

# Performance Audit Report

## Emergency Preparedness at Dickinson State University

Report No. NP-003-16b

October 19, 2017

**JOSHUA C. GALLION**  
**STATE AUDITOR**

**Office of the State Auditor**  
**Division of NDUS Performance Audit**

**LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND FISCAL REVIEW  
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

***Senator Jerry Klein – Chairman***  
***Representative Chet Pollert – Vice Chairman***

Representatives

*Bert Anderson*  
*Patrick Hatlestad*  
*Mary Johnson*  
*Keith Kempenich*  
*Gary Kreidt*  
*Andrew G. Maragos*  
*Mike Nathe*  
*Marvin E. Nelson*  
*Wayne A. Trottier*

Senators

*Dwight Cook*  
*Judy Lee*  
*Richard Marcellais*

# Contents

---

<i>Transmittal Letter</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Executive Summary</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Objective</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Background Information</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Emergency Management Plans</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Continuity of Operations Plans</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Objectives, Scope and Methodology</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Purpose and Authority</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Objective of the Audit</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Audit Scope</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Relevant Laws, Policies, Contracts and Agreements</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Audit Results</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Statement of Objective and Conclusion</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Audit Methodologies</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Findings, Recommendations, and Responses</i>	<i>7</i>



STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
**OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR**  
FARGO BRANCH OFFICE  
1655 43<sup>rd</sup> STREET SOUTH, SUITE 203  
FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA 58103

## *Transmittal Letter*

---

October 19, 2017

State Board of Higher Education  
Members of the North Dakota Legislative Assembly

We are pleased to submit this performance audit. The subject matter of this audit included certain aspects of emergency operations at Dickinson State University.

We conducted this audit under the authority granted within North Dakota Century Code Section 54-10-30. Included in the report are the audit scope and objectives, findings and recommendations, and management responses.

The in-charge auditor for this audit was Alec Grande, CPA. Craig Hashbarger, CPA, CIA, CFE was the audit manager. Inquiries or comments relating to this audit may be directed to the audit manager by calling (701) 239-7274. We wish to express our appreciation to the staff and management of Dickinson State University for the courtesy, cooperation, and assistance they provided to us during this audit.

Respectfully submitted,

/S/

Joshua C. Gallion  
State Auditor

# *Executive Summary*

---

## ***Introduction***

Emergency operations and continuity of operations plans are essential elements of an institution's security policy. The purpose of our audit was to determine the nature and extent of Dickinson State University's policies and procedures regarding emergency preparedness. Following is a description of the objective and an overview of the findings.

## ***Objective***

- Does Dickinson State University have an effective strategy regarding the development and implementation of an emergency operations plan?

We determined that DSU has developed an emergency operations plan. However, several opportunities for improvement were identified regarding the development and implementation of the plan.

- Dickinson State University's collaborative planning team lacks members from across the institution. (pages 7-8)
- Dickinson State University lacks a formal emergency operations risk assessment process. (pages 8-9)
- Dickinson State University lacks documented goals and objectives regarding emergency operations. (pages 9-10)
- Dickinson State University lacks formal emergency training and plan exercise requirements (pages 10-11)
- Dickinson State University is not enforcing its policy for periodically reviewing and revising the plan (pages 11-12)
- Dickinson State University lacks a continuity of operations plan. (pages 12-13)

# ***Background Information***

---

## ***Introduction***

Institutions of higher learning, as with any other public or private entity, are at risk of being impacted by a variety of emergencies, ranging from natural disasters such as floods, blizzards and tornadoes, to fires, active shooter incidents, and pandemics. These disasters can, and do, result in injury and loss of life, as well as damage to infrastructure and business interruptions.

## ***Emergency Management Plans***

The State Board of Higher Education, in recognition of the importance of North Dakota University System's (NDUS) emergency preparedness, adopted Policy 906 (SBHE 906) effective May 16, 2012. SBHE 906 establishes the requirement for all NDUS institutions to "develop and implement comprehensive Emergency Management Plans." SBHE 906 defines an emergency management plan as "a comprehensive, integrated plan that addresses emergency preparedness, emergency management, disaster and emergency response and recovery, mitigation, and continuity of operations."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) states that emergency preparedness "establishes organizational readiness to minimize the adverse impact of these events by means of active responses to protect the health and safety of individuals and the integrity and functioning of physical structures." (Fundamentals of Emergency Management chapter 9 AEMRC). In other words, the purpose of an emergency management plan is to save lives, prevent or mitigate injury, and prevent or reduce damage to critical infrastructure. An emergency management plan also facilitates timely recovery and restoration of educational functions.

The federal government recognizes the importance of robust emergency management plans in the nation's colleges and universities. Accordingly, in 2013, the US Department of Education, in cooperation with six federal agencies, developed a Guide for Developing High Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE Guide). The IHE Guide recognizes that "postsecondary institutions are entrusted to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students, faculty, and staff who live, work and study on campus."

The term "emergency management plan" is used by SBHE 906, and "emergency operations plan" is used by FEMA and the IHE guide. Both terms can be used interchangeably for purposes of this report, but for the sake of clarity we will use the term "emergency operations plan," or "EOP."

## ***Continuity of Operations Plans***

In addition to risks of injury, loss of life, and property damage, emergencies can also cause an interruption of the organization's important functions. SBHE 906 defines continuity of operations as "a plan to assure the capability exists to continue essential agency or institution functions across a wide range of potential disasters or emergencies." In other words, a continuity of operations plan (COOP) is a plan in which the institution identifies its essential functions and identifies the means to carry out those functions if an emergency event occurs.

In 2009, FEMA, in coordination with its non-federal partners, issued Continuity Guidance Circular 1 (CGC 1), *Continuity Guidance for Non-Federal Entities*. CGC 1 states that “continuity planning facilitates the performance of essential functions during...emergencies or other situations that may disrupt normal operations.”

While a COOP is an important component of an EOP, the mission, goals and objectives of a COOP differ from those of an EOP. The EOP addresses all aspects of prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery, while a COOP focuses on continuing to carry out essential functions of the entity and maintaining them during and after an incident.

For example, if there were a fire in DSU’s Murphy Hall, elements covered by the EOP might include detailed evacuation instructions, emergency call information, and other information necessary to prevent and mitigate loss of life, injury and property damage. The COOP, on the other hand, might identify instruction of students as an essential function ordinarily performed in Murphy Hall. It might also identify alternate locations in which classes may continue to be held until either the building is restored to working condition, or more permanent alternate facilities can be located.

# ***Objectives, Scope and Methodology***

---

## ***Purpose and Authority***

This performance audit of Dickinson State University's (DSU) emergency operations plan has been conducted by the Office of the State Auditor pursuant to authority within North Dakota Century Code ("NDCC") Chapter 54-10.

Performance audits are defined as engagements that provide assurance or conclusions based on an evaluation of sufficient, appropriate evidence against stated criteria, such as specific requirements, measures, or defined business practices. Performance audits provide objective analysis so management and those charged with governance and oversight can use the information to improve performance and operations, reduce costs, facilitate decision making by parties with responsibility to oversee or initiate corrective action, and contribute to public accountability. The purpose of this report is to provide analysis, findings and recommendations with respect to the audit objectives.

## ***Objective of the Audit***

The objective of our audit was to answer the following question:

- Does Dickinson State University have an effective strategy regarding the development and implementation of an emergency operations plan?

## ***Audit Scope***

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with *Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards*. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

We primarily used two sources of criteria for developing our findings and conclusions.

SBHE 906, effective May 16, 2012 was implemented with the intention of "meeting federal and state emergency preparedness requirements." SBHE Policy 906 identifies several requirements for all NDUS institutions with respect to the development and implementation emergency operations plans, including specific elements required to be included in each plan.

The IHE Guide, developed in 2013 in cooperation with various federal agencies, is a source of "good practices and matters to consider for planning and implementation purposes." It is not considered to be a source of laws or regulations; rather, it is a source of overarching principles, best practices and implementation guidance to enable institutions of higher learning to develop and implement effective emergency operations plans.

The subject matter for this objective consisted primarily of the Dickinson State University emergency preparedness policies, procedures in place as of October 31, 2016.



## ***Relevant Laws, Policies, Contracts and Agreements***

The most significant applicable policy relating to emergency preparedness is SBHE Policy 906.

SBHE Policy 906.1 states “The Chancellor and each institution president are responsible for ensuring that the NDUS Office and each institution develop and implement comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, including emergency preparedness and continuity of operations, in order to meet federal and state requirements and NDUS and institution needs.”

While federal law is not specifically tested in the scope of this audit, the IHE Guide incorporates several federal laws in its guidance. The most significant of these is the *Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act* (better known as the Clery Act). The Clery Act includes institutional notification responsibilities, focusing on emergency notification and timely warning requirements. It also includes requirements for reporting crime statistics and security-related policies, as well as performing a minimum number of tests of the institution’s “emergency response and evacuation procedures.”

# ***Audit Results***

---

## ***Statement of Objective and Conclusion***

The objective of our audit was to answer the following question:

- Does Dickinson State University have an effective strategy regarding the development and implementation of an emergency operations plan?

We determined that DSU has developed an emergency operations plan. However, several opportunities for improvement were identified regarding the development and implementation of the plan.

We communicated certain matters of lesser significance in a separate letter to management.

## ***Audit Methodologies***

To accomplish our objective, we conducted inquiries of members of management responsible and/or knowledgeable about emergency operations and security at DSU. We reviewed documented EOP and other emergency operations policies and procedures where applicable. We also reviewed sign-in sheets and materials provided related to emergency training, drills and exercises.

## ***Findings, Recommendations, and Responses***

### **Collaborative Planning Team**

The IHE Guide recommends the formation of a “collaborative planning team” for developing and implementing the EOP. The IHE Guide recommends the team include representatives from throughout the institution of higher education (IHE), as well as student and faculty representatives as applicable. This helps to ensure the interests of all significant stakeholders are represented. The IHE Guide also suggests the planning team should include first responders, local emergency managers or others who “have roles and responsibilities in IHE emergency management before, during, and after an incident.”

SBHE Policy includes similar requirements of its institutions. SBHE 906.4 requires EOPs to include “establishment of an institution emergency management task force or committee, chaired by the institution’s chief emergency officer.” SBHE 906.4 also requires the EOP include “a mechanism for coordinating with the local emergency managers and local responders for the jurisdiction in which an institution is located.”

Furthermore, the IHE Guide states that “Each person involved in the development and refinement of the plan should know his or her role and responsibilities in the planning process.” These roles ensure that team objectives are met and members are held accountable. SBHE 906 requires “identification of and assignment of responsibilities to officers and employees in different units and various levels within the institution,” as well as “clear and complete statements of assigned responsibilities.”

DSU has an emergency management task force consisting of the Director of Security and Emergency Management within DSU, as well as representatives from Dickinson Police,

Dickinson Fire, and county emergency services. The DSU EOP requires any proposed changes to be submitted to the task force for technical review prior to approval by DSU's President for adoption. The committee currently lacks active membership from representatives throughout the institution.

#### **Recommendation 1-1**

**We recommend Dickinson State University broaden its emergency management task force to include representatives from across the institution in accordance with the IHE Guide. Additionally, we recommend Dickinson State University develop roles and responsibilities regarding emergency management for all representatives of the emergency management task force and operations support group.**

#### **DSU Response:**

Agree. We expect to have a revision document ready for our spring semester in 2018 with roles and responsibilities outlined in the revised document.

### **Risk Assessment**

Upon assembly of the collaborative planning team, SBHE policies and the IHE Guide recommend the team conduct a formal risk assessment of potential emergency events. This facilitates an appropriately tailored emergency operations plan which allocates each institution's limited resources to the highest risk threats.

SBHE 906.5 states, in part, that "[emergency operations plans] may also include...a threat analysis and risk assessment of potential natural, technological and adversarial hazard which may impact an institution."

According to the IHE Guide, the emergency operations planning team "first needs to understand the threats and hazards faced by the IHE and surrounding community." To develop an appropriately tailored emergency operations plan, management should use its internal expertise, as well as that of outside experts as appropriate, to identify a range of potential threats. Upon identifying those potential threats, management should evaluate the risk posed by each threat or hazard. According to the IHE guide, management should consider the probability a threat or hazard may occur, severity of the impact, time to warn students and other stakeholders, and how long the threat may last. Such assessments may take many forms and involve a wide variety of tools and methods.

Because the nature of certain risks may change over time, the IHE Guide states risk assessments should not only occur upon initial development of the plan, but also on an ongoing basis to "inform updates and revisions to the plan."

DSU does not currently have a formalized risk assessment process.

#### **Recommendation 1-2**

**We recommend Dickinson State University implement a formal risk assessment to identify and evaluate potential emergency events.**

## **DSU Response:**

Agree. DSU had contracted with the Department of Homeland Security to conduct an extensive Risk Assessment on December 14, 2016 for the DSU Campus. The assessment was completed and results shared with DSU March 15, 2017. The results showed areas for improvement and how we compared to similar Universities of similar size throughout the United States. This information is being used to help us adjust and modify our Emergency Management Plan. We will continue to modify and adjust our assessment each year during the summer semester.

## **Goals and Objectives**

The IHE Guide recommends the planning team develop goals and objectives for each significant emergency threat and hazard based on the formal risk assessment. The IHE Guide recommends development of at least three goals for each applicable threat and hazard, indicating the desired outcome before, during, and after the emergency event. Each goal would include one or more specific, measurable objectives for achieving the identified goals.

Each identified goal should include one or more objective(s) which per the IHE Guide are “specific, measurable actions that are necessary to achieve the goals.”

The following is an example identified in the IHE Guide of possible goals for an IHE with respect to the threat of fire. These are only examples and are not intended to serve as a substitute for the judgment of the collaborative planning team.:

- Hazard Goal Example 1 (*before*): Prevent a fire from occurring in IHE-governed student housing facilities.
- Hazard Goal Example 2 (*during*): Protect all persons from injury and property from damage by the fire.
- Hazard Goal Example 3 (*after*): Provide necessary medical attention to those in need.

The IHE guide provided the following example objectives related to these goals:

- Objective 1.1 (*before*): Provide fire prevention training to all students and resident advisors who use combustible materials or equipment.
- Objective 2.1 (*during*): Evacuate all persons from the building immediately.
- Objective 3.1 (*after*): Immediately notify fire department and EMS personnel of any fire in a student housing facility.

DSU not currently include formalized goals and objectives with respect to emergency threats or hazards.

## **Recommendation 1-3**

**We recommend Dickinson State University establish formalized goals and objectives for handling threats and hazards to prepare for emergency situations.**

## **DSU Response:**

Agree. DSU currently has and continues to develop specific formalized goals and objectives for handling specific emergencies, events, and objectives contained in its DSU Emergency Management Plan and our School Dude Crisis Manager application that is available to all students, faculty and staff. This application is administered in 3 distinct programs including a public application available for free to anyone, an operations team application that is protected and available to the DSU Emergency Management Operations Team and an application specifically designed for our communications team. All of these programs and applications are updated in an ongoing basis and are scheduled for review once during each biennium.

### **Develop the Emergency Operations Plan**

The IHE Guide states that, upon identification of the EOP goals and objectives, the planning team should “develop courses of action for accomplishing each of the objectives identified.” In other words, the team should identify and document the specific action items necessary to accomplish the previously determined goals and objectives.

SBHE 906 requires emergency operations to include “Procedures for shelter-in-place, evacuations, bomb threats, fires and explosions, chemical spills, tornadoes, floods, winter storms or other natural disasters, etc.” The extent to which these individual threats and hazards, as well as other potential emergencies, are addressed within the EOP should be based upon the planning team’s individual risk assessment.

DSU currently has documented the procedures in the EOP for several potential hazards, such as severe weather and building lockdown among others.

### **Implement the Emergency Operations Plan**

SBHE 906.4 requires each EOP to include “Minimum training requirements...and assignment of training responsibilities”. It also requires the EOP to include “minimum exercise requirements and assignment of exercise responsibilities.”

Training, as defined by the IHE Guide, involves the following: 1) Hold at least an annual meeting “to educate all parties on the plan;” 2) Visit evacuation sites; 3) Distribute relevant documents regarding the plan to involved parties; 4) Post key information (such as evacuation routes and shelter-in-place locations) throughout building(s); 5) Familiarize the campus community with the EOP and community partners; and 6) Train campus community members on necessary skills to enable them to carry out the EOP.

DSU has provided training for building safety coordinators and resident assistants with evacuation roles and responsibilities. However, there currently are no formalized documented minimum training requirements for individuals with roles in carrying out the EOP.

#### **Recommendation 1-4**

**We recommend Dickinson State University formalize minimum training requirements for employees with emergency operations responsibilities into its comprehensive EOP.**

### **DSU Response:**

Agree. DSU requires all fulltime Public Safety Officers to complete Higher Education and Basic Emergency Management courses through FEMA including NIMS and ICS courses. Additionally, all Officers attend on-site courses as they become available. We have also conducted 2 training sessions in the past year for our Building Coordinators, Assistants and our Residential Life Staff. Training will be expanded this Fall and Spring Semesters and required on-line FEMA courses will be assigned to all operations team personnel.

Exercising the EOP is separate from training. The IHE Guide defines “exercises” as follows: “Exercises provide opportunities to practice with community partners including first responders and local emergency management as well as to identify gaps and weaknesses in the plan.” In other words, exercising the plan involves practicing the implementation of the plan under various emergency scenarios. Exercises typically include some combination of tabletop exercises, drills, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises.

Based on our testing, DSU conducts periodic exercises and drills, primarily for the purpose of complying with the Clery Act. However, the EOP currently does not include defined “minimum exercise requirements” as required by SBHE 906.

### **Recommendation 1-5**

**We recommend Dickinson State University develop and incorporate appropriate plan exercise requirements into its comprehensive EOP.**

### **DSU Response:**

Agree. DSU has conducted 2 table top exercises in the past 2 years. Along with each exercise a formal after-action review has taken place. DSU plans to continue to conduct a minimum of one exercise each year along with the after-action review. DSU conducts 2 fire drills in all residential life buildings each semester. After Action reviews are also conducted after each significant live event. DSU will formalize a minimum training requirement for policy for all operations team personnel and emergency management team support staff as part of its spring semester review.

### **Maintain the Plan**

As with any statement of policy or procedures, the EOP should include a process for reviewing, revising, and maintaining the plan. As the planning team learns new information and insight, or the risk related to certain events increases or decreases, the plan should be modified accordingly.

SBHE 906 includes several requirements related to maintaining, reviewing and updating the EOP. SBHE 906.4 requires each plan to include “a process to review and update the Plan as necessary, not less frequently than every four years.” After an actual incident, SBHE 906.4 requires “after action meetings...and development of plans to address identified issues or shortfalls.”

The IHE Guide suggests that each part of the plan should be reviewed and revised at least once every two years. It suggests that an IHE may find it useful to review specific portions of the plan rather than reviewing the entire plan all at once. It also recommends each institution consider reviewing and updating the plan after certain events such as actual emergencies, formal exercises, changes in key personnel, or changes in threats or hazards.

DSU's EOP states that the plan will be revised annually in July, however as October 31, 2016 the most recent approval of the plan by the DSU President was February 2014. In addition, the institution does not have a mechanism in place to track the changes to the plan and maintain previous versions on file.

#### **Recommendation 1-6**

**We recommend Dickinson State University enforce and strengthen policies for periodically reviewing and revising the EOP.**

#### **DSU Response:**

Agree. DSU will schedule a review of its policies and procedures during the spring semester of 2018 with the core operations team. The review will be in a minimum of a 2-phase process including a planning and assignment phase and a review and approval phase. Once these phases are complete DSU will schedule reviews each biennium.

#### **Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)**

In addition to risks of injury, loss of life, and property damage, emergencies can also cause an interruption of the organization's essential functions. SBHE 906 defines continuity of operations as "a plan to assure the capability exists to continue essential agency or institution functions across a wide range of potential disasters or emergencies." In other words, a continuity of operations plan (COOP) is a plan in which the institution identifies its essential functions and identifies the means to carry out those functions if an emergency event occurs.

SBHE 906.1 requires each institution to have a continuity of operations plan as part of its comprehensive EOP. SBHE 906.4 requires institutional EOPs to include "identification of critical infrastructure, key assets and **essential functions**." (emphasis added)

The IHE Guide provides some examples of "essential functions" applicable in a higher education setting. These may include: business services such as payroll or purchasing; facilities maintenance; safety and security; and continuity of instruction. The IHE Guide suggests that the COOP should be designed "so that it can be activated at any time and [the identified essential functions] sustained for up to 30 days."

Based on our testing, DSU currently does not have a COOP in place. As a result, in an emergency or other continuity event, there is an increased risk of extended interruption of some of DSU's functions, or excess cost and effort needed to maintain such functions.

#### **Recommendation 1-7**

**We recommend Dickinson State University implement a comprehensive continuity of operations plan.**

**DSU Response:**

Agree. DSU currently has a limited Continuity of Operations Plan. The plan includes relocation areas and verbal agreements for assistance with local agencies and businesses. As DSU reviews and updates all of its Emergency Management Plans this spring semester we intend on formalizing agreements in writing whenever and wherever possible. The COOP will be formally reviewed each biennium going forward.