NOTICE – January 25, 2013

Updates to Emergency Notification System
On January 25, 2013 the U of M will be moving to an improved system for delivering emergency text messages. All staff and students who previously registered their cell phones to receive a text message in the event of an emergency will be migrated to the new system, however you will still be asked to “opt-in”.

I did not subscribe to UMERG so why am I getting an “opt-in” request?
The original UMERG database was started in 2008 however it did not have a simple “opt-out” feature. Students and staff who had originally subscribed to the system may have left the University or given up their phone without ever unsubscribing or notifying the University. It is likely you have a phone number that once belonged to a student or staff member who had subscribed at one time. If you do not want to receive UMERG alerts, do nothing. Delete the message.

To learn more about the U of M’s Emergency Notification System, read on.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

UMERG is the University of Manitoba’s emergency notification text messaging system. It is one of several ways the University provides emergency information to faculty, staff, and students. UMERG has been a component of the University's emergency communications system since 2008.

The system will only be used to distribute information regarding emergencies that dictate immediate action or to convey critical, time-sensitive information. Examples of situations in which UMERG may be activated include severe weather (tornado warnings or other significant weather events), building evacuations, dangers requiring lock-down or shelter-in-place, or other emergencies requiring immediate action.

The message will direct you where to go for further information or what action to take. Following a warning, the alert system may be used to provide additional messages or an “all-clear” announcement. UMERG will also be tested on a routine basis. System tests will be announced using the campus email system
The emergency notification system also provides information updates through other, less rapid means, to keep you informed until the incident is resolved.

Scroll through the different ways that you can receive notifications should an emergency incident happen at the University.

**EXAMPLES OF THE VARIOUS NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS ON CAMPUS**

**Umanitoba.ca**: The University's website main-page is the source for updated information during an incident. It will be updated after an emergency notification message is created, however it may be delayed while detailed information is confirmed.

**Red/Emergency Phones**: This technology allows us to reach more than 840 classrooms, elevators and hallways throughout campus where personal phones may be off, and e-mail may be unmonitored. These paging devices activate within minutes of receiving a message.

**Callpilot**: This system can reach staff through their desk phones. Due to the large numbers of phones and the resources required to call them, this tool may take over an hour to complete its task.

**Text Messaging**: The U of M can send SMS text messages to you during an emergency. Standard messaging rates will apply. See below on how to opt in. This technology allows us to reach you off-campus, and outside buildings. Due to the realities of SMS infrastructure and the complexity of relationships between wireless providers, SMS messages may take over an hour to be received.

**E-mail**: The U of M mail server can send e-mail to all U of M student and employee accounts during an emergency. Check your e-mail often. This feature allows us to send large amounts of information to all U of M citizens. Due to spam-prevention infrastructure that is core functionality in all e-mail services, this e-mail may be delayed for over an hour.

In all cases, when you received a message, please share it with those around you, including coworkers and peers.
TEXT MESSAGING
Opting in to text messaging

On January 25, 2013 the U of M will be moving to an improved system for delivering emergency text messages. All subscribers currently in the database will be migrated to the new system, however you will still be asked to “opt-in”. The message will appear as follows:

To confirm opt-in to UofM SMS alerts, reply JOIN UMERG. Approx 2 msg/mo. Reply HELP UMERG for help Msg&data rates may apply

To "opt-in" and continue receiving emergency text messages, reply with:

JOIN UMERG (standard messaging rates will apply).

This will ensure your wireless provider knows you wish to receive these urgent messages and will help prevent the messages being labeled spam. You will receive a text message in case of a campus-wide alert. You will also receive up to two test text messages per year.

NOTE: Be careful when replying that your auto-correct typing feature does not ‘correct’ UMERG to another word (i.e. USER).

If you do not want to remain in the database, do nothing. Simply ignore or delete the message.

If at any point you wish to opt out, simply text STOP UMERG to 30000035 from your handheld device. If you cease your subscription you will still continue to receive notifications through building alarms, e-mail, and web-page updates when you are on campus.

If you want to find out more about the service, text HELP UMERG or go to sms.benbria.com for terms and conditions of use.

FAQ’s ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY’S EMERGENCY SYSTEMS

I did not subscribe to UMERG so why am I getting an “opt-in” request?
The original UMERG database was started in 2008 however it did not have a simple “opt-out” feature. Students and staff who had originally subscribed to the system may have left the University or given up their phone without ever unsubscribing or notifying the University. It is
likely you have a phone number that once belonged to a student or staff member who had subscribed at one time. If you do not want to receive UMERG alerts, do nothing. Delete the message.

**Do the messages come in any other languages?**
No, the messages come only in English. If you have an idea about how we can improve this, we'd love to hear from you.

**I can't remember if I signed up to UMERG. Can I check?**
If you want to subscribe, simply send a message to 30000035 from your handheld device, with JOIN UMERG in the text line. This will ensure you are registered.

**How will the system notify me personally?**
The system is capable of sending email and text messages to students. Email messages will be sent to your University-supplied address. Text messages will go to the text device at the number you provide.

**What kinds of emergencies is SMS and email messaging used for?**
Only for large-scale events that have implications for many people. This could include severe and imminent weather events such as tornadoes, “man-made” disasters such as fires or chemical releases or acts of violence. It will NOT be used for general crime alerts or other situations on campus that do not pose an imminent threat or danger. It will not be used for non-emergency communications such as campus event announcements, class reminders, news or advertisements.

**How quickly can you actually send out a warning?**
Messages can usually be issued within minutes. Information must be verified by a University of Manitoba Emergency Manager before inputted into the notification system for delivery. Different delivery methods have different expected delivery times.

**I've heard that email and SMS can be slow in an emergency.**
When large volumes of messages are being delivered at once, the various systems can slow down. For this reason we ask everyone to **pass on the message** to those around them who may not have received it.
How will I recognize an emergency communication?
Text messages will show the following code on the top left: 30000035
Emails will come from “UMERG”. While you cannot reply to the sender (no-reply@umanitoba.ca), further information can be obtained online at www.umanitoba.ca/emergency.html.

Do I have to pay for the text messages you send me?
The University of Manitoba does not charge a fee for the service. However if you do not have a text messaging contract as part of your cellular service, there may be a small charge for any text messages that you receive. You should check with your cell phone carrier to determine what these costs may be. However, text messaging will only be used for time-sensitive emergency messages, so the number of texts you receive will be minimal.

What would an emergency message contain?
In a very few words, a typical message would indicate what is happening, where it is happening, and what you should do for your own safety and the safety of others.

I only check my U of M email address occasionally. Is that useful in a critical emergency?
The email component of the emergency notification system is only one of several methods we use to communicate with you. Other methods include the red/emergency phones; Callpilot to office phones; University webpage; etc

Will the system be available to all U of M campuses?
All campuses have systems for emergency notification. E-mail, building paging systems, text messaging, and the U of M website are all tools that are available to all campuses.

There are things that could go wrong – the phone and computer lines could go down; people could ignore their phones etc. Are you putting all your faith in email and text messaging?
No. The University will continue to use all existing alarm and warning systems. These include the red/emergency phones, fire alarms, radio messaging to field staff, the University website, and, when appropriate, public service announcements through the local media.

The University is also in the process of developing an Emergency app that can be used with smart phones and we are preparing to install an outdoor notification system that will have three siren towers located on the Fort Campus.
It seems strange to use SMS when many students are asked to turn their devices off in class. Does this mean it is okay to leave my phone on?

Please continue to follow your instructors’ requests. As stated above, messages to email and text device make up only part of the University’s notification system.

Why can it take text messages so long to get to my phone?

There are issues with some cell phone companies and the aggregators used to send mass text messages. Due to the realities of SMS infrastructure and the complexity of relationships between wireless providers, including issues similar to 'spam' e-mail, SMS messages may take over an hour to be received.

If I don't have my mobile phone or my e-mail in front of me, how else will I know an emergency is happening?

Building fire alarm systems remain the principal communication device for fires on campus. The red/emergency phones can also broadcast emergency voice messages to 840 endpoints across both campuses. Before the alarm is activated, you may see, smell, or hear an emergency underway. Further, your colleagues, classmates, professors, teaching assistants, support staff and others may tell you about it. You may also see or hear First Responders attending the emergency or travelling to it.

Why should I sign up for UMERG alerts?

Because students, faculty and staff are constantly on the move, this system provides the flexibility for you to receive emergency messages on multiple devices. UMERG will be used to distribute important information regarding emergencies that dictate immediate action and to convey critical, time-sensitive information.

Will I receive UMERG alert messages if I don’t sign up for them?

No. However you may have got an “opt-in” request if your number was in the old SMS database that was migrated to the new text messaging system in January 2013. If you do not subscribe to UMERG, do nothing. Delete the message. If you are on campus, you will still receive emergency messages via your university issued email address.

If I change my phone number, how do I update it?

Simply send a STOP UMERG message to 30000035 using your current device and enter JOIN UMERG using your new device. This will remove your old number from the database and add
your new one. Whenever your phone number changes, it is very important that you update this information with UMERG to ensure you continue to receive alerts through the system.

**How soon after I sign up will I receive emergency messages?**

You will be able to receive emergency messages immediately after signing up and Opting-in to the system. You will get a confirmation message welcoming you to the U of M SMS alerts. If you do not get a welcome message it is possible that your auto-correct typing feature ‘corrected’ UMERG to another word (i.e. USER). Check your opt-in message. If this occurred, just re-send your request.

**Will my contact information remain secure, and will it be used for any other purposes?**

No personal information is collected, only your cell phone number. However this information is securely maintained and will not be shared. It is only used to distribute information regarding emergencies that require immediate action or to convey critical, time-sensitive information. For more information on the U of M’s privacy policies [http://umanitoba.ca/admin/vp_admin/ofp/fippa/](http://umanitoba.ca/admin/vp_admin/ofp/fippa/)

**How can I recognize messages from UMERG?**

- **Email** – Emails sent from UMERG will come from “UMERG”. While you cannot reply to the sender ([no-reply@umanitoba.ca](mailto:no-reply@umanitoba.ca)), further information can be obtained online at [www.umanitoba.ca/emergency.html](http://www.umanitoba.ca/emergency.html).
- **SMS Text Messages** – Text messages will come from UMERG at “30000035”.

**Where Can I find additional information about existing emergency procedures?**

Information about existing emergency procedures and emergency preparedness can be found on the Risk Management home page ([http://umanitoba.ca/admin/vp_admin/risk_management/](http://umanitoba.ca/admin/vp_admin/risk_management/)). During an emergency, details and updated information regarding the specific emergencies will be provided on the U of M home page at [www.umanitoba.ca](http://www.umanitoba.ca). If you have any other questions or need assistance, send a message to [emergency@umanitoba.ca](mailto:emergency@umanitoba.ca)

**How do I know if the system is working?**

The UMERG system will be tested periodically. During a test you will receive a test message from UMERG. This will allow us to ensure the system is functioning properly and users are receiving the messages. Other than those test messages, UMERG will only notify you when there is an imminent threat or danger to your safety.
You will also receive a regular text message reminding you that you have subscribed. No action is required.

**What will happen when UMERG is activated?**
UMERG will begin sending thousands of messages and e-mails simultaneously to subscribers' devices. Read these messages carefully and follow the instructions they contain. Additional instructions may follow throughout the emergency situation, so keep your device accessible or check the University’s web page for updates.

**Does UMERG work with my cell phone provider?**
As long as you subscribe to a Canadian service provider registered with the *Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association* (CWTA), such as Bell, MTS, Rogers, Telus, Virgin Mobile, etc. UMERG can contact any phone number, regardless of the service provider.

**Will we still receive campus-wide e-mails about emergency situations on campus?**
Yes. UMERG is in addition to the University’s other emergency notification tools, which include mass e-mails, red/emergency phone paging devices, and more. Those tools will continue to be used for the situations that warrant their use.

**Am I required to sign up for UMERG?**
No. UMERG is a free, voluntary, opt-in service. All members of the U of M community are encouraged, but not required, to participate.

**My parents / spouse / children want to receive notification of campus emergencies. Can they sign up?** Originally UMERG was limited only to U of M staff and students. However it will soon be available to private contractors and visitors on campus as well.

**Is text messaging the best way to receive alerts?**
While text messaging is one way to receive emergency notifications, its effectiveness is inherently limited by the capacity of cell phone service providers to deliver these messages. The university also uses e-mail addresses of subscribers so as not to rely on text messaging alone to receive emergency notifications. You are responsible for any fees charged by your provider for text messaging.

**Questions or Comments?**
If you have any questions about the any of our emergency notification systems, please send a
message to emergency@umanitoba.ca