



## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Federal Student Aid Programs  
Office of the Chief Operating Officer

**TO:** All FSA Employees

**FROM:** Theresa S. Shaw  
Chief Operating Officer

**RE:** Emergency Preparedness

**DATE:** February 25, 2003

I wanted to update you on what we have been doing to plan and prepare for a disaster or emergency should one occur during your workday. I want to assure you that we are doing all that reasonably can be done, and I will continue to update you periodically as information is available.

In addition to telling you what we have done so far, I also want to suggest that you consider taking steps to further prepare yourself.

### **STEPS ED IS TAKING TO PREPARE FOR AN EMERGENCY**

The Office of Management (OM) is the Education Department's lead office on this, coordinating with all appropriate federal, local, and defense authorities. OM regularly emails "Safety Updates" to all ED staff nationwide (such as the most recent, distributed February 19).

I have tasked our Acting CIO, Jerry Schubert, to coordinate with OM and also to lead two initiatives within FSA:

- The first initiative is working to make sure actions are taken NOW, immediately, while more detailed planning and preparation is being done. These actions are designed to help protect you in case of an emergency, and that is the Department's and my paramount concern.
- The next initiative is to review our continuity of operations procedures with OM and determine any enhancements that need to be made.

As a resident of the Washington, D.C., metro area, you know many authorities are distributing emergency preparedness information, and authorities are coordinating various responses should an event occur. The scenarios are many and planning appropriate responses is challenging.

That said, some of the steps we are taking include:

- Creating an FSA Crisis Management Team (CMT) and ensuring that proper procedures exist under which this team is activated and operates.
- Equipping key CMT members so they can be in direct contact with UCP building engineers at any time.
- Establishing a procedure for CMT members to quickly notify the UCP engineers to immediately turn off the air ventilation system, if that is the appropriate action in response to an emergency.
- Ensuring that we have basic emergency supplies on hand, such as batteries, flashlights, battery-operated radios and TVs, and first aid kits for UCP.
- Making sure there are identified safety coordinators for our 10 regional offices and procedures for communicating with them in an emergency.
- Reviewing emergency instructions with UCP Floor Captains and other safety volunteers.
- Reviewing and updating the UCP Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP), which is posted on the FSAnet homepage under “My Workplace.”
- Coordinating with OM, the Federal Protective Service, our Security Guard service, and building engineers to work out procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency.

#### **“SHELTER IN PLACE”**

You need to know that in the event authorities report certain kinds of dangers, we may need to “seek shelter in place,” which means the security guards may “lock down” the building. (This is similar to the procedure to be used at many area schools-the same procedure used on 9/11 and during the recent Sniper scare.) There are approved procedures for this, designed for your safety. If you exercise your right to leave through a locked door, however, (which you would be allowed to do as long as your exit would not harm others), you need to know that you may not be allowed back in.

UCP has an emergency generator and emergency lighting is designed to help you get to and down the stairwells. In the event we are instructed to “seek shelter in place,” you should follow the instructions of the Floor Captains and other safety volunteers.

#### **PLEASE BE PATIENT WITH SECURITY**

During this heightened state of alert, we’ve asked the Security Guards to redouble their efforts to screen everyone coming into the building. I ask that you cooperate with the guards and follow their instructions. If doing so creates an inconvenience for you, I apologize and thank you for your patience and cooperation.

## STEPS INDIVIDUALS MAY TAKE TO PREPARE FOR AN EMERGENCY

Each of you can and should take action to prepare for an emergency. Here are a few key steps, but this is by no means a complete list:

- In the event of an emergency, **STAY CALM**. The various authorities don't agree on everything, but they do agree that people remaining calm can save lives and prevent injuries.
- Review the UCP Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP), which is posted on the FSA net homepage under "My Workplace." (Look for "Emergency Preparedness" to be added there soon. We'll post new and helpful info there.) This explains procedures for the evacuation of UCP in the event of an emergency. Make sure you know what to do in the event of an emergency, and discuss the plan with your manager and other staff in your office.
- You may choose to put together your own contingency supply kit and store it in your office or desk. The kit could include items such as bottled water, non-perishable food, toiletries, medicine you take on a regular basis, sturdy walking shoes, and a change of clothing. Remember to replace the water and food every six months or so.
- Let a co-worker or manager know if you have a chronic, potentially life-threatening illness or disability, such as diabetes, asthma, etc.
- Talk with your family and set up alternate transportation and communication plans, including what family members should do if you cannot get home for several hours.
- When we conduct periodic drills, please take them seriously and treat them with a sense of urgency. Follow the instructions of the Floor Captains and other safety volunteers during these drills.

For more info like this, you may visit the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Web site at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov).

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I am working to communicate this information in what I hope is a constructive, helpful way. As I've said, your safety is the Department's and my paramount concern. But I also have to acknowledge that we don't have all the answers. Not all of the procedures are in place yet. We all must do the best we can now, in the short-term, while working toward better preparation with the OM as it coordinates with all appropriate federal, local, and defense authorities to provide Department-wide information and direction.

So for now, my request of you is that in the event of an emergency, please stay calm and listen to and follow the instructions of people whose job it is to help keep you safe. These include your Floor Captains and other safety volunteers and the Security Guards downstairs.

Working together we will face any threat, and helping each other we will be all right.

We will keep you posted as this work moves forward. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to email them to FSA Communications and we will try to get them addressed promptly.