

Pepperdine's Emergency Preparedness

To Students, Parents, and Family Members,

Each year, Pepperdine prepares a letter like this one to better inform our parents and students of the University's emergency response plans. Most years, these letters share what Pepperdine does to keep our students, faculty, and staff safe. In other years, like last year when the University community responded to significant crises, they serve as a reminder of how important awareness and emergency preparedness are for the entire University—and the role each member of our community has in managing our collective emergency response.

Pepperdine University is like a small well-equipped city. We have fire trucks and emergency response personnel; capable facilities personnel able to respond 24/7; medical supplies, food, and water; health and counseling centers; and numerous other resources available to us in an emergency. Additionally, faculty and staff who live on campus are present and active in assisting the University.

Through diligent training, equipping, studying, staffing, and commitment, we are prepared to be our own "first responders" until local and state agencies reach campus. 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, our expertly trained staff gather support personnel, disseminate information, and, if necessary, open pre-planned relocation centers. The University has an exhaustive and well-rehearsed protocol to evaluate risks and make decisions in the best interests of both our community and our campuses.

From personal experience I can attest that in the middle of an emergency at Pepperdine, including events as large as those we had last year, a sense of calm permeates our community. Though it may not be known by the public or reported on the news, we know it is because we have done our due diligence to prepare accordingly. One of our greatest tasks is to transmit accurate information from, to, and within the campus community. Our emergency notification system, Everbridge, allows the University to send voice messages to the cell, office, and home phones of every faculty, staff, and student, as well as deliver text messages and emails. The system is dependent upon each of our community members entering his or her contact information into the University web portal that feeds into Everbridge and students receive instruction on how to do so.

In addition, the latest updates and decisions of the University's Emergency Operations Committee are posted on Pepperdine's Emergency Information Page, <https://emergency.pepperdine.edu>. You may also call our Department of Public Safety at 310.506.4442 (non-emergency line) or 310.506.4441 (emergency line) at any time during the day or night.

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

Furthermore, we use the *StepUp* campaign to emphasize 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 themselves and others who may be in distress.

Another instrumental tool in this effort is the LiveSafe campus safety app, which allows users to submit emergency and non-emergency messages to Public Safety; 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 the University's emergency procedures. Importantly, the app works for users who are traveling or participating in one of our renowned international programs. We also partner with International SOS, a global emergency medical and security services firm that provides assistance to our students, faculty, and staff abroad.

Pepperdine maintains a multi-disciplinary threat assessment team that meets whenever necessary to immediately address potential threats to our community. The team includes University leaders, members of our Counseling Center, and outside experts and law enforcement when applicable. The group is experienced and well-trained, and it always works to serve the best interests of the University community and the individual for whom the concern was raised.

Our emergency plans are living documents, regularly updated to include the latest best practices adapted to best serve our community. In addition to learning from our own experiences, we also study disasters around the world to glean lessons learned and adapt them to our circumstances. These planning revisions and careful preparation place us in a state of readiness as we move into this new school year. We hope our emergency response plans remain unused, but we must be ready—and we are. All of us at Pepperdine are excited for the school year ahead, and we look forward to completing it successfully—and safely—with each student who has been entrusted to us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Gash". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

Jim Gash
President