

EVACUATION PLAN / PROGRAM CLOSURE¹

Below is a framework for dealing with a potential emergency. The details of an evacuation plan cannot be absolute as the nature of this type of emergency will have its unique and unpredictable qualities, and usual local resources and support may not be there when needed.

A. DEFINITION

The evacuation could be permanent as in shutting down the program for the semester or even indefinitely. Or, it could be a temporary evacuation, i.e. with the purpose of securing your student group after an attack in the case of a city shut down.

The evacuation could mean a flight back to the US or a temporary displacement of the program in a more secure area either within France or Europe. The former could be a first step towards the latter.

An evacuation plan may be implemented:

1 - following an official emergency evacuation plan decided by local public authorities after a major crisis or threat (attacks, war, epidemics, natural or technological catastrophe, etc.)

2 - following a decision made by the home university and/or program after assessing a situation of threat or crisis

In both cases, following protocols established by local public authorities (first and foremost) and/or the university(ies) (second) is a priority:

This information will be broadcast by local government through the media (**radio** will be the most efficient way of informing the population – favor France Info, France Bleu and local radios, social medias, apps and public announcements).

French Government and Plan ORSEC (Organisation de la Réponse de Sécurité Civile):

Please read carefully the following:

<http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Alerte/Alerte-ORSEC>

And more specifically:

<http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Alerte/Savoir-reagir-a-l-alerte/Comment-reagir-en-cas-d-alerte>

and:

<http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Alerte/Savoir-reagir-a-l-alerte/Comment-se-preparer>

US Government:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/emergencies/crisis-support.html>

Tel.: +1-202-501-4444

<https://tfa.state.gov/> (this site should only be used to provide information about U.S. citizens who are in the affected foreign country)

Students abroad should be enrolled in the STEP program and will therefore receive information from the State Department while abroad. Should your program evacuate or close, the home university should inform the State Department of the decision.

Home or partner university(ies):

Your home institution may have a scenario detailing procedures and plans to follow. If you are not presently aware of the plan and procedure, find out, as even a general idea of how such an event would occur is important to know.

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B. THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Information, actors, tools:

One should assume and understand the level of **stress and confusion** caused by such emergency procedures and the enormous responsibility for the group. This includes potential for resistance or hesitation from the university, the students and/or the students' families. There will also be personal concerns for loved ones and yourself.

To avoid or at least minimize the above, **information is key**.

Have a ready-made and updatable message template explaining the situation and the protocols followed by the program for :

- your students
- your university / partners universities (study abroad offices)
- students' parents
- your staff (administration and professors)

Basic documentation should be ready, accessible and transportable. A USB key or a paper folder with copies of passports, addresses, ID and emergency contacts should be at the ready for every program.

Depending of the structure of your program and the size of your team, the following should be considered:

- Creating crisis management team.
- A lead coordinator for the whole operation.
- One voice to relay messages and information to the students, the home university and the press in order to ensure consistency and avoid confusion.
- Having/preparing an **emergency kit**. Local and academic authorities encourage the possession of such a device in the case of a major crisis. This would include gathering tools for identification, signalization, information, hygiene, food supply, compensation and entertainment in a backpack/sport bag.

Insurance: Although it will vary from school to school most institutions have insurance to cover costs for evacuation/program closure. How will you access that money locally?

Directors and Officers Liability Insurance (D&O): as Program Director you will exercise your professional discretion to best achieve the intent of the plan in place. How are you protected by your institution?

D&O insurance would cover the director of the program and senior staff managing the operation in case of human mistakes or accidents.

The equivalent in France is called : "Responsabilité Civile des dirigeants" ou "Responsabilité civile des mandataires sociaux".

Gathering your students and colleagues

It will be a challenge.

The first thing is to localize each individual and make sure that they're in a safe area, i.e. at home, in a local university, at their internship – in the latter cases, you will have to deal with the university or the work place office policy in such context.

Second: inform students to stay where they are until further notice and/or inform them of the evacuation plan.

Third: make clear that this decision is for all program participants and that no exception will be made for security and time-management reasons. The program cannot be responsible for any student or visiting faculty who refuse to comply with procedures being arranged.



To this end, have a **waiver form** ready in case a student (and/or their family) is not willing to follow the evacuation procedure that releases you and your institution of responsibility for this individual.

One or several **meeting points** should be identified beforehand, depending on the size of the city and the size of the program. Depending on the localization of the attack/threat, several meeting points should be listed, so as to avoid being in proximity of the event.

These meeting points should be :

- Wherever possible, well connected by public transportation or close-by walking (when mapping your students in the city, you should be able to "lead" them to the appropriate meeting point)
- Easily identifiable by your students/staff
- Ideally located in the periphery of the city (North, South, East, West). This last element is crucial. If your program center/office is located in the heart of the city, meeting there may not be the most efficient choice if you have then to evacuate the whole group outside of the city. Indeed, massive traffic should be expected, as turmoil in local public transportation. Getting the group to the periphery of the city will grant safety and access for evacuation.
- Handled by at least one staff member (one per meeting point if possible).
- Each student should confirm by text/phone, etc. which meeting point they will be joining, and be in regular contact with the designated staff member.

Transportation:

- Anticipate that public transportation will be impacted negatively by the situation whether it is shut down, delayed or overcrowded.
- Anticipate that taxis/Uber will not be easily available as they cannot navigate as usual through the city. Moreover, it is likely that in the case of a complete shut down of the city, local authorities will not allow taxis to exit the city.
- Anticipate that local bus companies will not have coaches available for group evacuation. Have another resource outside the city center.
- Anticipate that car rentals will not be available in the city.
- Identify beforehand car rentals in the suburbs, close to the meeting point(s) if possible. It may be more efficient to pick up the students coming outside of the city than to evacuate them from within. Having a resource person living in the outskirts of the city would be a strong asset.

Resettling:

- Identify hotels in the suburbs or closest towns to settle the group. Ideally, the hotel will have a conference room usable for meetings and if the program is to continue, classes.
- It is important to keep a normal functioning of the program as much as possible.
- It is important to provide the students with time, space and resources to process the event. Therefore access to counselors and discussion groups will be key.
- Information: keep key players updated on the status of the evacuation plan (home institution, parents, colleagues).
- A paper trail should be kept of events chronologically as after the event is finished a report will no doubt be required. Endeavor to write as you go and as things develop. Remembering all the details of every event and procedure after the fact will be virtually impossible.