

# Valdosta State University

## Fire Response Plan

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**Revised:**

### **Overview**

Fire can be one of the most dangerous events, which can occur on a university campus. Fire prevention is preferable to fire fighting and University staff will report all fire hazards to the University Police Department.

The University buildings vary in construction, internal fire suppression capabilities, and ease of access. It is imperative that in the event of a fire, that we work together to provide a coordinated response to assist fire fighters.

### **I. Training**

All departments should train their personnel in fire prevention techniques, the use of portable fire extinguishers, and first aid. All staff should also be instructed in the location of fire exits in their building the exit plan for removing students and other personnel from the building in the event of a fire. *Staff and faculty should pay special attention to any; disabled employees or staff that would need assistance in exiting a building in the event of fire or natural disaster.*

### **II. Fire Response**

#### **1. University Police Officer locates fire**

##### **A. Evaluation**

When an officer locates a fire, the officer will evaluate the extent of the fire and determine the following:

1. Will a fire extinguisher be able to suppress the fire rapidly and completely?
2. Is the fire contained in a room or area that it can be contained (fire and smoke) if the fire extinguisher fails to suppress?
3. Does the officer have a clear path of escape if the fire extinguisher fails to suppress?

## B. Response

If the fire can be extinguished by the use of a fire extinguisher, the officer will do so. If the fire is located in a **mattress** the mattress will be removed from the building. If the fire was against a wall and the wall shows signs of burning, Plant Operations will be contacted to examine the area for damage to wiring and plumbing. If Plant is not available and the officer is concerned that the fire may have pierced the wall, the Valdosta Fire Department will be notified.

If the fire cannot be suppressed successfully, Dispatch will notify the Valdosta Fire Department to be in route. The responding officer will begin evacuation of the facility and coordinate fire department response.

## 2. Fire Reported to Dispatch

### Dispatcher Duties

1. Fires may be reported to Dispatch in any of these four ways:

Fire alarm system reports to University Police through the central monitoring station.

Phone Call to emergency number (5555)

Person's coming to the police station to report the fire.

Direct call to 7816

2. When notified of a fire, the dispatcher will notify the duty Commander and the method by which it was received; Alarm system; phone call, etc.). The dispatcher will immediately call the Fire Department.

The duty commander and the Valdosta Fire Department will be given the following information.

The location and type of building involved; Academic, Residence Hall, Chemical storage area, etc);

- a. The location of the fire (or alarm) in the building and how extensive the fire is.
- c. The number and type of any injuries reported.
- d. If any disabled persons are in the building.

**Note:** If additional, critical information becomes available the dispatcher will re-contact 911 and supply that information to them.

1. The Chief of Police and Director of Environmental and Occupational Safety will be notified once the Fire Department has been notified. The Chief of Police or designee is responsible for making calls to the University Administration.

## Responding Officer(s) Duties:

1. **Locating Fire** - It is the officer's primary duty to see if there is a working fire in the building. The responding officer will enter the structure to determine the existence, location, and extent of a fire, and any injuries associated with it. All information discovered by the officer will be provided to Dispatch who will relay it to 911. **Note:** *If officers can see heavy smoke or fire coming from a building they are not to enter the structure.*
2. **Fire Alarm** - If a fire is located and the building alarm system has not been activated, the first officer on the scene will activate the alarm. Responding officers will assist in the evacuation of the building but will not enter smoke filled areas. Responding officers will not reset the fire alarm until a thorough inspection of the facility has been completed.

**Note:** Shutting off the alarm is a signal that it is safe for people to return to the building. There is no way to tell them otherwise once they have started going back in.

3. **Request Additional Personnel** - If in the opinion of the shift commander that additional manpower is needed, the Chief will be contacted and assistance requested.
4. **Traffic Control** - The supervisor on duty will direct officers to clear traffic from the affected areas so as to allow for rapid Fire Department response. Once the Fire Department has arrived all roads into the area are to be blocked to any motor vehicle traffic.
5. **Access To Fire Scene** - *Police Line* tape will be placed around the structure on all accessible sides. Officers will stand on each side of the facility to prevent non-emergency personnel from interfering with fire suppression activities.
6. **Missing Persons** - If the structure is a residence hall, officers will work with Housing staff to determine if anyone is not accounted for. In non-residence halls employees will be surveyed to determine if anyone may still be inside. If it is determined that someone may still be in the structure this information will be forwarded to the battalion chief on the scene. University staff will not enter the building in an attempt to rescue those who may be trapped.
7. **Chain of Command** - The Battalion Chief from the City Fire Department is in command of the scene until the fire is extinguished. All officers will respond to requests from the Fire Chief as if it were a direct order from VSU PD supervisor. If directed by the fire department to perform a duty that takes an officer from a VSU Police assignment, the VSU supervisor is to be notified immediately.
8. **Update Dispatch** – The supervisor will keep the Dispatcher updated as to the progress of the fire, level of damage, fire suppression efforts, injuries/fatalities.

### **III. Activation of Command Center**

In the event a fire affects a major structure on campus, a Command Center will be activated.

#### **1. Direction and Control**

The President of the University or his/her designee will exercise direction and Control of Disaster Operations at Valdosta State University. **The VSU Chief of Police and the Director of Environmental and Occupational Safety (or their designee) will be utilized as *Operational Disaster Coordinators* for the President.**

#### **2. Establishment of a Command Center**

**The Command Center** will be established in close proximity to the fire scene.

**Staffing of Command Center** – Depending on the severity of the disaster, the type of facility involved, the Command Center will be manned by some/all of the following personnel:

- President
- Command Group
- Emergency Coordinator
- Dir. of University Police or designee
- Dir. Environmental and Occupational Safety or designee (Safety Officer)
- Dir. of Facilities or designee
- Public Relations Officer or designee
- Telecommunications Officer
- Human Resource Officer or designee

If appropriate, the following agencies will also be included:

Valdosta Police /Fire Department ..... Lowndes County EMA.....GEMA

Once the situation has stabilized, command personnel may leave the Center as long as a replacement with decision making authority is on site, or the person can be quickly located via radio or phone. Once the situation has stabilized, the Command Center will be activated in the Presidents Conference Room and University response will be coordinated from there.

*The following administrative personnel will be notified to respond to campus and activate their staffs as directed.*

Director of Food Service or designee

Director of Health Services or designee

Dean of Students or designee

### **3. Communication Systems**

The VSU PD Communications System the 800 MHz Facilities Radio System and other radio systems will be utilized to ensure contact with Campus Departments and assisting Agencies. Any radio system used during the operation will be registered with the Command Center and one of the radios assigned to the dispatchers in the Command Center.

### **4. Use of University Resources and Mutual Aid**

During the emergency or disaster, university departments will perform necessary emergency functions as provided in this plan. Mutual aid will not be requested until all available university resources and/or manpower have been depleted, or until resources are no longer available. All assistance provided to the University or by the University to the County or City will be in accordance with the Mutual Aid agreements signed by all three entities.

### **5. Personnel Rosters**

All responding emergency services personnel will report to the Command Center and sign in. It is important that an accurate roster be kept for all personnel who work during the crisis and recovery stage. The roster serves the following purposes:

1. Make assignments and arrange for replacements.
2. Allow communication operators to keep track of the on duty employees for safety reasons.
3. Provide documentation for the University to be reimbursed for hours worked if the incident results in a disaster declaration.

## **IV. Relocation – Residence Halls and Academic Buildings**

### **Residence Hall**

In the event that a fire in a residence hall requires an extended period of time to extinguish, or is made uninhabitable, the residents will be transported to a temporary shelter site. From this location the University will coordinate a response to see that the residents are fed, arrangements are made to obtain clothing, replace books and other documents, and provide for the medical and psychological needs of the residents.

## Shelter Sites

The locations for use as shelter sites are as follows:

1. University Center
2. Student Union
3. Student Recreation Center (SRC)
4. PE Complex

University Center will be considered the primary shelter site due to the availability of food service, parking, and limited access. The second choice will be PE Complex and then Student Recreation Center. If a shelter site is activated, the department responsible for the location will be informed as soon as possible.

## 2. Transportation

Residents will be transported by use of a shuttle bus. If it is a large group that needs transportation, the Parking Services Supervisor will be called for a rapid response to campus.

Multiple trips may be required and Housing or Student Life and University Police must coordinate the movement of the residents from the Hall to the shelter site.

*Residents must not leave the area without checking-in with the Housing Staff. A list of all residents must be maintained showing who is in the shelter and those who have found shelter with friends. This list will be maintained so that the University can account for all residents.*

## 3. Shelter Operations

Student Housing personnel will staff the shelter during the entire time that it is in operation. An information desk will be staffed so that residents can sign-in when they arrive, and parents can check-in upon their arrival.

Student Health will be available to deal with medical and psychological problems.

The shelter is considered a secure site and VSU Police will limit access and provide security until the shelter is closed. Only residents of the effected hall should be allowed in the shelter.

University Communications will coordinate media access and will have staff on site until the shelter is closed.

Dining Services will be contacted to provide drinks and snacks during the time that the shelter is in operation.

## **Academic Buildings**

In the event that an academic building is damaged or destroyed by fire, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the dean for the respective college and Registrar will be notified as soon as possible.

Depending on the extent of the damage the President will either cancel classes for a period of time to allow for cleaning and repair, or relocate those classes to other facilities.

Whatever decision is made, flyers will be created and the staff from the effected College and VSU staff will distribute them over the next several days following the fire, outside the damaged structure.

## **Building Security**

Once a fire has been extinguished and released by the fire department, the room/building will be physically secured by Facilities to maintain the integrity of the scene until our onsite Risk Insurance person, insurance investigators and the State Fire Marshall arrives, VSU Police will post an officer at the site. The campus locksmith, at the direction of the Chief of Police, will change the locks to a non-master lock to further restrict entry. A key will be provided to Risk Management.

## **V. Arson**

If a fire is determined to be of suspicious origin, the following actions will be taken.

### **Dispatchers:**

The following personnel will be notified immediately in the following order:

Chief of University Police

President

Vice President

Director of Environmental and occupational Safety

Risk Insurance Manager

## **Officers:**

If an officer comes onto a fire scene and evidence exists which would indicate arson or if the cause of the fire is not readily apparent, the following actions will be taken.

**Scene Security** - secure the scene immediately after the fire has been extinguished.

Do not allow anyone into or around the scene after the overhaul is completed by the fire department. Tape off the scene with CRIME SCENE tape and post an officer(s) at the location until relieved

**Field Interviews** - Officers will attempt to interview any person who is at the scene as to what they know about the fire and if anyone was in the area prior to the fire. Officers make a special effort to interview anyone who has been seen at a previous fire or seems to be overly interested in the proceedings of the fire department activities. All field interviews will be recorded and turned over to Chief of Police at the end of the shift.

**Investigators** - All officers assigned to protect the scene will stand by for the arrival of the investigators. When the investigators arrive they will be in charge of the scene. Uniform personnel will be under the direction of the investigators until told by the investigator they may leave.

The investigator(s) will be responsible for evidence collection, follow-up interviews, and prosecution of the case.