

OWL Ready



Communication Key to Continuity

Communicate, communicate, and, yes, communicate. Effective communication is important during normal operations, but during and after an emergency, it's even tougher and more critical. Try this at your next staff meeting: Ask everyone to turn off their phone, and then ask, "what's my phone number?" They'll get the point.

From a University perspective, having a back up plan to communicate to "your" stakeholders usually falls within three areas:

1. Departmental Workers
2. Key Institutional Contacts
3. Students

Technology continues to provide a wide range of communication systems, but we must plan for technology platforms to fail. Using alternative platforms, or even "old school" platforms, must be considered. Losing communication tools during and after an emergency complicates the response and continuity efforts!

We've all heard "have a back up plan," but what kind of back up plan? Here are a few ideas:

- Make, and regularly update, a paper copy of your contacts. Have a copy in your office and home. Losing your cell phone, or just the contacts, is something that would degrade your ability to reach out to those you need during and after an emergency.
- Text: Remember, if the phones are "tied up," a text message can usually get through.
- Social Media: Although not a particularly good way to communicate departmental updates, it can be a valuable way for over-all updates. Ex, "We are currently experiencing phone issues, but will regularly update over social media."
- OwlReady: Use KSU COOP Portal (OwlReady) to regularly update critical contacts. Although there is a section specifically for your important Contacts, you can also add documents to the Key Resource section. OwlReady is also the place to list and plan "Communication" as an Essential Function, which would include the details on what to do if you lost the ability to communicate using normal means (phones, email, etc.).
- Have a Family Communication Plan: This has been covered in past OwlReady Tips, but it is important to be able to connect with family. If you can't communicate with family during and after an emergency, it adds to the stress of getting back to normal operations at work!

And, of course, expect to have communication issues after hours (nights and weekend) when you're not on campus, or not have as much support for your needs. (It gets late early out here. Yogi Berra).

