CHAPTER CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

The following suggestions are made in the event a tragedy or crisis occurs either on or off chapter property. Examples of such situations include but are not limited to:

- The death of a member of guest
- Serious injury of a member or guest
- A fire in the chapter house
- Hospitalization
- Members arrested for selling drugs
- Drunk driving accidents
- Firearms in chapter house

These suggestions are designed primarily for chapters with houses, but can easily be adapted and followed by any group. Some chapters may already have similar crisis procedures. This document will supplement those procedures by providing names and telephone numbers of local contact people who can be of assistance. Prompt reporting often prevents minor incidents from developing into major problems as well as ensures that you are ready to defend the chapter if lawsuits result.

MEMBER EDUCATION

- Be certain that all members of the chapter know the President is in command of every emergency situation. The President should immediately contact the Chapter Advisor and Director of Greek Life for advice and counsel.

- In the event that the President is absent, the next highest should be consulted and in command of the situation. All chapter officers should know where to find a copy of the chapter's emergency procedures.

- All members must know who is in charge and be prepared to follow instructions. Include a review of the chapter's procedures in your member education program. The house manager and Chapter Advisor must also be aware of these procedures.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

1. If a crisis occurs, close the chapter house at once. The President cannot give instructions and maintain control if members are leaving and strangers are entering. Permit only your members and appropriate officials to enter. Assign one or more responsible members to calmly guard the door.

2. In nearly all situations, the President’s first telephone call will be the 911 emergency number. Briefly and calmly explain the situation so that appropriate emergency personnel (police, fire, ambulance) can respond. If the emergency situation is a fire, your alarm may or may not automatically bring a fire truck; therefore, assume the worst and immediately call the fire department.
3. Call your chapter advisor:

Name:_________________________________________

Phone:_________________________________________

Call Office of Greek Life staff:

Director of Greek Life: Kristin Torrey, 615-429-4637

ALWAYS CALL, DAY OR NIGHT, IF YOU ARE IN DOUBT AS TO WHETHER A SITUATION IS SERIOUS OR NOT. We will discuss the situation with you and in all serious cases will be at the house or chapter meeting place in a matter of minutes.

4. Notify your chapter’s Executive Office and when appropriate, file an incident report to be sent to your chapter headquarters.

5. While on the scene of an incident, get the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all parties involved, as well as any witnesses. Should the police be conducting an investigation at the scene, never interfere with their investigation.

6. Assemble your members in a group. Depending on the situation, out-of-house members may need to be called in. Explain that there is an emergency and that the house is closed. Ask them to cooperate in halting outgoing phone calls until the situation is under control. **Members are not to speak to anyone outside the chapter.** Remind members not to discuss details, speculate on events or otherwise elaborate on the situation until police, university officials, and your Chapter Advisor have arrived. To do so would only create unrest and other unnecessary concerns. **The President will be the official spokesperson for the chapter to the authorities.**

7. While the membership is gathered, it is important that they remain calm and realize that the situation is under control. If there is a need to inform members who are not present, the President may delegate this duty to a responsible member.

8. **No one should speak to the press or give any statements without first consulting your Executive Office and/or Vanderbilt News and Public Affairs.** Should a press release be necessary, a careful statement will be written through the Executive Office and/or Vanderbilt News and Public Affairs in consultation with the chapter. When appropriate, only the chapter president should speak on behalf of the chapter.

**SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH OF A MEMBER**

- Do not notify the parents. In the event of a serious injury or death, medical or police personnel (who are trained in this area) will notify the family. You should always have parent/guardian information on file available for the proper authorities. After you know that the family has been notified, it is appropriate for a chapter representative to call and share your concern.
If the situation is a death outside the chapter house, do not announce it until a university official or fraternity staff member has arrived to help. Be very careful about giving out any information.

In the event of death, do not remove any personal items from the room. Do not let members enter the room. Temporarily, move the roommate to another room in the house. If possible, keep the door locked. Ask the family what their wishes are in regard to the member’s possessions. You may offer to pack them in boxes, but it is more likely that the family will want to do this themselves. Before they arrive be sure that any borrowed items are returned. When the family arrives, have empty boxes available and offer your help. Understand that this is a difficult time for them and they may want privacy.

You will want to coordinate member attendance at the funeral or memorial service. Along with your Chapter Adviser, discuss with the family or the family's religious representative the possibility of conducting the fraternity ritual memorial service.

In the case of serious injury or illness, find out the visitation wishes of the family and coordinate this with members of the chapter.

In the case of a suicide attempt, with or without serious injury, do not assemble your members or call parents.

GENERAL FOLLOW-UP

The notification of further administrators and faculty will be arranged by the Director of Greek Life and other university staff members.

In any emergency, use tact and caution in your statements to members and others. Where possible litigation may follow, be cautious about jumping to conclusions or speculation.

University staff is always available for member counseling and general assistance. Do not hesitate to call for help. Individual and group counseling is strongly recommended following any crisis situation. No matter how well things appear to be going, counseling and other support services are both wise and appropriate. The Psychological & Counseling Center can be help with any kind of counseling and can be reached at 615-322-2571.

All of this, no doubt, seems grim and harsh. Everyone hopes that no Chapter president will ever have to use these procedures. But sadly, that hope is not realistic. Tragedies do occur. Usually, they are unpredicted. You can ease the situation for all by being prepared to follow these procedures and guidelines.

Adapted from the Alpha Epsilon Pi Crisis Management Plan
Important Phone Numbers

VUPD (Emergency): 615-421-1911 (from a cell phone) or 1-911 (from a campus landline)

VUPD (Main line): 615-322-2745

Ambulance: 911

Fire Department: 615-862-5421

City Police: 615-862-7400

Vanderbilt Hospital: 615-322-0160 (Emergency Services)

Kristin Torrey cell: 615-429-4637

Chapter Advisor: _______________________

Executive Office: _____________________

Greek Life Office: 615-322-2048