



CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN A CROSS-CULTURAL SETTING

International Student and Scholar Services

NAFSA

Association of
International Educators

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Responding to a Disaster in the University Community

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Disasters that strike a university community can disrupt the normal infrastructure of an institution and severely limit access to affected areas for an extended time. The university could suffer catastrophic destruction causing the campus to lose power, communication systems to shut down, and a required evacuation of the entire campus. To ensure that safety provisions are in place prior to such an event, the international student and scholar services office can utilize this checklist to proactively

prepare staff and students for a disaster and engage an effective response, whether the university is directly or indirectly affected.

For additional guidance and resources on ways to formulate and implement a response to a disaster within the university community, read “Responding to a Disaster in the University Community” in *Crisis Management in a Cross-Cultural Setting*, which can be purchased online from the [NAFSA bookstore](#).

CONDENSED CHECKLIST

Prepare for a disaster:

- Identify your campus emergency plans.
- Plan for contact among staff and your international population in event of an emergency:
 - Retain an updated staff directory.
 - Ensure your office has various communication mechanisms.
 - Identify staff members with advanced technical skills and communication strengths.
- Keep passwords in safe locations both at home and at work.
- Retain records and make records accessible on secured/shared files and with a back-up system.
- Be connected to other campuses.
- Collect emergency contact information of international students and scholars.
- Educate international students and scholars about the procedures for severe weather and other events for your specific region/location and include disaster preparedness information in their orientation materials:
 - Bring in safety experts.
 - Prepare students and scholars for weather “test” alarm sounds and sirens.
 - Identify the signage of shelter locations.
 - Instruct your students and scholars on how to receive information or who to contact in the event of an emergency.
 - Encourage students and scholars to keep documents and valuables safe.

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CONDENSED CHECKLIST

- Inform students and scholars on how to evacuate:
 - Explain customs and location specific expectations.
 - Give realistic estimates of what it will cost to evacuate.
 - Take only the most valuable (monetary or sentimental) items.
 - Use social networking to disseminate planning information and to maintain contact.
- Identify evacuation challenges with transportation and limited driver's licenses.
- Expect the unexpected.

Disaster response:

- Activate an incident response team and plan:
 - Set up the operations of your office.
 - Inform of where and how to reach representatives of the international student and scholar services office.
 - Designate a point of contact to be involved with Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) and other government officials, exchange partners, consulates/embassies, and sponsoring agencies to report updates.
 - Communicate to the international population, including student applicants and expected scholars.

- Determine the scope of the problem:
 - Use technology.
 - Use networks.
- Proactively communicate information on the situation:
 - As soon as possible, help students and scholars notify others of their well-being.
- Provide outreach:
 - Compile or make known existing information on resources.
 - Schedule information sessions.
- Identify the immigration options for those impacted based upon federal guidance:
 - Review past federal directives during natural disasters.
 - Provide documentation on event that can be included as evidence.
 - Update Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) records to retain nonimmigrant status of students, scholars, and dependent family members.
- Research and provide students and scholars with available financial resources:
 - Identify health insurance provisions.
 - Document and itemize physical losses.
 - Identify available financial options.
 - Coordinate with campus fundraising efforts.

- Identify federal/state relief that may restrict or limit funding to nonimmigrants.
- Understand Internal Revenue Service (IRS) provisions.
- Voice the needs of international students and scholars.
 - Be a cultural resource.
 - Arrange for access to residences.
 - Identify resources for help with mental health issues.
 - Realize the recovery itself takes much time and prepare yourself and your international population.

Response to a disaster when you are not directly impacted:

- Learn about what is being done during the current situation and help accurately communicate such efforts.
- Identify volunteer opportunities to help.
- Communicate fundraising efforts.
- Provide immigration assistance and expertise.
- Assist displaced students/scholars by bringing them on your campus or in your area.
 - Locate safe housing.
 - Confirm services and connections.
 - Provide transportation.
 - Identify volunteers
- Be of support.