Call Center staff, who can provide general information about the emergency to callers.

1.6 NOVA Alert

NOVA Alert is a free notification/alert service offered to NOVA community members. Once approved language is finalized, information will also be distributed through this channel. Students, faculty and staff are automatically signed up for email alerts through their official NOVA email address. Users may add a mobile phone number or additional email account to this service by going to http://alert.nvcc.edu/. Students, faculty and staff are encouraged to add additional devices to increase the probability they will see emergency messages from the College.

For College-wide events, NOVA Alerts are also disseminated through Twitter, Instagram and Facebook (#NOVAAlert).

1.7 System Testing

All NOVA alert systems will be tested annually through NOVA's Information Technology Department.

1.8 NOVA Website

The NOVA website serves as the primary method of communication to students, faculty and staff for all important emergency-related follow-up information. As soon as a NOVA Alert is issued, emergency messages are posted on the NOVA homepage, emergency webpage and other appropriate pages.

1.9 Training

Training is essential to demonstrating and improving NOVA's ability to execute the procedures set out in these protocols and to identifying the most effective methods for implementing crisis communication.

Staff members who have roles and responsibilities within the NOVA Crisis Communication Protocols have received the necessary training on emergency procedures and processes. NOVA's Administrative Council has been briefed on the protocols. Staff members with roles and responsibilities, and College leadership will be informed when procedures, system characteristics or capabilities are updated. In addition, new staff with roles and responsibilities in the NOVA Crisis Communication Protocols will be trained accordingly.

2 Emergency Notifications

The Director of Emergency Management and Safety (OEMS) and the Chief of Police are responsible for the content of all Emergency Notifications.

2.1 Responsible NOVA Authorities (RNA)

The below NOVA officials will have the authority to send or authorize NOVA Emergency Notifications and are considered "Responsible NOVA Authorities." At all times in these protocols, referenced positions at NOVA may be replaced by designees.

- NOVA President
- Chief of Staff
- Campus Provost
- Chief of Police
- Director of Office of Emergency Management and Safety (OEMS)
- Director of Communications
- Vice President of Finance and Administration
- Vice President of Instructional and Information Technology
- Vice President of Strategy, Research and Workforce Innovation
- Police Dispatch (Can authorize and send severe weather alerts. All other alerts must be authorized by another Responsible NOVA Authority before the alert is sent by a Dispatcher)

NOTE: NOVA's executive officials and NOVA Police Officers who are directly involved with the emergency response for safety and security incidents are designated as "Responsible NOVA Authorities" for purposes of confirming that a legitimate emergency/dangerous situation exists or authorizing a NOVA Emergency Notification. They are limited to authorizing an initial alert in response to an incident or event within their direct area of responsibility and only in cases in which a delay could compromise the safety and security of NOVA community members.

2.2 Emergency Operations

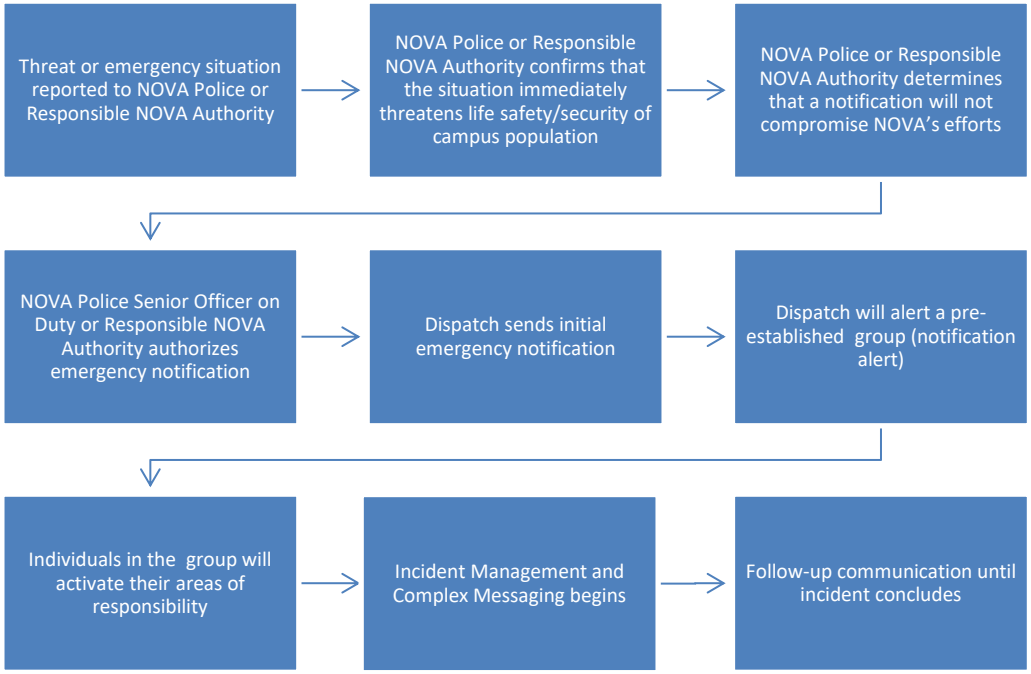
An individual who encounters or learns about a NOVA-related emergency should immediately call 911 or NOVA Police Dispatch (whichever is appropriate for the situation) and relay as much information as possible. Police Dispatchers will seek additional information, begin dispatching emergency services and once the situation has been confirmed, send the initial emergency notification based on the procedures in this protocol. The Police Dispatch Center is the central point of communications and should be kept abreast of all activities as they transpire so that continued, prompt, and accurate notifications and communication responses can be initiated.

The Police Dispatcher will make notification of the incident to a pre-established group, which includes Police leadership and OEMS.

Once the notification has been received by these individuals, they will immediately activate their areas of responsibility.

Diagram 2.2

The following diagram illustrates the sequence of events that takes place during the emergency notification process.



2.3 Confirming an Emergency Situation

For the majority of emergency threats and incidents, the first notice of the situation will be via an incoming call to Police Dispatch. It must be confirmed that an emergency situation poses an immediate threat to the safety or security of the campus community. In the event that a Police Officer is not yet on the scene of the incident to confirm/verify that a legitimate emergency or dangerous situation exists, another Responsible NOVA Authority (see Section 2.1) may **confirm** it and **authorize** an immediate emergency notification with emergency safety instructions.

The existence of a tornado or other severe weather emergency may be confirmed by the National Weather Service (NWS). The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) may confirm a serious health emergency.

2.4 Initial Response and Notifications

An immediate emergency notification will be issued by Police Dispatch when the NOVA Police Department or another Responsible NOVA Authority has **confirmed** an emergency situation exists. In addition, NOVA Police and/or OEMS will take into account the safety of the community and immediately determine the content of the notification and initiate the emergency notification system, unless issuing a notification will compromise efforts to assist a victim or to contain, respond to or otherwise mitigate the emergency.

See Section 2.9 for specific information related to "Tornado Warnings" and Section 2.10 for specific information related to "Severe Health Emergency."

NOTE: If a Responsible NOVA Authority is trained in and has direct access to send the emergency notification, the Responsible NOVA Authority may issue it, if necessary. However, this should only be done as a last resort in order to protect health and safety and to prevent duplication of messaging. Under most circumstances, the primary responsibility to issue NOVA emergency notifications shall rest with the Police Dispatcher on duty.

2.5 Notification/Alert Groups

NOVA has the ability to notify specific segments of the population determined to be at risk. Determination shall be made by NOVA Police and/or OEMS as to who should be notified of a localized emergency and which platform should be used. If only a small segment is determined to be at risk, the situation will be monitored to determine if escalation and additional notifications are required. The entire NOVA community will be notified when there is even the potential that the entire community will be affected or when a situation threatens NOVA operations more broadly.

2.6 Emergency Message Notification Channels

NOVA may use some or all of the systems described below to communicate a threat to the NOVA community or to the appropriate segment of the community:

- NOVA Alert – NOVA Alert is a free notification service offered by NOVA. Students, faculty and staff are automatically signed up for email alerts through their official NOVA email address. To add a mobile phone number or an additional email account to this service, users may register them at http://alert.nvcc.edu/. Students, faculty and staff are strongly encouraged to add additional devices.

- NOVA Desktop Computer Alert - NOVA is able to send an emergency alert to every computer owned by the College and connected to the NOVA computer network, while it is logged on to the College network. This allows emergency messages to be sent to classrooms, computer labs and staff in their offices or logged in off-site.

- Automated or Live Broadcast to Campus - Emergency messages can be broadcast directly into any IP phone on a campus, and emergency calls can be made from phones that have been installed NOVA-wide. The activation of this system can be campus-wide or college-wide.

- Digital Signage - Emergency messages can be displayed on flat panel screens that have been strategically located on each campus. The messages can be locally or centrally controlled. This will allow messages to be displayed in common areas (i.e., hallways, eating areas, etc.). Crawlers can be activated on College TV screens and are also used to display important information.

- NOVA Email - During emergencies, email can be sent to all faculty and staff, all adjuncts and all enrolled students. Separate distribution lists are also maintained for each campus.

- NOVA Website - Emergency messages can be added to the top of the NOVA Website (www.nvcc.edu) quickly from any location.

- NOVA Social Media - A message may be posted to NOVA's Facebook page, Twitter account or other social media platform.

- NVCC TV - Emergency messages can be broadcast on NOVA's Cable-TV channel from remote locations. The NOVA Channel appears on Cox and Comcast in Fairfax County and Alexandria and on Verizon FiOS 24-7. It is available in the other jurisdictions on a more limited daily schedule.

- Other - Emergency messages can be recorded and set to play from any telephone. Signs are in place at campus entrances that alert the public to emergency situations.

- Local News Media – The Office of Communications issues press releases and statements and calls local media contacts, as appropriate. For emergency situations, the Director of Communication and the Public Information Officer(s) will develop clear language to be shared with various audiences. For weather related events, the Office of Emergency Management and Safety will brief the Office of Communications on outreach intended for specific outlets. Because of the transient nature of its population, NOVA depends a great deal on broadcast media to inform students, faculty and staff of emergencies before or during their commutes and before they enter campus.

2.7 Emergency Notification Messages: Content

The initial emergency notification message should, at a minimum, contain the following information in this order:

- Location
- Nature of incident, and
- Actions to be taken by affected populations

NOTE: Text messages should be no more than 115 characters.

2.8 Preset Initial Emergency Notification Messages

The following table contains examples of preset initial emergency notifications maintained by Police Dispatch. When feasible, staff should use one of the messages provided, customizing only as needed. For consistency, the initial notification should be the same on all activated channels (i.e. text messaging, NOVA Desktop Computer Alert, Automated or Live Broadcast and Digital Signage)

Figure 2.8

Scenario	Message
Active Shooter/Person with Gun	(LOCATION) Gun Incident. Evacuate if Possible. Hide if you cannot Escape. Prepare to fight shooter if confronted.
Bomb Threat – Avoid Area!	**Campus Name**: Please evacuate **building name*** Follow instructions of authorities. Avoid area.
Earthquake	All Campuses-Earthquake. Once shaking stops, evacuate and remain outside until further notice. Follow instructions from authorities.
Explosion	(LOCATION): Explosion-evacuate immediately. Follow instructions from authorities. Avoid area.
Fire	**Campus Name**Fire at (BLDG NAME). Evacuate if you are in that bldg. Avoid area. Watch out for responders. Follow instructions from authorities.
Fire Alarm	**Campus Name** Fire Alarm at (BLDG NAME). Evacuate if you are in that bldg. Avoid area. Watch out for responders. Follow instructions from authorities.
Hazmat Spill or Leak	**Campus Name** HAZMAT spill. Evacuate and Avoid Area. Stay Clear. Campus closed (DATE).
High Wind Warning	High Wind Warning. Conditions are present for dangerous weather until *time*. Seek Shelter immediately. Go to a designated Shelter Area.
High Wind Watch	High Wind Watch. Conditions are present for dangerous weather until *time*. Prepared to seek shelter if conditions worsen. Monitor weather.
Hostage	(LOCATION): Hostage situation. Take shelter. Follow instructions from authorities. Avoid area.
Odor Investigation	**Campus Name**-Odor investigation smell of **type** in **building name**. Evacuate Building. Stay clear!
Robbery	(LOCATION): Robbery at (BLDG NAME/STREET/ETC) at (time). Police searching for suspect(s). Avoid area, stay alert!

Severe Thunderstorm Warning *Campus*	Severe Thunderstorm Warning **Campus name** is effect until *date/time*. Be aware of possible thunderstorms in the area. Consider moving to shelter.
Severe Thunderstorm Warning – Loudoun Village Only	Loudoun Trailer Village & LD Building Weather Alert- Severe Thunderstorm Warning. Remain aware of possible severe thunderstorms in the area.
Severe Thunderstorm Watch *Campus*	Severe Thunderstorm Watch **Campus name** is effect until *date/time*. Remain aware of possible thunderstorms in the area. Monitor weather.
Sex Assault	**Campus Name**: Sexual assault at **enter time**. Police searching for suspect(s). Avoid area, stay alert!
Suspicious Item Evacuation	**Campus Name**: Suspicious item. Evacuate **Building Name** immediately. Follow instructions of authorities. Avoid area. Do not use Cell phones.
Tornado Warning	**Campus name**: Tornado Warning until **time and date**. Seek Shelter immediately. Go to a designated Severe Weather Shelter Area.
Tornado Watch	**Campus name**: Tornado Watch until **time and date**. Be aware of threatening weather conditions and ready to seek shelter.
Test	TEST of the NOVA Emergency Notification System. This is only a test.

NOTE: For situations that are <u>not</u> addressed above, consider using the above as a template for the emergency notification message.

2.9 Tornadoes

Definitions:

- <u>Tornado Watch</u> – A tornado watch is issued when severe thunderstorms and tornadoes are possible in or near the watch area. When a tornado watch is issued, stay tuned to local radio, TV~~,~~ or NOAA weather radio for further information and possible warnings. Consider shelter options and be prepared to take cover~~,~~ if necessary.
- <u>Tornado Warning</u> – A tornado warning is issued when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. When a tornado warning is issued, seek safe shelter immediately.

Police Dispatchers will continually monitor the National Weather Service (NWS). If a tornado warning is received, a Police Dispatcher will immediately:

- send emergency notifications to the affected population;
- make an announcement to the respective police officers on the NOVA police radio;
- contact the Chief of Police and the Director of OEMS.

The Police Dispatcher will continue to monitor the weather. When the tornado warning has been lifted or expires, the Dispatcher will send another notification, make a radio announcement, and advise the Chief of Police and the Director of OEMS.

2.10 Serious Health Emergency

All potential serious health emergencies should be brought to the attention of the NOVA Safety Manager, who will contact the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) directly. VDH will confirm whether or not a significant emergency exists that involves an immediate threat to the health of the NOVA community. If confirmed, the Safety Manager will work collaboratively with VDH to determine the content of the notification, the appropriate segment or segments of the campus community to receive a notification as well as the appropriate mode of communication. Modes of communication may include direct contact of individuals via mail, email, or phone. VDH will initiate the notification.

2.11 Follow-Up Communication

After an Emergency Notification has been sent, NOVA will provide follow-up communication. (see Section 4). Exception: for serious health emergencies, VDH will provide follow-up communication.

3 Timely Warnings

Timely warnings alert the campus community to potentially dangerous criminal situations and afford people an opportunity to protect themselves. The Chief of Police or designee will issue a timely warning for any crime that occurs in NOVA's Clery geography (College property, leased spaces or anywhere College-sponsored events take place) that is:

- reported to NOVA Police or local police agencies; and
- considered by the Chief of Police~~,~~ or designee to represent a serious or continuing threat to students and employees.

The Chief of Police~~,~~ or designee will decide whether a timely warning will be issued~~,~~ based upon the following:

- date, time and location;
- the nature of the crime;
- receipt of pertinent information:
  - Even if all the facts are not available, a timely warning can be issued, and follow-up information sent when available.
- the potential of continuing danger to the campus community;
- the possible risk of compromising law enforcement efforts.

The warning may be disseminated by any of the emergency notification channels found in Section 2.6, as deemed necessary by the Chief of Police or designee and will include all information that would promote safety and aid in the prevention of similar crimes.

3.1 Crime Alerts Webpage

When a Timely Warning is issued, in addition to it being distributed College-wide, it is also placed on the NOVA Crime Alerts Webpage (http://www.nvcc.edu/police/crime-alerts.html) as an extra step to alert the campus community to potentially dangerous criminal activity.

Figure 3.1

The table below is an example of a Timely Warning that is sent out via email and posted on the NOVA crime alerts webpage.

Initial Post: May 29, 2015

On-Campus Sexual Assault

Date and Time of Occurrence:

Approximately May 29th, 2015, unknown specific time

Date & Time of Reporting:

May 29th, 2015, at 6:30 p.m.

Location:

In the A lot at the Manassas Campus

Reported Offense:

On Monday, May 29th, 2015, at approximately 6:30 p.m., NOVA PD was notified of a reported sexual assault that took place on the NOVA Manassas Campus.

The victim reportedly traveled to the campus with the suspect to inquire about a class and was assaulted in the parking lot by that individual.

Suspect Description:

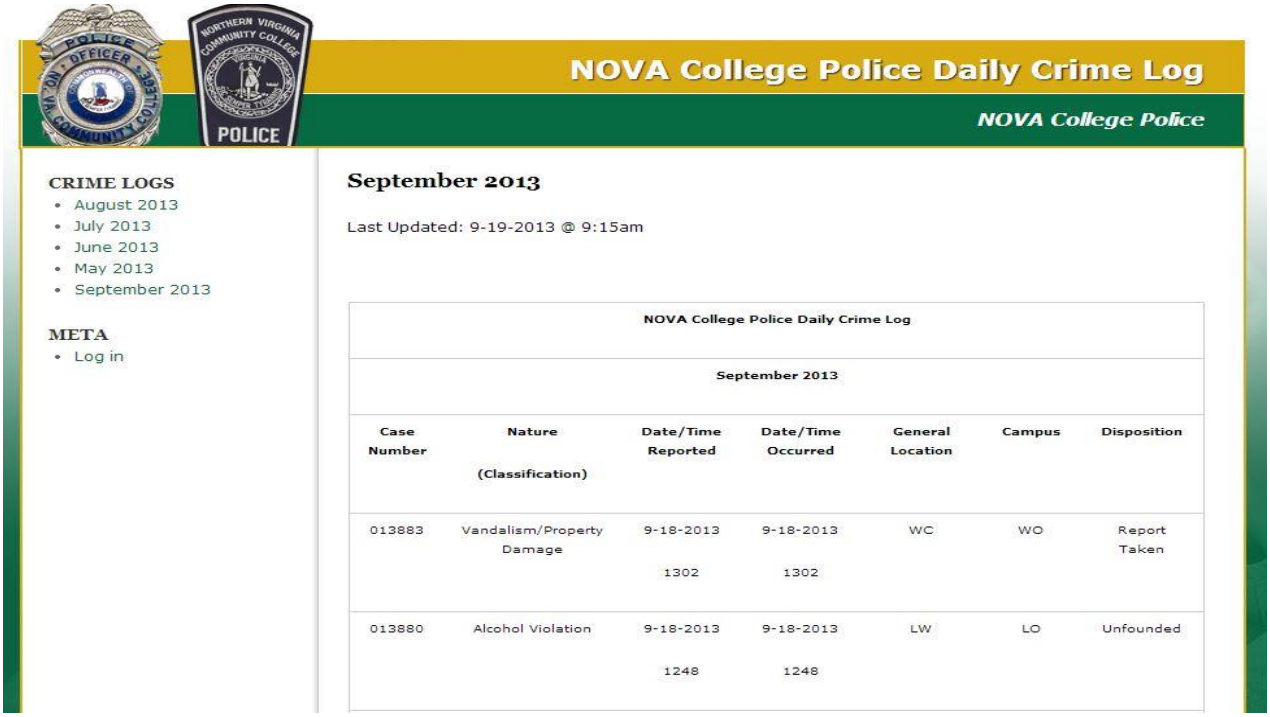
The suspect in this case is known~~,~~ has been identified and is no longer a threat.

3.2 Crime Log

NOVA's crime log is updated on a daily basis. It provides details about crimes that have been reported to the NOVA Police Department. The most recent crimes are typically at the top of the crime logs and hard copies are also available at the NOVA Police Offices. The Crime Log may not be in chronological order. The Daily Crime Log is located at http://blogs.nvcc.edu/crimelog/.

Figure 3.2

Figure 3.2 is a screenshot of the NOVA Police Daily Crime Log



NOVA College Police Daily Crime Log

NOVA College Police

CRIME LOGS
- August 2013
- July 2013
- June 2013
- May 2013
- September 2013

META
- Log in

September 2013

Last Updated: 9-19-2013 @ 9:15am

NOVA College Police Daily Crime Log

September 2013

Case Number	Nature (Classification)	Date/Time Reported	Date/Time Occurred	General Location	Campus	Disposition
013883	Vandalism/Property Damage	9-18-2013 1302	9-18-2013 1302	WC	WO	Report Taken
013880	Alcohol Violation	9-18-2013 1248	9-18-2013 1248	LW	LO	Unfounded

4 Follow-up Communication

4.1 Prepare Fact Sheets, Statements and/or Other Products

The Office of Communications will prepare fact sheets, talking points, media statements, press releases, social media guidance and other products as needed that summarize the situation, including all known details to be released to the media. All written statements should be analyzed with respect to the public's right to know and concerns for privacy and security.

4.2 Identify Spokespersons

In most cases, the primary spokesperson is the Director of Communications or the Public Information Officer (acting Crisis Communications Specialist). In cases of a significant crisis, additional spokespeople with direct knowledge of the crisis may be designated by – or with the approval of – the President of NOVA. An example could be the Chief of Police for police incidents or the Director of Emergency Management and Safety for emergencies related to natural disasters, fires, chemical leaks, health emergencies, etc. The President may also designate the most appropriate member of Administrative Council to speak to the media on a case-specific basis.

4.3 Notify Key Constituencies

The Director of Communications will assemble and coordinate the communication of the facts of the incident, with help from the ECT. It is important to keep administration, faculty, staff, students and family members informed of appropriate details and actions taken by NOVA during an emergency or crisis. Effective communications will help minimize rumors, maintain morale and ensure continued orderly operations.

Key constituencies that should be kept informed in an emergency include:

- law enforcement agencies or public service agencies
- college administration, faculty, staff
- students
- family members of employees or students
- NOVA Board
- general public
- media
- alumni

The Director of Communications and designee(s) will work with the Vice President for Strategy, Research and Workforce Innovation, OEMS, NOVA Police and any other key stakeholders to develop messages including:

- An initial email message (or messages); impacted faculty, staff and/or students providing details on the event, its duration and potential impacts, as appropriate
    - A similar initial email message (or messages) may be sent to college administration and the NOVA Board
    - This message will include social media and media guidance for faculty, staff and/or students, as needed. For example:
        - In rapidly developing situations where rumors on social media could negatively impact NOVA's ability to mitigate the emergency, the guidance could say: "This situation is developing, and we ask that faculty/staff/and students refrain from commenting to media or on social media at this time."
        - If assistance is needed, the guidance could provide sample language for faculty/staff/students to use.
- Follow-up email message(s) providing updates on the situation, including an eventual all-clear.

- Talking points for spokespeople, which can also be used for media statements, press releases, social media posts, etc.
- If-asked Q&A as needed

Once approved by the relevant ECT members, the materials will be sent to relevant Administrative Council members and the NOVA President for approval.

4.4 Alert the Media

The Director of Communications will determine the best time and way to convey information to the news media and the public. For most emergencies, a brief news release will be the most appropriate vehicle. If a news conference is needed, the Director of Communications or designee, with assistance of the PIO (acting Crisis Communications Specialist), will establish logistics. This includes when/where the news conference will take place, how the media will be contacted, who will supervise the news conference, who will appear as the College-approved spokesperson or spokespeople, etc.

4.5 Establish a Joint Information Center

For events with considerable media attention, a Joint Information Center (JIC) should be established. The JIC should be established if it appears multiple jurisdictions and agencies are involved to ensure a unified message is being delivered. The JIC will be managed by the Director of Communications in coordination with the Director of Public Safety and Office of Emergency Management and Safety alongside other jurisdictions and federal and state agency designated members.

Each campus should identify a space that can be used for news conferences. Space should also be set aside for a media work room that is equipped with desks, electrical outlets and wireless internet access.

4.6 Photograph the Scene

It may be helpful to assign videographers and photographers to take video and/or pictures of the emergency/crisis scene. This may prove helpful in responding to media inquiries, in recording the event for historical purposes~~,~~ and in providing an accurate record in the event legal issues should arise.

This will be coordinated by the Vice President of Strategy, Research and Workforce Innovation, the Director of Communications or designee, the NOVA Police Department and the Office of Emergency Management and Safety.

5 Inclement Weather – Delays, Closing Procedures

In the event of inclement weather such as snow or freezing rain, NOVA may be required to close early, open late or close completely for an extended period of time. In the event of a weather event that makes commuting dangerous, NOVA makes every effort to communicate closures in a timely manner. Announcements concerning weather-related closings will be posted by the following departments:

- NOVA Police/OEMS – activation of NOVA Alert
- Web Services - NOVA's website
- Office of Communications - social media channels, local TV, radio, blogs, etc.

6 Protocol Maintenance

Updates to this protocol will be made when necessary, through coordination within the Office of Emergency Management and Safety, NOVA Police and the Office of Communications. Please refer to NOVA's *Emergency Operations Plan* for more information on NOVA's emergency planning and procedures.