

Recommended Crisis Management Procedures for Fraternities and Sororities at The Ohio State University

Updated 06/08

The following guidelines can be used in the event of a tragedy or crisis that occurs on or off chapter property. Examples of such situations include, but are not limited to:

- ❑ The death or serious injury of a member (whether on or off campus).
- ❑ Any injury or incident involving a member and/or a non-member at or during a chapter event, whether that event occurred on or off campus.
- ❑ Any injury or incident involving a member and/or a non-member that occurs on chapter property.
- ❑ Fire in the chapter facility.
- ❑ Hazing

It is important to note that this document provides guidelines for how you may act in a crisis situation. Your chapter should work with University Officials, Advisors, Alumni, and Headquarters Staff to develop your own strategic plan in case of emergencies. This document is a great starting point for that document, but should work in conjunction with guidelines provided by your national organization.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. GENERAL GUIDELINES.....	Page 2
2. WHO IS IN CHARGE.....	Page 3
3. PROCEDURES.....	Page 3
4. SUICIDE ATTEMPT	Page 5
5. STUDENT DEATH	Page 5
6. WORKING WITH PARENTS.....	Page 6
7. FIRE.....	Page 7
8. HAZING	Page 8
9. IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS.....	Page 10
10. SAMPLE CRISIS SITUATION	Page 11

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Each chapter should create and maintain a policy for crisis management.
 - This document may be used as an outline for the creation of such a plan; however, it should be specific to each organization.
- The procedures and included documents should be maintained by designated officers as determined by the chapter, but at a minimum, should be maintained by the chapter president and chapter advisor.
 - The crisis management procedures, chapter roster, chapter contact list, and emergency contact numbers should be maintained as part of this policy.
 - Chapter may want to consider keeping emergency information cards on file for all members. You cannot mandate that member report medical information, but can assist responding units during emergency situation.
 - Keep on file in the president's room an emergency card or sheet for each member and new member. Included on the card:
 - Member's full, legal name and birth date
 - Member's local address and telephone number (if other than the chapter house)
 - Name, address, telephone numbers and email addresses of parents or guardians. Be sure to get this information for both parents. Include home, work and cellular telephone numbers. (See below for caution when contacting parents)
 - Name, address, and telephone numbers of another person to notify in the event the parents cannot be reached.
 - Medical information (allergies, medical conditions, medications, etc.)
 - Name and telephone number of the family physician
 - A copy of the policy should be maintained at a location known by all chapter members both inside and outside of the facility; i.e., with the chapter advisor (if local), at a near-by chapter (in case of fire and one of the copies being destroyed) or in the annex house (if applicable).
- It is also important to establish relationships with neighboring properties whether Greek or not. Introduce yourself and provide neighbors with contact information for chapter leadership and a copy of your crisis management procedure.

In the event of a crisis situation:

WHO IS IN CHARGE?

- Be sure that all members of the chapter understand that the president is in charge of every emergency situation. The president should consult with other members who may possess more expertise or insight. However, the final decision rests with the president.
 - In the event that the president is absent, the next ranking officer assumes control. All officers should know where to find a copy of the chapter's crisis management procedure and emergency contact lists.
 - All new members must know who is in charge and be prepared to follow instructions. Include a review of the chapter's crisis procedures in your fraternity/sorority education program each term.
 - In all situations, emergency response personnel should be allowed to assume control of a situation. The chapter president or his/her designee should represent the chapter, but not interfere with any actions of emergency personnel or university officials.

PROCEDURES

- If a crisis occurs at the chapter facility, **CLOSE THE CHAPTER FACILITY AT ONCE**. The president cannot give instruction and maintain control if members are leaving and strangers are entering. Permit only your members, alumni, appropriate officers (police, fire, medical, etc.), and university officials to enter the chapter facility. If a crisis occurs at a location other than a chapter facility at which the chapter is sponsoring the event, identify a common meeting place at once and give instructions under the same closed-meeting status. It is an expectation, however, to communicate with advisors, university officials, and responding officials.
- In nearly all situations, the president's first call should be to 911. If the emergency situation is a fire, dial 911 (or 221-2345). Do not hesitate to call the police regardless of the situation at 911 (or 222-4545). Briefly and calmly explain the situation so that the appropriate emergency personnel can respond.
- Before you leave the phone, please make the following calls:
 - Ryan Lovell – Senior Coordinator of Greek Life. **Call at ANY hour: office (614) 688-4888 (normal business hours) or cell (614) 460-1895**. He will discuss the situation with you and, in serious cases, will be with the chapter as soon as possible. If you are in doubt as to whether the situation is serious or not, please call. If you cannot reach Ryan, call **Sharrell Hassell, Coordinator of Greek Life at the office (614) 247-8609 or cell (937-478-3452)**
 - **The Greek Life Office representative will contact other university officials in cases where appropriate.**

- Your chapter advisor or a member of the House Corporation Board. Have a discussion with these individuals prior to any emergency situation and come to an agreement of who is to be notified. You should work with your advisor to notify appropriate members of your national headquarters staff so that they may offer support to the chapter.
- Notify your Head Resident (i.e., house mother, resident scholar, house director).
- Assemble your chapter members for a chapter meeting.
 - Dependant upon the situation, this meeting should include ALL members (including both out of house members and new members) or just those that reside at the chapter facility. Regardless, all members should be notified, at some point, about the crisis.
 - It is important that you and your chapter members remain calm until the situation is under control. Explain to them that there is an emergency situation and that the chapter is closed. Outgoing calls and discussion of the situation by members should be done with reasonable discretion. Chapter members should not discuss the situation until all of the details have been found. It is appropriate for chapter members to notify immediate family and friends that they are okay, but should not go into specifics.
 - Do not discuss the situation with media until the Senior Coordinator of Greek Life, your Chapter Advisor/headquarter representative, or representatives from the Student Advocacy Center arrives. Instruct your members that they are not to make statements on behalf of the chapter to anyone other than police or fire officials. The president or a designated member should make any appropriate statements to the media after the situation is under control and the content of any statement has been discussed.
- There are several ways you can get your message out to the public during a crisis. You should determine, before any incident happens, what strategy your organization will develop to interface with the media. You are encouraged to work with your national organization and the media relations office at the University to determine these steps. Below are listed different strategies that *may be* used in developing your plan.
 - Prepare a statement.
 - In this form, you have control over the message you want to provide to the public. Statements should be short and concise and written as though the words are coming from one person, probably the chapter president.
 - Issue a press release.

- A press release reads more like a news story, with the who, what, where, when and why of the incident or situation outlined. A quote from a chapter officer or president is included so that reporters can use it in their stories in lieu of an interview.
 - Grant interviews or hold a press conference.
 - Sometimes, a crisis will bring reporters looking for a comment to your doors. When this happens, it is advisable to meet reporters so they can get the sound bite or quote they need.
 - Use your website.
 - Create a special link on the home page for crisis-related news, and post any statements or press releases that are issued to the media through that link.
- For any situation, work with your chapter advisor to notify headquarters as soon as possible. The headquarters' staff is supportive and can offer advice for dealing with any situation.
- In all cases, work with the Senior Coordinator of Greek Life to initiate the notification of proper university officials concerning course work, class attendance, withdrawals, tuition refunds, etc.

SUICIDE ATTEMPT

- In the case of a **suicide attempt**, with or without serious injury, do not assemble your members or call parents. Appropriate actions should be discussed with your chapter advisor, the Senior Coordinator of Greek Life or officials from Student Advocacy.
 - Resources are available to help both the individual and affected chapter members. Work with your chapter advisor and university official to identify these resources and to get help to the appropriate folks.

STUDENT DEATH

- In the tragic case of a student death, contact appropriate officials immediately. This would include EMS, University Officials (see list above) and chapter representatives (headquarters staff, chapter advisors, graduate chapter, etc.).
 - If the death occurs inside the chapter facility, during a chapter event, or during a time when school is in session, work with University Officials, especially Student Advocacy, to address the issue to all chapter members. Follow the above guidelines as they relate to procedures.

- Prepare a media plan working with your advisors and headquarters. Media will be present on the scene and will be requesting interviews.
- If the death occurs outside of the chapter or outside of a time when school is in session, understand that members may not be aware of the incident that has happened. Work with the University or chapter advisors on a communication plan to let all members know about the tragedy.

PARENTS

- When making the decision to notify parents, please discuss first with your chapter advisor, Greek advisor, and local officials on the scene.
 - Gather sufficient information before making any decision to speak with parents.
 - In the event of a serious accident or illness, please ask the medical personnel/university officials to notify the parents and advise them of the student's physical situation.
 - In case of hospitalizations, find out the visitation wishes of the families and coordinate this with chapter members.
 - In the event of a death, Ohio State Student Advocacy Officials will notify the parents. You should always have parent/guardian information on file to make available to the proper authorities.
 - Student Advocacy will coordinate with the parents regarding any visits they may need to make to campus.
 - Do not remove any personal items from the deceased member's room. Do not let members enter the room. Temporarily move the deceased member's roommate to another room in the house and allow only authorized personnel to enter the room. If possible, keep the door locked. Ask Student Advocacy to ask the family what their wishes are with regards to the member's possessions. You may offer to pack them in boxes, but the family will more than likely want to do this themselves. Before they arrive, make sure any borrowed items are returned. When they arrive, have empty boxes available and offer to help. Understand that this is a difficult time for them and they may want privacy. Do not hold or conceal items or information to save feelings.
 - Coordinate member attendance at the funeral or memorial service. It is, of course, proper to send sympathy cards and notes, flowers, etc. Most of your general fraternities have a memorial ritual pertaining to the chapter. Check your own individual procedures and offer it to the parents in advance of final arrangements.

IN CASE OF FIRE

- ❑ Each chapter providing common housing should take each of the following steps on a quarterly basis:
 - Create a rooming chart that assembles the house floor plan.
 - List the residents of each room directly on the floor plan. Note any information next to the individual's name that may become important to the fire department (i.e., crutches, physical challenges, etc.).
 - If your chapter utilizes a sleeping dorm, note the placement of beds and who is assigned to each on the floor plan; this is in addition to the room assignments.
 - Maintain a list of cell phone numbers for each person living within the facility.
- ❑ Make two copies of the document. Give one to your next door neighbors (even if they aren't a Greek chapter). Keep the original in a publicized place (head resident's quarters, chapter president's room, house mother's room, or the foyer). Should a fire break out, you will need to assist the fire department in determining if anyone was left in the facility, and if so, where they might be found. The floor plan can be of great benefit at a point when chapter officers may not have time to recall numerous names and rooming situations. The cell phone list will allow you to contact folks in case you were unable to grab your cell phone as you evacuated the building.
- ❑ Each chapter providing housing should hold a timed fire drill each quarter. A planned escape route and an alternate route should be permanently affixed to the back of the door of each room.
- ❑ Select/Identify a common meeting place outside of the facility at which all members will meet if a fire occurs. This can be a tree or a neighbor's porch, etc. This will help in finding everyone after evacuation.
- ❑ If a fire occurs:
 - All members should meet at the pre-identified common meeting place outside of the facility. At that point, you should get a copy of the rooming list and you should take attendance. Make note of any individuals who are missing and determine whether they may still be inside the facility. These steps will have to happen as quickly and as efficiently as possible.
 - One representative of the chapter should transmit information to the fire department. Other officers should begin calling those individuals identified in the general emergency procedure listed above. A listing of necessary numbers should be kept with all copies of the floor plan.

- Keep chapter members together. Under no circumstances should any member of the chapter return to the burning building. Nothing is more important than your lives.
- Again, maintain established lines of authority. The fire department and/or police will not deal with numerous people giving instructions.

HAZING

- Hazing is contradictory to the mission and values of Greek letter organizations. Brotherhood and sisterhood is based upon trust, friendship, and common goals. Membership is not a proving ground for belonging.
 - If you discover that hazing is occurring within your chapter, you must take immediate steps to stop the activities. Notification can occur in several means.
 - Notify your chapter advisor and Ohio Union Greek Life Office regarding the alleged hazing incidents. Efforts may be made to keep your name from the incident, but that is not always possible.
 - You can also anonymously divulge details of the hazing. This is not a preferred method but can be effective. Dates, times, who was present, location, and actions taken are all important in anonymous accusations. The more detail included the more likely action can be taken, even without a name to put with the allegations.
 - In almost all hazing cases, an investigation will occur. A chapter should begin the process of conducting its own investigation.
 - Work with your chapter advisor to notify your national organization (regional director or national office) regarding the incident.
 - Your national office will want to coordinate with the chapter to conduct its own investigation. Cooperation with representatives from your national organization during the process is essential.
 - Cooperate with Ohio State Officials who may request to conduct their own investigation.
 - Prepare members for what may happen. Expulsions and suspensions of membership are very likely outcomes for anyone involved in the hazing as well as many chapter officers. New members who allowed themselves to be hazed may not be allowed to join the organization. The organization may be suspended for a given period of time. All are possible outcomes of the investigation.

- Regardless of outcome, preventing hazing is important. Severe injury or even death can result from hazing incidents, even if this is not the intention. True brotherhood or sisterhood is bettering our fellow members. Getting your organization in trouble is a better outcome than explaining the death of a member due to our actions.

PLEASE NOTE:

In any emergency, use extreme discretion and caution in your actions and statements. The realities of a crisis without a doubt can be gruesome and harsh. We would hope none of you ever need to use these procedures. If however, a tragedy does occur, following these procedures should ease the situation for all concerned.

IMPORATANT NAMES AND NUMBERS

CHAPTER ADVISOR

Name: _____

Phone: _____

HOUSE CORPORATION BOARD MEMBER

Name: _____

Phone: _____

GRADUATE CHAPTER PRESIDENT / REGIONAL ADVISOR

Phone: _____

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Phone: _____

SENIOR COORDINATOR OF GREEK LIFE

Ryan Lovell

(614) 688-4888 – work

(614) 460-1895 – cell

COORDINATOR OF GREEK LIFE

Sharrell Hassell-Goodman

(614) 247-8609 – work

(937) 478-3452 – cell

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE OHIO UNION

Kurt Foriska

(614) 247-5878 – work

(614) 496 -2465 - cell

ASSISTANT VICE-PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT LIFE - DIRECTOR OF THE OHIO UNION AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Tracy Stuck

(614) 688-4145 – work

STUDENT ADVOCACY (Business Hours) – 614-292-1111

24-HOUR RAPE HELPLINE – 614-267-7020

SAMPLE CRISIS SITUATION

It's early December and finals are upon us. Members of the chapter are up at all hours studying while others are blowing off steam in-between finals. At roughly 1 am, a fire breaks out within the kitchen of the off-campus house where many of your chapter members live. As the alarms in the building sound, members evacuate into the street. As they begin to gather outside, you as the chapter president know that you must take control of the situation. What do you need to do?

Following the plan we have outlined above...

- Someone should call 911 and report the fire in your house if this hasn't already been done.
- You should have a designated area where all chapter members (or your roommates) are to meet if anything happens within your house.
- You should have access to your chapter roster, contact list, and house floor plan.
 - If you did not have a chance to grab it when you evacuated the building, you should have left a copy with your neighbors, with your advisors or even in your car.
- Take attendance at the designated location. We need to figure out if anyone is trapped in the house and where. This is of utmost priority as the rescue workers put out the flames and find anyone who is trapped in the building.
 - Who is not present?
 - For those who are missing, where are they?
 - Call cell phone numbers that you have on the contact list and determine locations.
 - Ask other members if they know of the locations of missing members.
 - Don't take their word as completely factual as they may not know for sure. Their information should help you to locate anyone who may be missing.
 - Don't allow anyone to leave yet.
- As the fire department and rescue workers arrive, introduce yourself as the president (allow them to do their job) and tell them that if you can assist in anyway, just have them ask. Let them know who is unaccounted for and where in the house their room is (use the floor plan).
- Once you have assisted the rescue workers and fire fighters in locating folks, begin your phone calls to other constituencies.
 - Chapter Advisor
 - Greek Advisors
 - Your Greek Advisor will call other University folks as necessary.
 - Regional Advisor or Graduate Chapter Advisor if applicable.
- Determine your communication plan
 - The news media is going to be on-site quite quickly. They are going to want to talk to you or anyone from your chapter who is willing to say anything about what happened.
 - Work with your Greek Advisor or Chapter advisor to put a statement together about the situation. **DESIGNATE ONE PERSON TO TALK TO THE MEDIA.** Make sure other members know that they should refer all inquiries to the designated person.
- Work to notify all members of the chapter, even those who live out of house. They should avoid coming to the location of the house as this will just add more traffic and folks to an already chaotic scene.
- Coordinate with University Officials and your Chapter Advisor to notify parents of the situation.
- If injuries or deaths have occurred, follow the communication plan described above for those situations.
- Once folks are accounted for, allow chapter members to head their separate ways. Some may want to go home as everyone deals with loss (even if just the house) in different ways.
 - Put a plan in place for checking in with everyone within the next 24 hours.
 - Work with University official to find alternative housing.
 - They should have begun this process already, but once things have settled, begin asking about it.