

# After-Action Report

Residence Life Severe Weather Tabletop Exercise

July 24, 2018

## Executive Summary

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The tabletop exercise held on July 16, 2018 to consider the impact and management of a severe weather incident during the overnight hours in residence halls successfully answered several questions that will improve operations and actions taken by Residence Life staff during such an event. Generally, the importance of gaining advanced knowledge of impending severe weather for hall directors, resident advisors and their supervisors was highlighted and the actions the university will take as a whole were clarified.

Evacuation locations varied depending on the building, but sheltering options for apartment residents were discussed as a primary concern due to the lack of low level interior spaces in these apartment complexes.

The following report includes areas for improvement identified during the exercise and its follow-up activities:

## Sheltering Locations

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- Reiterate the community solution of allowing upstairs neighbors to shelter in downstairs apartments, but stress that allowing others into one's apartment is not a requirement for first floor residents
- Explain to residents the reasoning behind opening the Student Union during a Tornado Watch, and stress that people should move to this location well ahead of impending weather
- Residents should understand that a Severe Thunderstorm or Tornado Warning means that it is too late to move to the Student Union, and that the most interior space of the building you are in is the best option with such short lead time

## Communications

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- Some hall directors noted that they used the GroupMe app to pass on information they receive from the university or Residence Life department. This could become standard practice.
- Participants noted that mobile phones were the primary source for weather Watches and Warnings
- There was some discussion on the use of weather radios, but care should be taken on location and programming of these devices, so that they only relay warnings for our area and are not in a location where they will be ignored
- USEM will work with Residence Life to program existing weather radios and identify the best locations

## Training & Exercises

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- Participants expressed interest in a storm spotter or radar class through the National Weather Service (NWS)
- Residence Life will gather a list of willing participants, and USEM will coordinate with NWS Memphis to schedule the course
- The similarities in actions taken during fire drills as compared to those taken when weather threatens were noted, particularly knocking on doors and advising residents of the threat and the sheltering location