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## Safe Text Practices: Message System Part of UNH Emergency Planning

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DURHAM, N.H.H - University of New Hampshire officials take safety seriously. And, apparently, so does the campus community.

During the first 19 hours of a text message alert system becoming available, more than 2,250 UNH students, faculty and staff members registered for the free service.

Roam Secure is offered through a Virginia-based company specializing in emergency communication and information sharing. The system is capable of sending more than 18,000 messages per minute to cell phones, emails or PDAs. The University of New Hampshire has contracted with Roam Secure to provide text alerts to UNH subscribers if there is a crisis on campus.

Part of UNH's comprehensive safety plan, Roam Secure teams with the university's ability to reach 22,000 people through directed communication and Student Alert, a siren warning system, to maximize its abilities to reach the UNH community in the event of an emergency.

Student Alert uses a siren followed by voice instructions broadcast via outdoor loudspeakers to warn of an incident on campus. Used by colleges and universities around the world, the system was donated to UNH last spring by alumnus John Olson, president and CEO of Whelen Engineering Company.

"Colleges and universities are facing an ever-increasing amount of natural and man-made emergencies," says Paul Dean, UNH deputy police chief and emergency operations coordinator. "Having transparency with the community allows for better management of emergencies and is part of a best-practices plan for any campus."

If an emergency occurs, university police will use Roam Secure to send a text message to all subscribers. Updates of the situation will be posted on the UNH Web site. A second text message will be sent when the crisis is resolved.

A notice explaining Roam Secure was emailed to 22,000 members of the campus community last week. Everyone is encouraged to subscribe. Registering takes mere minutes.

Another link in UNH's safety plan is currently in the works; Dean noted that adding a public safety radio station similar to that used when entering the White Mountain National Forest is in the planning stages. Solar-powered signs stationed at either end of campus would, when flashing, alert drivers to tune to a particular number on their radio dial for emergency information.

"Our goal is to provide a safety shield around the campus that has redundancy built into it," Dean says. "If the community knows there is an emergency, then they will be able to respond appropriately."

