



# QUANTUM LEAP

## in Emergency Notification Technologies for Clery Compliance

**S. Daniel Carter**

In an emergency, today's campus communities expect more from their colleges and universities than ever before. As recognized since 2008, by the federal Jeanne Clery Act, those challenges run the gamut from active shooters to bad weather to violent political protests. In these potentially life-threatening situations, responses must be both quick and effective. Institutions need to leverage advance planning and the quantum leap in technology, now available to them, in order to comply with the Clery Act -- and to meet the safety demands of their campus communities.

While the Clery Act is best known in this context for requiring immediate emergency notifications, it actually goes much further by establishing a baseline for each institution's "immediate emergency response and evacuation procedures, including the use of electronic and cellular communication." The efficacy of these procedures, not just the notification system, must be tested at least annually with the intention of there being ongoing improvements in both policy and technology. Diligent institutions go beyond this and every incident, not just one annual test, should be reviewed with an eye towards lessons learned and making improvements. These reviews are essential to the mitigation of future emergencies. Advanced technology can put valuable information at the fingertips of campus officials.

Not unlike access control and CCTV systems put in place across campuses over many years, emergency response systems may be disparate with outdated components, such as paper manuals. It may seem daunting to do, but advances in technology now allow for an integrated, unified, and automated approach to planning, initiation, and response. The difference can be the capacity to get control of an emergency situation or it spiraling out of control.

It has been said that "all this has happened before, and it will all happen again." The political controversies that are erupting into violence on campuses across the country are one example of this, with scenarios harkening back to both civil-rights and Vietnam war protests. Now it is controversial speakers and rallies that are drawing counter-protesters sometimes leading to violent conflict. But what if history didn't have to repeat itself? With the framework of the Clery Act and modern technologies, true preparedness and the ability to quickly respond is now possible.

The process begins with developing tested policies and procedures for a range of all-hazard emergency situations, outreach to local first-responders, and coordinating exercises with campus, local, state, and federal agencies. Then the resulting policies and procedures are mapped to a digital system that enables the near instantaneous deployment of the procedures including creation of a virtual unified command that is customized for each type of emergency a campus may face.

When an emergency situation presents itself, the senior campus public safety official present can use a smartphone or smartwatch app to launch the pre-planned emergency response protocols. Campus officials who need to respond will receive customized instructions, local first-responders will be alerted to where they are needed on campus, and campus community members will receive pre-determined emergency notifications on various channels both on and off campus.

Leveraging the technology now available, each person in a campus community who needs specific actionable information can now receive it almost instantaneously. This is a world beyond that of the emergency text messages of a decade ago that are now pervasive. Today, they are only one piece of a much larger puzzle.

When the call goes out, key campus personnel will receive critical information they need to begin to take action, including the policies and procedures to be followed for a particular emergency. No longer do they have to pull a manual off a bookshelf, something which is especially important if they happen to be off campus. Decision makers can also immediately initiate a conference bridge allowing campus officials to speak with each other and to see critical information in real time.

When an incident unexpectedly escalates, those properly trained and equipped for crowd control can be dispatched and deescalate unrest. If there are people injured, emergency medical personnel can be dispatched to a designated safe staging area to treat them or transport them for additional medical help. Members of the broader campus community will receive emergency notifications through multiple channels – text messages, emails, public address systems, digital signage, campus cable TV, alerts on campus PCs, and others – advising them of the situation and to avoid the areas affected.

Of course, once the situation is resolved, officials and members of the campus and broader community will receive “all clear” notifications. In the aftermath of a crisis this is a sometimes overlooked, but essential step to begin the recovery process.

The Jeanne Clery Act is geared towards ensuring that campus communities have the information about threats to their safety that they need to protect themselves. Even more fundamentally it is about learning lessons from the past so that in the future campuses will be safer. Embracing the quantum leap in emergency notification technologies is the embodiment of both these values and is a critical element in the evolution of campus public safety. Just sending out text and email notification is not enough any longer. 🌱

## About the Author

S. Daniel Carter, President of Safety Advisors for Educational Campuses, LLC., has been at the forefront of advancing campus safety and victims’ rights for over 25 years. Carter has served with many safety organizations and in 2008, was recognized on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives as “the leading person in this Nation in advocating more action and tougher action against crimes that are committed on campus.” Through his work, Carter has helped to develop, draft, and secure passage of regulations for seven major pieces of federal legislation, including the Clery Act and the Campus SaVE Act (also known as the Violence Against Women Act amendments).