

Managing Emergency Events

Guidance for Managers

In the event of an emergency or major incident emergency services and/or University Security will assume control at their point of arrival at the scene. **The purpose of the following guidance is to help managers of the service area where the incident occurs:**

- to support those who may be in the vicinity of the incident;
- to minimise distress to witnesses of the incident; and
- to consider whether continued service delivery is possible and/or appropriate around the affected area while the incident is being dealt with by the emergency services/security

Local managers, in consultation with staff locally, as appropriate, will be supported in developing and establishing structures and procedures which are appropriate to their own circumstances although, by their nature, emergencies are sudden and unpredictable. For this reason, it is difficult to plan for them or to implement any pre-arranged emergency procedure to full effectiveness. Nevertheless, the immediate response and aftermath will need to be managed as well as it can be in the circumstances.

(It follows from the unpredictable nature of emergencies and the difficulty of managing them that individuals must take personal responsibility in these circumstances for their own wellbeing and that of others around them. They should make contact with their managers to find out what they should be doing and ensure they comply with any instructions issued by the emergency services and/or security.)

To this end the following guidance is given to managers:

- 1 Establish in advance who will be in charge and a communications hub for the area/service should there be an emergency. Ensure that local staff know the identity of that person and the location of the hub. Deputies may be needed eg for liaison with security and/or the emergency services; or for communications with staff and service users etc.
- 2 Once security have been called, follow the instructions of security staff prior to and while they are in attendance at the incident. If the emergency services or security determine that a facility needs to be evacuated or a service suspended, the local manager should assist in carrying out that instruction and/or put in place any appropriate measures to assist with the management of the situation. This may include arranging for any witnesses to be seen by the emergency services.
- 3 Consider what messages should be given immediately to staff, students and other visitors about the incident itself, any disruption to the facility/service and when normal service will be resumed (if known). Ensure that communications are consistent to avoid confusion and most of all, sensitive. Make sure front line staff are fully up to date with the latest information and know what messages are to be given. (Contact Marketing and Communications on **58088** as part of the local planning process at 1) above for advice on appropriate internal communication channels including social media such as Twitter and Facebook).
- 4 Staff should be advised not to communicate with the press or post messages on social media about the emergency, as external communications will be managed by Marketing and Communications. Local management should make contact with Marketing and Communications as soon as they are able after the emergency has come to light.
- 5 Some incidents can make unpleasant viewing. Consider whether the area where the incident has occurred can be screened off from public view and whether people traffic can be diverted to avoid the incident. Post temporary signage directing people away from or around the incident to avoid their witnessing potentially distressing circumstances. However, do not interfere with any scene without prior discussion with Security or the emergency services. Accept that it may not be possible completely to prevent viewing.

- 6 The incident may be shocking and upsetting to those who witness it and any others affected, who should therefore be treated sympathetically. Refer to the guidance available at [https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/documents/staff/HSU/Guidance-and-support-for-untoward-incidents-\(PDF---3MB\).pdf](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/documents/staff/HSU/Guidance-and-support-for-untoward-incidents-(PDF---3MB).pdf)
- 7 Contact Employee Support Services on **45117** to advise them of the incident and to request an adviser attend to help anyone who may be affected, whether directly or indirectly. Employee Support Services will advise the recognized trade unions of the incident (although the unions may already have been informed by members). Visit <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/wellbeing/employeesupportservices/index2.aspx>
- 8 When the incident itself has been dealt with and the emergency services/security have departed, consider sending a message to staff thanking them for their help/patience and possibly provide a sensitive debrief on the outcome of the incident. Acknowledge that staff may be upset and that they might need help to deal with post incident trauma. If any member of staff still feels upset after a few days, they might like to consider some support from the University Employee Support Services. Encourage an open atmosphere in which people feel able to discuss the event.
- 9 Let staff know that their feedback is important. In the heat of the moment things aren't always dealt with in the ideal manner. Staff may well have concerns that they would like to raise or ideas about how things could have been done better. Staff should be encouraged to share their thoughts with a manager and then be given feedback on how their concerns/ideas have been dealt with.
- 10 In the days and weeks after the emergency, local managers should review the effectiveness of their plans and make any adjustments which may be appropriate for any future emergency. Such reviews should be forwarded to the Head of Security and to the Assistant Director of HR (Workplace Wellbeing) to ensure that these guidelines are updated as appropriate.

Emergency procedure

Any person discovering an incident which requires the Fire Service must call Security Control on **44444**. If an ambulance or the police are required dial **999** directly and then inform Security Control that you have done so. For non emergency matters call Security on **43000**.

Adrian Buckley, Assistant Director HR (Policy)
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