

MU EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What do you consider a threat to campus?

ANSWER: Threats to campus are any event, manmade or natural, that threaten the safety and security of our students, faculty and staff. Examples include weather-related emergencies, bomb threats, and criminal activity on or near campus.

Q: Why wouldn't you send a text alert during a bomb threat?

ANSWER: Text messages are sent when the entire campus is under threat. A bomb threat is usually localized to a building or a specific location. The beacons and computer desktop notification are the communications tools used to notify people in the buildings that are threatened. As soon as MUPD becomes aware of the threat, officers are dispatched to the site where they secure the building and its perimeter.

Q: Why can't you send a text to a certain group of people? (For example, just students, or the occupants of certain buildings.)

ANSWER: We continue to investigate the possibility of doing this. Our current system does not have the technological capability to separate individuals into certain groups based on phone numbers or location. Additionally, we are unable to tell when a student has entered a parent's number into the system.

Q: Why aren't you using all of the tools in your arsenal for any threat just to assure that you keep everybody safe? Wouldn't it be better to be safe than sorry?

ANSWER: The MU emergency notification system is not a public news source. The system is a set of tools for police and MU administrators to communicate with the entire campus or a specific portion of the campus, providing information about a potential threat along with recommendations on what actions should be taken.

We are very judicious when choosing which notification tool(s) to use during a crisis. We want to reach a target population in an effective and efficient manner. We also work to assure that those receiving the alert read the message and follow the recommendations. Law enforcement and emergency responder experience and numerous studies show that over-notification causes people to begin to ignore warning messages. Therefore, MU restricts campus-wide warnings to situations where the threat impacts the entire campus or the location of the threat can not be pinpointed.

Q: How often do you review or test the system?

ANSWER: The emergency notification system is tested multiple times each year. MU's emergency management office conducts regular drills that review current plans and policies, while also testing the emergency alert system. The entire campus is involved in these drills at least once each semester.

We also review each major threat after it is over and determine if we should make any changes to our policies and procedures, which includes our emergency alert system.

Q: How do I register for the system?

ANSWER: Students can register for emergency notifications through their accounts on myZou. <http://mualert.missouri.edu/whatToDo/update-students.php>

Faculty and staff can register for notifications through their accounts on myHR.: <http://mualert.missouri.edu/whatToDo/update-faculty-staff.php>

Q: Can parents register for the system?

A: Our systems do not currently allow parents to sign up for MUAAlert, but we are taking these requests into consideration in future technology decisions.

Q: How can I make sure MU can't call my cell phone in the middle of the night?

Answer: When registering for the system, students, faculty and staff can choose which types of alerts they want to receive. You can edit the information at any time, removing or updating phone numbers. You also can opt out of receiving any notifications.

Once an emergency notification has been made, where can I find further information?

ANSWER: Once a notification has been sent, we will post updated information to <http://mualert.missouri.edu> This website will be updated periodically during a crisis with the latest information available. This site, along with the <http://munews.missouri.edu>, are the only official sources of information or verification for the public and the news media.

Please do not use or pass along any information from other websites or social media accounts. Information from other sources cannot be verified.

What should I do when I receive an alert?

ANSWER: Any of the alert tools utilized will contain a message recommending actions. Please follow those actions and do not call the MUPD for additional information. Dispatchers need to be free to respond to other health and safety emergencies and to obtain additional information concerning the emergency event. As new information is received, it will be posted on MUAAlert.missouri.edu, posted on MU's official social media sites, and sent to local media.

Who is responsible for updating mualert.missouri.edu?

ANSWER: A team of communications professionals works closely with the MUPD and MU's emergency management office to update the MU Alert website as quickly as possible with accurate information.

The MU Alert website is the only official source of information or verification for the public. Please do not use information from other websites or social media accounts. Information from those other sources cannot be verified.

Who makes the decision to activate the MU emergency alert system?

ANSWER: Officials from MUPD and MU's emergency management office have the authority to activate the emergency alert system. Upon identification of a threat, officials make a decision to activate the appropriate communication tool(s) as quickly as possible.

Emergency alert system tools also can be activated automatically in the event of a weather emergency. When a weather warning from the National Weather Service is issued, the emergency alert system will be activated automatically.

Q: How are those individuals qualified to make decisions on when to activate the emergency alert system?

ANSWER: Officials with access to the system go through multiple training sessions and discuss when and how to activate the emergency alert system.

The MUPD is the *only* law enforcement agency in the state of Missouri accredited by both The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) and The International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA). MU police officers attend multiple training sessions each year, including sessions at the FBI's training academy. Extensive training provides prepared MU's police officers to be some of the best trained officers in the nation, capable of dealing with a variety of dangerous situations. They are experts in identifying when threats are credible and the best methods for alerting affected populations appropriately.

Why haven't you been using the emergency alert system in the past?

We have used the emergency alert system many times in the past. As technology has improved, we have added tools to the system. These additional tools have allowed us to more effectively and efficiently communicate with affected populations on campus during emergencies.

Q: Has crime increased on campus or in Columbia? Why are we hearing so much more about crime lately?

ANSWER: As communication and technology techniques have improved and become more instantaneous, the public is hearing sooner about crimes in the Columbia area through social media, which unfortunately is often unconfirmed and/or incorrect information. The result is false or partial information being shared quickly.

To repeat – the absolute No. 1 priority at Mizzou is the safety and security of our MU family. To meet the challenges of a changing communications environment, we have recently updated and improved our methods of communications so that we can provide the best, most up-to-date, confirmed information to our family members as quickly as possible. We ask for your cooperation as we continue to work hard to do so. And, we ask you to do your part by taking responsibility to take an active role in addressing your own safety and that of our campus.

Why can't my parents sign up for MUAAlert notifications?

ANSWER: Our systems do not currently allow parents to sign up for MUAAlert, but we are taking these requests into consideration in future technology decisions.