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Severe Weather Emergency Plan

The following plan establishes the procedure and appropriate contact personnel for students, faculty, staff, and guests to follow in the event that the Pittsburgh area experiences a severe weather emergency.

NOTIFICATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

The **National Weather Service** uses the following terms to alert the public to "weather conditions which, may or already have produced tornados."

Severe Thunderstorm Watch: Weather conditions exist which could produce thunderstorms in the area. These storms can produce a tornado.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning: A severe thunderstorm has been observed and is moving toward the area.

Tornado Watch: Weather conditions are such that a tornado could develop in the area.

Tornado Warning: A tornado has been sighted and is moving toward the area.

When notification of a severe weather watch/warning is received from the National Weather Service, University Police dispatch will immediately initiate their severe weather watch/warning notification plan, calling key departments. Each area is then responsible for communicating key information to students, faculty and staff in their administrative areas according to their established mechanisms of official communication.

During uncertain weather conditions, when possible, individuals should listen to radio or watch local television weather broadcasts as well as being alert for municipal tornado siren notification (an indication that the possibility of tornado is imminent), and/or listen for outdoor broadcast of warning messages via the university wide-area emergency broadcast system (WEBS).

All building team leaders, departmental heads, directors and/or supervisors should familiarize their staff with the content and terms of this policy. In addition they should discuss this emergency plan with their staff at the beginning of each academic semester, and with new personnel upon beginning work. All members of the campus community, particularly staff and faculty are urged to become familiar with the characteristics of their respective buildings so they can better promote the safety of all students, faculty, staff, and guests should severe weather conditions occur.

Storm Refuge Areas: Signage designating STORM REFUGE AREAS (black background with white lettering) are installed in all campus buildings. Floor plan drawings (pdf format) for each university owned building showing storm refuge areas are available to university faculty and staff via GUS (log-in required) under the PSU

Internal Documents tab. Storm refuge areas are illustrated in these drawings by single hash lines applied to the corresponding rooms and corridors.

PROCEDURE

1. The following procedures are to be observed during severe weather warnings.

a. **Severe Thunderstorm Warning:** Sirens will not sound. Supervisors should monitor the situation if uncertainty exists regarding weather conditions. All building personnel should be alert for damaging wind or hail. If the likelihood of damage exists, staff and building users should evacuate the areas of danger and move to designated storm refuge area as available or to the lowest level of a building to seek a protected inner hallway or area that does not have exposed windows.

b. **Tornado Warning:** If it appears that a tornado is imminent, the Sirens will continue until the event has passed and the all clear is given.

ALL ACTIVITIES OCCURRING WITHIN BUILDINGS OR UNIVERSITY GROUNDS WILL CEASE IMMEDIATELY AND REMAIN SUSPENDED UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE TORNADO WARNING HAS ENDED.

All individuals present should go to designated storm refuge areas as available or to the lowest level of a building to seek a protected inner hallway or area that does not have exposed windows. Building team leaders, area supervisors and managers or maintenance supervisors will utilize available staff to occupy "key locations" (stairwells, doors, etc.) and guide people. Large open areas with wide roof spans such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, cafeterias and ballrooms must be checked and cleared of people. The safest areas usually are lowest levels and away from glass windows. People should not seek shelter in laboratories, which contain hazardous substances.

c. **If Areas Are Evacuated:** Where applicable, employees are instructed to secure all monies, lock all cash registers and secure computer terminals and valuables unless doing so would jeopardize their safety. The custodial personnel on duty will lock off all elevators and direct building users to use only safe stairwells. Freight elevators can be used for disabled persons in wheelchairs. (See Building and/or Campus Evacuation Plan). All persons should remain under cover until the all-clear is given by local radio and/or television stations, the National Weather Service Radio System, law enforcement personnel or other official sources of information. Tornado warning sirens continue to sound intermittently through the duration of the warning with only brief gaps in continuous sound to avoid malfunction of the equipment. Cessation of the sirens indicates expiration of the warning and indicates an all-clear indication. Expiration of tornado warnings can also be confirmed by contacting the University Police dispatch at 235-4624.

2. **If Damage is Observed** after the all-clear is given, the staff members in charge should observe the following procedures:

a. If it is an emergency on campus, call University Police dispatch by dialing **911** (via university phone) or 235-4624 (via cell or off-campus phone).

b. If damage to the building leaves the area uninhabitable, emergency personnel will close the area and cancel functions until further notice.

3. In the Event Personal Injury Occurs as a result of severe weather, the following procedures should be observed:

- a. Call University Police dispatch by dialing **911** (via university phone) or 235-4624 (via cell or off-campus phone). Advise the dispatcher of the location and extent of any injuries. Information regarding respiratory or cardiac failure and/or severe bleeding should be reported.
- b. Normal emergency first-aid procedures should be followed.
- c. If a telephone is not available, someone should be sent to a working telephone to report any injuries. If possible, this person should be a police officer or staff member.
- d. **DO NOT RETURN TO A BUILDING ONCE EVACUATED**, until told to do so by University official or emergency personnel.

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Pittsburg State University