BACKGROUND

The University currently has a Western Alert system using a number of notification elements to provide the campus community with information when an emergency or threat occurs. Western Alert includes the following elements:

- Voice messages over the fire alarm system (building enunciation) in academic and administrative and some auxiliary buildings,
- Sounding Big Ole’ steam whistle for outdoor alert – a signal to seek information,
- Sending text messages to everyone who has registered in web4u at MyWestern,
- Emailing every university email address,
- Posting a Western Alert message on the emergency communication webpage, emergency.wwu.edu, and the Western homepage, and
- Posting a message on Western’s Facebook page and Twitter feed.

Together, these notification elements bring the university into compliance with the Clery Act. Part of this Federal Law requires that higher education institutions provide timely warnings if incidents occur that pose a serious or ongoing threat to students and employees. These warnings must be accomplished in a manner likely to reach all members of the campus community. Western provides both timely warning and emergency notifications to help safeguard Western students and employees.

Activating different elements within Western Alert system takes time, as they require accessing different software and hardware systems, entering passwords and following various system-specific instructions. Without any delays for password entry, bringing up websites or activating fire panels, it takes well over 6 minutes to perform all these elements. When one considers that active shooter events are frequently over in about 5 minutes, this seemingly short delay is actually lengthy.

In addition, several current systems do not meet the needs of people on campus with hearing disabilities. For example, Big Ole has no visual component. In addition, Big Ole does not directly provide information to people outside, but only is a signal to seek information, a step away from best practice. Further, many of our building enunciation notification appliances have speakers but no amber strobe to alert that a non-fire emergency message is being provided.

CHARGE

The Emergency Notification Planning Group (ENPG) will develop a systematic strategy and approach to improve Western’s emergency notification systems.
DELIVERABLES. The deliverables constitute a plan for improving emergency notification on campus to include the following elements:

- Recommendations for enhancement and integration of emergency notification systems focusing on the following major elements:
  - Reaching persons with disabilities in a comprehensive way; and
  - Minimizing the time to send and receive emergency notifications via multiple means with a goal of a rapid, ‘one-button’ solution, while simultaneously ensuring that multiple means developed are likely to reach all students and employees.

- Recommendations for emergency notification system hardware, software and infrastructure elements that will integrate in the best way and to the extent feasible with existing software and hardware.

- Recommendations for notification coverage of the campus community, including evaluations of academic and auxiliary buildings and exterior locations on campus.

- An implementation plan for the recommendations with estimated costs, fund sources, and schedules for plan elements. These might include, but are not limited to: minor capital work, equipment and software purchases and installations, and one-time, integration work to connect new and existing systems; and,

- Recommendations for any related on-going operational staffing and costs including maintenance and operations with clear identification of operational responsibilities within the following areas:
  - Public Safety including Dispatch Services
  - University Communication and Marketing
  - Facilities Development and Capital Budget
  - Facilities Management
  - Information Technology including Telecommunications
  - Environmental Health and Safety
  - Emergency Management Committee
  - Other major stakeholders and delegated authorities (e.g., deans, directors and department heads)

- Recommendations for changes, if any, to organizational unit responsibilities to streamline ongoing operations and/or improve services, including the possible development of emergency notification policies and procedures.
MEMBERSHIP

Associated Students President or Vice President for Student Life
Linda Beckman, Division Director of Budget and Administration, Enrollment & Student Services
Rick Benner, Director, Office of Facilities Development and Capital Budget
Paul Cocke, Director of University Communication and Marketing
John Furman, Director, Facilities Management
John Lawson, Vice Provost for Information Technology
Ted Pratt, Dean of Students
Darín Rasmussen, Interim Director, Public Safety / University Police Chief
Brian Sibley, Manager, Campaign Communications
Sue Sullivan, Chair, Director, Environmental Health and Safety
Sara Wilson, Special Asst. to the Senior VP / Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services

Attendees as resources and/or substitutes:
Bill Managan, Assistant Director of Operations, Facilities Management
Ed Simpson, Assistant Director, Facilities Development and Capital Budget

CHAIR

As shown above, the Chair is the Director of Environmental Health and Safety. The Chair approves agendas, and convenes and presides at meetings of the ENPG.

MEETINGS

Meetings are called by the Chair. The ENPG begins meeting in June 2013. It is anticipated that the ENPG meets approximately every two to three weeks when all members are available, with a minimum of one week’s notice. An outside consultant is anticipated to be used in plan development, and meetings will be adjusted accordingly as the plan is completed. Upon completion of the basic planning document, the committee will stop meeting unless needed for guidance as the plan is implemented.

REPORTAGE

The ENPG reports to the Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs, who will share the group’s recommendations with the other Vice Presidents and the President for possible action.

BUDGET

Use of a consultant is anticipated to advise the group and develop the emergency notification plan. Business and Financial Affairs will use one-time rebasing funds for this purpose.

TIMELINE

Plan Deliverable: Approximately December 2013