

MEMORANDUM

May 17, 2010

Dear members of the university community,

Three days after the Kendall Berry tragedy, I conducted a management incident review. I confirmed my feeling that first responders did an excellent job. FIU police, Miami-Dade Police and fire rescue arrived within minutes of the original call. However, I was not satisfied with the alert system.

I asked College of Law Dean Alex Acosta to conduct a review of our emergency alert system, which we had had no occasion to use in a live criminal incident before the night of Kendall's death.

Dean Acosta has concluded his review and has prepared a report that contains specific recommendations as to how we can improve our alert system and our emergency management plans and procedures consistent with established best practices. He has made several recommendations, all of which we will follow, but one of them requires the participation of each one of us: Increase university community awareness of the emergency management plan and implement a policy through which all members of the university community are automatically signed up for the Panther Alerts emergency text messaging system.

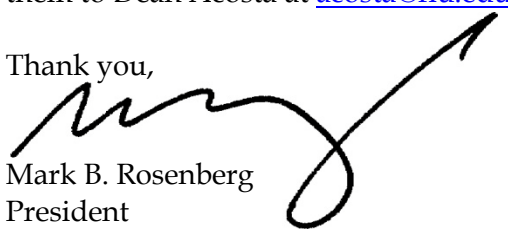
I have reviewed his report very carefully and today I am instructing senior leaders of our university to move swiftly to put in place the procedures, technologies, and training to improve our readiness to cope with any future emergencies. For more detail, <http://news.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/MBRDirectivesEAlertSystem.pdf>.

Below you will find the cover letter Dean Acosta sent me with the report, as well as his executive summary. The full report is available at <http://news.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Final-Report-Cover-Letter.pdf>.

My sincere appreciation to everyone who participated in putting together this comprehensive and timely assessment of how we reacted to the events of March 25, 2010. In particular, I'd like to thank Dean Acosta for taking on this project and completing it in such a short amount of time.

I ask everyone to take a moment to review these documents, become more aware of the systems that we have in place and keep abreast of modifications and improvements that will be made in the near future. If you have any comments or recommendations on this report, please direct them to Dean Acosta at acosta@fiu.edu.

Thank you,


Mark B. Rosenberg
President

May 14, 2010

Dear President Rosenberg:

On April 1, you asked me to lead a review of our current emergency response alert systems, and, by the end of the Semester, to present you with recommendations to improve our emergency response alert system capability and capacity. Enclosed is my report.

As you observed, the students, staff and first responders are to be commended for their rapid and focused efforts to help Kendall Berry during the altercation of March 25, 2010. The incident was one of senseless violence and tragedy, and one from which lessons can be learned. Among these lessons is the need for our university community to continuously review our emergency response plans, seeking potential improvements consistent with the newest response technologies and best practices.

FIU is in many ways a small city. Our university community is more populous than many cities within Miami-Dade County. Our combined campuses' student population exceeds 40,000 and our faculty and staff number more than 5,000. Nearly 11,000 students take courses at night at one of FIU's campuses, and nearly 3,000 FIU students now live on campus, facts that must be considered in planning emergency response alert systems.

FIU is foremost a public educational and research institution. This imposes on us obligations of openness, flowing both from our public status and from traditional notions of academic freedom and free exchange of ideas. I have tried to keep these principles in mind when making recommendations for improvement.

This report, obviously, is only a first step, developed within a short time frame. It is merely a starting point for discussing and implementing potential improvements. I hope it is helpful, and I remain available to discuss its content with you or your designee.

Sincerely,

R. Alexander Acosta
Dean, College of Law
Florida International University

An Overview of, and Recommendations Regarding, Florida International University's Emergency Response Alert Systems

I. Executive Summary.

At 9:03 p.m., on March 25th 2010. Miami-Dade 911 received a call regarding an altercation outside the FIU recreation center. Rescue 29, located at 351 S.W. 107th Avenue, responded and arrived on scene at 9:08 p.m.

In the minutes and hours to follow, individual staff at FIU did their jobs, and did them well. Dispatch coordinated first responders. FIU Police took charge of the crime scene, identified and apprehended possible suspects. The staff in housing and residential life responded quickly, providing heightened security and counseling to those in the residence halls.

This review focuses on one part of that evening's response, and specifically on the emergency response alert system. As part of that evening's emergency response, an InformaCast informational alert issued at 10:24 p.m. At 10:28 p.m., a Panther Alert message issued. The Panther Alert written and InformaCast audio messages read: WE HAD A FELONIOUS ASSAULT BY THE RECREATION CENTER SUSPECT AT LARGE TUNE INTO LOCAL MEDIA FOR MORE. The InformaCast message was broadcast audibly over the Modesto A. Maidique Campus' Voice over IP telephones, external speakers, emergency phones and emergency call boxes. The Panther Alert message was sent to over 21,000 system subscribers.

Following the events of March 25th, President Rosenberg commended the students, staff and first responders for their rapid and focused efforts to help Kendall Berry and the FIU community that evening. President Rosenberg expressed dissatisfaction, however, with the emergency response alert system. Accordingly, he directed this review, to develop recommendations to improve the emergency response alert system capability and capacity. Reflecting his desire to implement change expeditiously, he directed that the review be completed by the end of the semester.

The evening of March 25th was the first use of the emergency response alert system during a live criminal incident. From this, several lessons may be learned. This emergency response technology is consistent with best practices and has the capacity to work well. The system's performance, nonetheless, can be improved. A low Panther Alert subscription base, a delay in issuing the alert, and technical problems with the alert transmission that night reduced the emergency response alert system efficacy. This review recommends emergency response alert policy and systemic changes intended to help get the alert out faster and to more people.