

**CRITICAL INCIDENTS COMMUNICATION**

Section: External Relations (ER)

Subject: Communications

Legislation:

Effective: January 29, 2013

Revision: September 1, 2016 (reformatted); May 27, 2020

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**President and CEO****POLICY**

The policy of the Board of Governors is to ensure communications activities enhance SAIT's reputation among key stakeholders by supporting a comprehensive and effective public and community relations and communications strategy.

**PROCEDURE****DEFINITIONS****Critical incident**

An event, usually but not always sudden or unexpected, that involves a real or perceived threat to personal safety or loss of/damage to SAIT facilities, causing a material disruption to normal operations. This includes but is not limited to fires, bomb threats, chemical spills, natural gas/ammonia leaks, weapon-related incidents, extreme weather, data breaches and medical emergencies.

**Facilities**

Any building, ground or area that SAIT owns, uses or occupies and that is under the jurisdiction of SAIT's Board of Governors.

**Incident commander**

The individual who has overall authority and responsibility for conducting operations relating to a particular incident and who

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is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site, including developing strategies and tactics and ordering and releasing resources.

**SAIT campus**

SAIT's main campus and all satellite campuses.

**GOVERNING PRINCIPLES**

1. Effective communications are a critical component of SAIT's Emergency Response Plan, allowing SAIT to respond to and recover from any critical incident.
2. SAIT critical incident communications will:
  - a) Align with SAIT emergency operations.
  - b) Be integrated with the Incident Command Systems of SAIT and police, fire and emergency medical services ("Emergency First Responders").
  - c) Establish clear roles and responsibilities.
  - d) Feature multiple communication strategies and intentional redundancies to address on-campus and off-campus stakeholders, or segments thereof, in the event of a crisis.
3. The Communications department will focus on providing timely instruction that encourages safe behavior, generates information that assists the operational response and protects SAIT's reputation.
4. Communications will consider the implications for ongoing SAIT campus operations; SAIT's numerous campus locations; the unique circumstances of those in residence; the constant presence of SAIT campus visitors, suppliers and contractors; the interests of key partners and supporters (for example, industry panels and donors), the Board of Governors, parents of students, alumni, the SAIT Students' Association, the provincial and municipal government, post-secondary peers and communities neighboring SAIT.
5. Communications will acknowledge the important role media can play in assisting an effective response. During any critical incident, the sole media spokesperson for SAIT is SAIT's president and CEO, unless otherwise assigned by the president and CEO or designate. SAIT employees and board members who are contacted by the media should direct the media to Communications.

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## PROCEDURE

1. If, in the judgment of SAIT's manager of Security and Emergency Management Services or delegate an incident occurs on the SAIT campus that cannot be dealt with effectively through regular channels or other specified procedures, the matter will be referred to the incident commander or designate to activate SAIT's critical incident response.
2. The incident commander will notify and brief the communications lead or designate according to critical incident protocols to determine the initial communications strategy, including whether or not to communicate internally and externally, and if so, specifically to whom, the messaging, the communication tactics, spokesperson(s) and timing.
3. All communication actions are subject to the incident commander's approval; they will be executed and tracked by Communications.
4. In accordance with critical incident protocols, the incident commander will also notify and brief the following individuals:
  - a) The CFO and vice president, corporate services, to inform that individual of the incident and status of the response.
  - b) Health, Safety and Environment lead, to discuss potential safety and regulatory issues and identify required action.
  - c) Management Council liaison, to inform that individual of the status of the response and to gain awareness of potential academic operational implications that may affect emergency response plans.
  - d) Government Relations lead, if deemed necessary, to inform that individual of the status of the response, in order for that individual to liaise with the government as required.
5. The CFO and vice president, corporate services will inform the president and CEO and other vice presidents of the incident and the status of the response.
6. The president and CEO will inform the chair of SAIT's Board of Governors of the incident and the status of the response.
7. The communications lead will:

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- a) Activate the Emergency Communications Team to the level deemed appropriate considering the potential for escalation of events and the anticipated resource requirements.
  - b) Report directly to SAIT's incident commander as a member of SAIT's Emergency Response Team (ERT), providing ongoing counsel regarding suggested internal and external communication tactics based on the status of the response and feedback generated through audience monitoring (including mainstream and social media). The communications lead will execute and track all communication tactics and messaging that the incident commander has approved.
  - c) If any of the Emergency First Responders are activated in the course of the response, SAIT's communications lead (and SAIT's Emergency Communications Team) will assume the role of support to the Emergency First Responders communications lead. In this situation, working with SAIT's incident commander, the SAIT communications lead will continue to ensure that SAIT's interests are represented and that timely communication is maintained with all SAIT audiences.
  - d) At the conclusion of any response, as deemed by the incident commander, the SAIT communications lead will ensure an 'all clear' is communicated to all SAIT audiences.
8. In the aftermath of an incident, the communications lead will:
- a) Contribute to the debrief and the incident commander's report.
  - b) As appropriate, distribute a briefing document of the incident (prepared in consultation with the incident commander) to the Board of Governors, senior executive, and Management Council.
9. When not responding to an incident, the communications lead will:
- a) Conduct regular rehearsals and simulations to ensure readiness of SAIT's emergency communications personnel, communication vehicles and processes.
  - b) Initiate and support campus-wide initiatives contributing to SAIT's preparation, recovery, mitigation and prevention of critical incidents.
  - c) Proactively identify and execute continuous improvements to incident response communications.

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## POLICY/PROCEDURE REFERENCE

- ER.1.1 Institutional Communications policy
- ER.1.1.3 Communications with Government procedure
- ER.1.1.4 Communications to SAIT Alumni procedure

**PROCEDURE**

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