

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
SOUTH TEXAS VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM  
7400 Merton Minter Blvd  
San Antonio, TX 78229-4404

RESEARCH SERVICE  
MEMORANDUM NO. 06-23

September 8, 2006

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN FOR THE  
RESEARCH SERVICE

1. PURPOSE: To supplement the STVHCS Emergency Management Plan, identifying service actions during the activation of the Emergency Management Plan in the event of a community or internal emergency and/or disaster. The STVHCS has adopted the Hospital Emergency Incident Command System (HEICS), which is also used for all other private and public hospitals in the San Antonio area.
2. POLICY: The Research Service will provide support services as required during the implementation of the Emergency Management Plan. All employees are required to be familiar with this plan and accordingly are expected to perform their duties during emergencies. If they do not have a specific role, their role is to *"stand by and await further instructions from their supervisor."*
3. ACTION:
  - a. Staff Recall: The Research Service will maintain a service Cascade Recall list. Upon notification from the hospital, the ACOS for Research and Development/Administrative Officer for R&D will initiate the recall system. The recall list will be divided into cells, with identified individuals being responsible for contacting others within their cell. If the service is directed to initiate a total recall, the entire service personnel list will be notified.
  - b. Response:
    - (1) During work hours: Upon hearing the disaster alarm, all Research Service employees will report to the supervisor in their work area. Employees will remain in the area until the "all clear" is announced or notified otherwise.
    - (2) If notification is initiated after hours, employees will be advised of the nature of the call – telephone drill only, to stand by until notified otherwise, or to return to duty.
  - c. Area Safety/Security: Employees will take appropriate measures to insure safety within their work area, e.g., shut off gas, depending on the nature of the emergency or disaster. Each laboratory supervisor will establish and train lab personnel on the procedures to be followed in emergencies.
  - d. Emergency Duties: Employees who have been appointed and trained as members of specific emergency teams will report to their designated area as previously instructed.
  - e. Manpower Pool: Employees not assigned to an established team will remain on standby in their work area. The STVHCS Labor Pool Leader will advise Research Service of the number of employees required to man the Labor Pool. Research will initially provide a minimum of three employees. Additional employees will be assigned to the Labor Pool as requested by the Labor Pool Leader. These employees will be instructed by the ACOS/AO for R&D to report and sign in at the Labor Pool located in the Auditorium.
  - f. Coordination: The Research Office, Q203, will be the service coordination site during emergency conditions.

4. RESPONSIBILITY: The ACOS for Research and Development will be responsible for the service operations during designated emergency/disaster conditions. Supervisors will be responsible for insuring the availability of Research Service personnel.

5. REFERENCE: STVHCS Policy Memorandum 001-05-39, Emergency Management Plan (available in the yellow emergency binder located in Q203 and on the STVHCS intranet)

6. RESCISSION: Research Service Memorandum 05-23, dated July 1, 2005.



PETER MELBY, M.D.  
ACOS for Research and Development

Distribution: Research Service Employees

**Research Service Memorandum 06-23**  
**Emergency Contingency Plan**  
**Attachment #1**

**Veterinary Medical Unit Emergency Operations**

1. Recall of personnel. As warranted by the nature of the disaster, the VMU supervisor will recall the number of technicians considered to be needed immediately and the veterinarian as necessary. Upon complete evaluation of the situation, additional personnel may be called in. Depending on the circumstances, employees will be permitted to leave when no longer needed. If necessary, irregular tours will be immediately set up to provide needed coverage and provide employee rest.

2. Assessment. An assessment will be made as to whether the disaster has or will affect the animals within the VMU. If it has or may affect the animals, the supervisor in conjunction with the VMC will outline the actions to be taken to insure the safety of the animals. Staff will immediately proceed to the actions defined. If additional non-VMU personnel are required, the Administrative Officer will be notified. Non-VMU Research personnel may be assigned to assist in movement of animals, etc., if required and other tasks of a non-technical nature. Attempts will be made to ascertain the extent and length of conditions, e.g., duration of power outage. In the event of the need for additional technicians in a disaster that is limited to the VA facility, the UTHSCSA animal facility may be contacted to determine if they can provide assistance during the immediate disaster activities.

3. Emergency Procedures.

a. In the event of a disaster affecting the VMU during hours when employees are present, the safety of employees will be immediately confirmed. After confirmation of employees' safety, the condition of the animals will be ascertained. Immediate actions will be taken as required, e.g., backup lighting, comfort of animals, debris cleanup/repairs, etc. The VMU Supervisor will maintain a Disaster Book/Plan that outlines for all VMU personnel the activities they must undertake in the event of various potential emergency conditions and the information needed (e.g., outlets providing emergency generator power, backup equipment, battery lights, procedures for warmth or cooling, procuring fans, food/water, steps to be taken in the event of loss of water, contacts if animals must be moved. interim procedures to be used in the event of the loss or limited availability of water, steam outages,. The VMU supervisor and veterinarian as necessary will provide continued assessment of the situation and corrective actions until both are assured of the continued safety of the animals.

4. Disaster Reference Book and Training of VMU staff.

a. The VMU supervisor will maintain a Disaster Plan reference book of procedures to guide VMU personnel in the event of various specific disaster conditions. VMU technicians will receive training on these disaster procedures. All technicians will be made aware of the location of the disaster book in the event the supervisor is unavailable and they must initiate the action.

b. VMU technicians will receive continued training on the disaster procedures spelled out in the disaster plan/book.

5. Coordination with Hospital Emergency Planning. The Administrative Officer for Research and Development as a member of the hospital's main Safety Committee provides liaison between Research Service, Veterinary Medical Unit, and the hospital's program.

**VETERINARY MEDICAL UNIT (VMU)  
EMERGENCY PROCEDURES/DISASTER PLAN  
For Veterinary Medical Unit Staff  
(revised September 2006)**

This Disaster Plan is designed to provide specific procedures and responsibilities for the Veterinary Medical Unit staff regarding the care of laboratory animals during emergencies. The ability to handle emergencies is a responsibility of each individual working with animals. This plan does not replace or change any existing general emergency policies established by the facility or the Research Service. It is designed as a supplemental plan specific to the animal care responsibilities of VMU personnel

**ANIMAL CARE PROGRAM AUTHORITY & NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES**

Should an emergency situation occur in a VMU, the following procedures and authorities will be followed:

**Line of Authority:**

- Veterinary Medical Consultant
- Veterinary Medical Unit Supervisor
- VMU Technicians

**Notification:** The designated personnel will also be responsible for notifying the other VMU personnel in a timely manner, as soon as conditions permit, to insure a quick return to full animal care. If necessary, the designated personnel should exit the emergency area and seek out a telephone in another location, as necessary, to make the calls. If, for any reason the designated individual is not able to make all of the phone calls, he/she is to call at least one of the veterinarians.

**ANIMAL EVACUATION PLAN**

**General:** When certain emergencies occur, it may become necessary to move animals from their secure animal housing. The decision of emergency housing will be made by personnel as defined in "Line of Authority" (see above). It is the responsibility of the designated personnel managing the animal emergency care to assure housing, care, and security for any removed animal. Animal evacuations will not take place until the emergency situation has been stabilized. If it becomes necessary that animals belonging to the VA must be moved from their secure housing, the following selection order will be used:

- Transgenic Founder (Breeding) Animals & Frozen Embryos
- Breeding Animals
- Experimental Rodents (non-biohazardous)
- Other Mammals
- BSL2 animals (can only be moved to equivalent BSL2 or quarantine space)
- Animals of unknown disease status must not be moved

## **Readiness:**

- Know the disease status and requirements of animals in your area (e.g. special food, water, care).
- Know proper moving and handling techniques.
- Know feed / bedding locations.
- Know location of carts, dollies, moving devices.
- Know the arrangement of the transport truck.
- Know where you can find the pager numbers for the veterinary staff.
- Report to the facility manager as soon as you recognize an emergency has occurred.
- As you leave the building, stuff gloves and masks into your pockets for the initial period of emergency in which you may have to rely upon your own resources.

## **SECURITY INFORMATION**

**General:** The animal facility strives to provide a secure environment by a program integrating electronic security systems with security officer presence and employee awareness. The VA Police Department is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be reached at x15555 at any time to report security incidents. Access is controlled at the perimeters of the facility by the keypad access. Employee photo ID badge display is required, and temporary identification is issued to visitors, vendors, and contractors. Employees can reduce the opportunity for criminal activity by locking rooms and securing valuable property. Alert employees can also report suspicious persons to the VA Police Department.

**Crimes in progress, Thefts of property, Threats, Suspicious persons, Other security related incidents:** Established hospital policies will be followed. Report to VA Police Department at x15555 for appropriate action.

## **ANIMAL ACTIVIST DEMONSTRATION**

**General:** Animal facility employees need to be alert to unauthorized persons demonstrating on or near Hospital property. Research Service and the VMU are secured areas. Employees are required to wear photo ID at all times when in animal facility areas, but should remove photo ID when near a demonstration area. Do not engage demonstrators in conversation.

### **Personal Response Action:**

- If a PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION is underway on public property (e.g., sidewalks, streets, etc.), avoid confrontation by walking around the demonstrators. If you LEARN OF animal activist demonstrations targeting the VA, call the VA Police Department at x15555.
- Information to be provided to the VA Police:
  - Nature of demonstration
  - Location
  - Number of people involved
  - Possible threat to personal safety
  - Specific facility targeted
- Safety precautions during a demonstration (any location):

- Remain calm
- Be courteous
- Avoid an incident
- If you arrive during a disturbance, leave the area at once
- If inside the building:
  - Remain calm
  - Be courteous
  - Avoid an incident
  - If you arrive during a disturbance, leave the area at once
  - Remain in your office or work area
  - Stay out of the building lobby
- Request an escort, if needed, to leave the building
- ALWAYS! Use stairways inside the building rather than the elevator. Elevators may be taken out of service.

### **BREAK-INS**

**General:** Employees need to be alert to unauthorized persons attempting to gain access to animal facilities. Activists sometimes claim to “Have a delivery,” or an “Appointment,” or to have left their access card elsewhere, and may pretend to have authority to gain access. Only those persons authorized for access by the ACOS of Research and Development are allowed to enter. Employees are required to wear photo ID at all times when in animal facility areas.

#### **Personal Response Actions:**

- If you learn of animal activists targeting the VA, whether on VA premises, at researchers’ homes, or elsewhere, call the VA Police Department at x15555.
- If a BREAK-IN or other illegal act in progress, call the VA Police Department at x15555.
- Information to be provided to the VA Police:
  - Nature of Situation
  - Location within VA
  - Number of people involved
  - Possible threat to personal safety
- Safety Precautions (any location):
  - Remain calm
  - Be courteous
  - Avoid an incident
- If you arrive during a disturbance, leave the area at once.
- Remain in your office or work area.
- Stay out of the building lobby.
- Request an escort if needed, to leave the building.
- Use stairways inside the building rather than the elevator. Elevators may be taken out of service.

### **FIRE**

Employees should follow established hospital procedures as outlined in current hospital policy.

## **POWER FAILURE**

**General:** The VA Hospital will automatically transfer, within 30 seconds, to a standby power system. Emergency power is supplied to heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems including fume hood exhaust systems. Emergency lighting is provided in animal care areas. Expect most areas to be extremely dark, so use caution during any movement. Elevators will move to preset levels and will not be available. In the event of an extended power failure, employees may be directed to evacuate the buildings for their safety.

### **Readiness:**

- Know location of flashlights and batteries.
- Be aware of what equipment is on backup power.
- Check that power to critical equipment is operating. You may be required to stay in the building even though the power is out or if it is unsafe to travel on city streets (e.g. windstorm blowing down trees and/or overhead wires).

### **Personal Response Actions:**

- Turn "OFF" all electrical and office equipment, including computers, light switches (if not on an emergency power backup), printers, monitors, cage washers, etc. When service is restored, power surges may occur that can damage electrical equipment. If uncertain that the equipment is off, unplug it.
- Listen for announcements over the public address system concerning what actions to take next.
- If another emergency (e.g. fire) accompanies the power failure, follow response actions for other emergency as well.
- Stay put (unless fire or other emergency requires immediate evacuation). Locate flashlights and batteries (never use an open flame such as a match or lighter for a light source).
- Use battery operated radio to check on local outage reports or other emergency information.
- Check that freezers are plugged into emergency outlets.
- Check if hoods are operating. If not, completely close sash. Notify supervisor.
- Use stairs and hallways to exit. Avoid using the elevators.
- Stay to the right side of the hallway at all times and use the handrails provided to avoid possible collisions or loss of balance.
- Proceed to animal facility assembly area.
- AO and VMU supervisor should verify all personnel to ensure all employees are out of the building.
- Building entrances to animal facility areas should be monitored to prevent unauthorized building entry.
- Do not re-enter building until instructed to do so by the Police Department.

## **TORNADO OR OTHER SEVERE WEATHER**

**General:** San Antonio rarely experiences tornados or severe storms; however, they do occur. It is essential that the animals are cared for during such storms. The most likely storm related problem will be the loss of electricity or failure of the HVAC. Furry animals can usually do very well in

their cages with the doors closed for a long time in such conditions. The task of the care provider is to check on the animals, and to report the condition of the room to the VMU Supervisor.

In the event of severe weather, you should:

- Inform your supervisor or emergency evacuation coordinator of the emergency
- Take shelter on an inner corridor/safe area
- Stay away from windows
- Assemble with your work group
- Inform your emergency evacuation coordinator or supervisor of any missing employees
- Wait for the all clear signal before returning to work area
- If you are on the top floor of a building: Move down to an interior corridor on the floor below
- If you are outside: Take shelter indoors immediately
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#### **Response Actions: After tornado, high winds, etc.**

- Be ready to Drop, Cover, and Hold if necessary.
- Check for injuries to people nearby. If qualified, begin first aid. Do not move a seriously injured person.
- Do not use candles, matches, or other flames and do not turn electrical equipment on or off. Flames and electrical sparks can cause any leaking gas to ignite or explode.
- Check for building safety. Evacuate if there is a fire, broken gas pipes, or severe structural damage to the building. Fallen light fixtures, ceiling tiles, and paint cracks do not indicate damage to the structure.
- Exit the building: After the safety of evacuation routes has been checked, exit as directed by public address system or VA Police Department personnel.
- Report damage observed in your area to VA Police.
- Use stairs to move from floor to floor. Never use the elevators during an emergency.
- Stay off the telephone. Unnecessary calls to the VA Police Department may delay critical emergency care to victims.
- Go to the animal facility outside assembly area. Report to the VMU supervisor.
- VMU Supervisor will need to verify that personnel have vacated the area. Note any missing people. Provide collected information to VA emergency response teams responsible for search and rescue, medical assistance, and damage control.
- You should plan on being on-site with no services, such as water, power, and telephone, for up to 72 hours. You may not be able to go home due to blocked roads and damaged bridges.

### **WINTER STORMS**

**General:** San Antonio rarely experiences severe winter storms; however, they do occur. It is essential that the animals are cared for during such storms. The most likely storm related problem will be the loss of electricity or failure of the HVAC. Furry animals can usually do very well in their cages with the doors closed for a long time in such conditions. The task of the care provider is to check on the animals, and to report the condition of the room to the VMU Supervisor.

**Readiness:**

- Check your work area(s) for adequate caging, feed, and other supplies
- Check with your VMU Supervisor for the status of developing weather
- Keep emergency supplies in your locker or desk drawers, including a flash light, out-of-state telephone contact number, family emergency contact telephone numbers, first aid kit, and battery-operated radio.

**Personal Response Actions:**

- Animal care operations must continue for all animals on this campus
- Check with your VMU Supervisor for developing weather conditions during the workday
- If possible, you will be alerted in time to send you home, but
- Be prepared to be confined to the animal facility for a period up to 24 hours due to sudden severe winter storms.
- Use stairs to move from floor to floor if the electricity is out.
- Stay off the telephone as much as possible. Unnecessary calls may delay critical emergency care to victims
- Verify that your animals have been cared for and have full water and feed (in case of extended care delays)
- Collect information on any storm damage and injuries and report to the AO or VMU Supervisor

## UTILITY FAILURE

**General:** City Public Service and the VA Hospital provide utility service. However, on occasion even the best mechanical devices will break and this may stop or restrict our connection to electricity or other utility service. The table below lists a variety of service related problems and what is expected in each circumstance.

<u>Failure</u>	<u>What to Expect</u>	<u>Responsibility of User</u>
Electrical power failure-emergency generators work	Many lights are out.	Ensure that freezers and insulators are on emergency Power. Use flashlights.
Electrical power failure-total	Failure of all electrical systems.	Use flashlights and lanterns.
Natural gas failure or leak	Odor, no flames on burners, etc.	Open windows to ventilate. Turn off gas equipment. Don't turn on or off any spark-producing devices: electrical motors, switches, telephones, etc.
Animal care equipment	Equipment does not function properly.	Replace and tag defective equipment.
Sewer stoppage	Drains backing up.	Do not flush toilets. Do not use water.
Steam failure	No building heat or humidity control. Cage washers will not operate properly.	Use space heaters and backup room humidifiers if necessary
Telephones	No phone services.	Pay phones, pagers. Use runners as needed.
Water	Sinks and toilets inoperative.	Institute fire watch. Conserve water. Use bottled water for drinking. Be sure to turn off water in sinks.
Ventilation	No ventilation; no heating, cooling, or humidity control.	Close doors. Do not use hazardous/odorous materials.

## UNSCHEDULED ANIMAL DELIVERIES

**General:** Timely processing of animal deliveries is necessary to avoid loss of life or injury to animals. On rare occasions, animal shipments may arrive unexpectedly on dates different from those posted. Emergency procedures to address both scheduled and unscheduled animal shipments need to be in place.

### Readiness:

- Contact animal suppliers when an emergency occurs and let them know of emergency procedures.
- Identify where to redirect animal shipments if they cannot reach animal facility personnel and appraise the VA Police Department staff.
- Let suppliers know that if they learn of a major emergency (e.g. severe storm) affecting San Antonio area, they should call to verify shipment instructions.

### Personal Response Actions:

- Contact the supervisor for specific receiving instructions. If unavailable, contact the Research Office for the veterinarian on-call.
- Contact the VA Police (x15555) in case this may be a developing animal rights intrusion.

## FACILITY/EQUIPMENT PROBLEMS

### HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING

Temperature in rooms below 64degrees C or above 80 degrees F

1. Call 15722 or 15724, give room numbers and approximate temperature
2. On Weekends and if no answer, call VA operator "O" and have engineering paged
3. Contact VMU supervisor immediately to assess need for additional personnel

Temperatures too warm

1. Open doors to animal rooms. Put fans in doorways to circulate cooler air from hallways
2. Turn off all laminar flow units to decrease heat load in room
3. Make sure Engineering Service maintains air handlers on high to keep air circulating in rooms
4. If temperatures remain > 80 degrees F, remove filter bonnets to further increase heat loss.

## **REVERSE OSMOSIS WATER TO BOTTLE FILLER/PROPORTIONER**

Reverse osmosis water problem (off-color, shut down by Engineering Service, etc)

1. Notify Engineering Service x15025 or x15722 or 869-6489 (pager)
2. Turn off reverse osmosis supply at valve, open research deionized water supply at valve
3. Notify Nathan Shock group (Elizabeth Fernandez x15577) at time of change over and resumption of reverse osmosis service.

## **DOOR LOCKS**

1. Call locksmith x 16728 or x 15025, Engineering Service
2. Submit work order thru Judy Berdecia, Research Office x 15550

## **CAGE WASHER**

1. Call Engineering Service 869-6419 pager and work order desk George x 15025
2. Fill out work order and submit to Judy Berdecia, Research office - Include nature of problem,  
Notate as emergency, give VA tag#.
3. Some replacement parts are located in R223
4. If cage washer down longer than one day arrange with Emilio (UTHSCSA 767-6166) to pick up dirty cages to be washed at UTHSCSA.
5. Cloudy water in sump - hard water. Call 869-6489 (Pager) enter 4 digit extension number, office x 15722.

### **AUTOCLAVE**

1. Submit work order to Judy Berdecia, x15550, in Research Office. She will notify Mike Abbot of problem.
2. If Judy is not available, call Mike direct (800) 259-5940 x 210. Leave message and phone number.

### **WASHER/DRYER**

1. Submit work order to Judy Berdecia, Research Office. Include: Nature of problem, VA tag#
2. Call Engineering Service, 869-6419 (pager) and work order desk #15025
3. Use washer/dryer in V203

# CURRENT EMERGENCY CONTACTS

(revised 9/06)

## **Emergency (Medical, police, fire) 15555**

Research Office	15123
Research Office - Work orders	15550
Engineering Maintenance and Operations	15025
Engineering Maint and Operations (afterhours problems)	15724
Police and Security Desk	15911
Employee Health Office	15975
Safety Office	14039
Radiation Safety Office	14036
Veterinarian (UTHSCSA Lab Animal Resources)	567-6166