



Office of the President

August 2018

Pepperdine's Planning for Emergencies

To Students, Parents, and Family Members:

Each year I write a letter to brief parents and students regarding the University's emergency response plans. We are not disaster-prone, but there seems to be a price to be paid for this beautiful place in which we live, learn, and work. The mountains behind us and the ocean in front of us are the reason for our remarkable vistas; they are also geologic and natural reminders of the fragility of this environment.

We know our campus well. We know the capabilities of our staff and how our infrastructure responds to extreme conditions. Our emergency preparedness planning encompasses a broad range of both naturally-occurring and man-made contingencies, including earthquakes, heavy rainfall, and wildfire. National and international events, like Virginia Tech, Hurricane Katrina, strife in complex international settings, and pandemic episodes, have also shaped our planning as we study and glean best practices from these situations. At home and also abroad, Pepperdine takes great care to protect the safety of our community through careful planning and the strategic placement of resources.

Pepperdine University is like a small well-equipped city: with fire trucks and emergency response personnel; capable facilities personnel on campus 24/7; medical supplies, food, and water; health and counseling centers; and numerous other resources upon which to call if needed in an emergency. Additionally, faculty and staff who live on campus are present and active in assisting the University as it addresses challenges of any kind.

We have taken steps to be our own "first responders" until state and local agencies reach campus, and we are prepared to be self-reliant in the event that utilities and other infrastructure services are disrupted. When the University activates an emergency response plan, staff are trained to gather support personnel, disseminate information, and, if necessary, open a previously planned relocation center. A practiced and articulated protocol exists to evaluate risks and to make decisions in the best interests of the Pepperdine community and our campuses. These protocols are reviewed and updated at least annually.

You should know that in the middle of an emergency at Pepperdine, there is a calm that news organizations often do not share with the public. In my view, it is the difference between perception and reality. One of our greatest tasks is to transmit accurate information from, to, and within the campus community. Our emergency mass notification system, Everbridge, allows the University to send a message to faculty, staff, and student cell, office, and home phones, as well as text messages and emails. The system is dependent upon our community members (your students) entering their correct contact information into the University web portal which feeds into Everbridge.

Also, the latest updates and decisions of the University's Emergency Operations Committee are posted on Pepperdine's Emergency Information website, <http://emergency.pepperdine.edu>. You may also call our Department of Public Safety at 310-506-4442 at any time during the day or night.

The only things which may impair our communications plans are things for which we simply cannot plan or control. Throughout all of this, our every effort is directed toward returning to safe and normal operations, including classes, as soon as possible.

We implemented the StepUp campaign to help us drive home the importance of looking out for one another, both in emergency situations and in daily life. Through the StepUp campaign, our students, faculty, and staff have received valuable bystander intervention and Title IX training that encourages participants to step up and speak up for those who may be in distress.

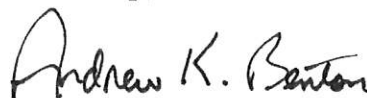
One instrumental tool in this effort is the LiveSafe campus safety smartphone application. The app allows users to submit emergency and non-emergency messages to Public Safety, either by phone or text, utilize SafeWalk, a person-to-person virtual security escort allowing users to ensure their loved ones reach their destinations safely, and see a full list of our emergency procedures. Importantly, the app works for users who are traveling abroad or participating in one of our renowned international programs.

Additionally, we partner with International SOS, a global emergency medical and security services firm that provides assistance to our students, faculty, and staff while traveling abroad.

Pepperdine maintains a multi-disciplinary threat assessment team which meets to address potential threats to the community. The team includes university leaders, members of our Counseling Center, outside experts, and law enforcement as appropriate. The group is experienced, well-trained, and always works with the best interests of the University community and the individual for whom the concern was raised at heart.

Recent planning revisions and careful preparation place us in a state of readiness as we move into this new school year. We all will be happy if those same plans are merely dusted off after an uneventful year, but we must be ready, and I believe we are. We have begun a truly remarkable school year and look forward to completing it successfully, safely, and in a manner most beneficial to the student you have entrusted to us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew K. Benton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Andrew K. Benton
President