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- *Thanks, and enjoy!*

In case of emergency

How prepared is your campus for an emergency or natural disaster?

Summary: A flash flood in the Texas Hill Country killed at least 120 people, with 160 left missing. Like other natural disasters, this event exposed critical gaps in emergency preparedness and aging infrastructure.

As extreme weather events become more frequent and severe, universities across the country will face the daunting task of protecting the students, faculty, and staff who live and work on campus.

Assignment: Investigate your university's emergency preparedness systems. How well would your campus handle a major emergency? Include a list of possible emergency events, from school shootings to floods to fires, and find out what kind of contingencies your university has in place for each.

This can be as wide-ranging or narrowly focused as you decided. It could be a comprehensive team project, or it could focus on just one aspect of emergency preparedness.

Produce a (story // package // social post // xxx) of (word count // length // time).

Potential sources:

- Campus emergency management director/coordinator
- University police and fire chiefs
- Facilities management director
- Students in higher-risk housing (residents of basement dorms, older buildings or flood-prone areas)
- Residence hall directors/RAs

- Local emergency management officials (county/city coordinators who would respond to campus emergencies)
- University risk management officer
- Faculty/staff with emergency response training
- Students with disabilities
- International students (who may not be familiar with local emergency procedures)
- Campus mental health director

Potential questions:

Emergency systems and technology

- What emergency notification systems does the campus use and how quickly can they reach all students/staff?
- How often are emergency alert systems tested, and what is the failure rate?
- Are there backup communication systems if primary networks fail?
- What areas of campus have poor cell coverage that could hamper emergency communications?
- How are students in remote locations (research sites, off-campus housing) included in emergency alerts?

Infrastructure vulnerabilities

- Which campus buildings are considered most vulnerable to natural disasters?
- What is the condition of the campus storm water drainage system?
- Are there buildings with known structural issues that could be dangerous during earthquakes or severe weather?
- How old are the residence halls and what safety systems do they have?
- Are there underground tunnels, basements, or other areas prone to flooding?
- What backup power systems exist and how long can they operate?

Preparedness and response plans

- When was the campus emergency plan last updated and how often is it reviewed?
- How many students and staff are trained in emergency response procedures?
- What evacuation routes exist and are they clearly marked and maintained?
- Where are emergency shelters located and what is their capacity?
- How would the campus handle prolonged emergencies (multi-day power outages, extended shelter-in-place)?
- What coordination exists with local hospitals, fire departments, and emergency services?

Training and drills

- How often does the campus conduct emergency drills and what scenarios do they practice?
- What percentage of students and staff participate in emergency training?
- Are international students given special orientation on emergency procedures?
- How are students with disabilities included in emergency planning and drills?
- What training do RAs and student staff receive for emergency situations?

Resources and funding

- What is the annual budget for emergency preparedness and has it changed in recent years?
- Are there deferred maintenance issues that could worsen during emergencies?
- What federal or state funding has the university received for emergency preparedness?
- How has the campus preparedness changed since COVID-19?
- What emergency supplies are stockpiled and where are they located?

Historical and comparative analysis

- What emergencies has the campus experienced in the past and how well did response systems work?
- How does your university's preparedness compare to peer institutions?
- What lessons learned from other campus emergencies have been implemented?
- Have there been any "near miss" incidents that revealed system weaknesses?

Potential documents to request:

- Campus emergency response plan
- Emergency notification system testing records
- Building inspection reports and maintenance backlogs
- Emergency drill participation rates and after-action reports
- Budget allocations for emergency preparedness (past five years)
- Insurance claims related to campus damage from natural disasters
- Correspondence with local emergency management agencies
- Student complaint records related to emergency systems
- Facilities condition assessments for high-occupancy buildings

Story development tips:

- Consider creating a timeline of how long various emergency responses would take
- Map campus evacuation routes and identify potential bottlenecks
- Compare your campus policies to peer institutions or national best practices
- Include specific examples of infrastructure concerns you can observe firsthand
- Calculate the cost per student of emergency preparedness spending

- Test emergency systems yourself where possible (try calling emergency numbers, check if alerts reach your devices)

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