



VANDERBILT
Divinity School

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
GUIDEBOOK**

2025-26

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Emergency Response Plan

In the event of an emergency, call 911 from any Vanderbilt phone; call (615) 421-1911 from any cell phone to reach Vanderbilt University's Police Department; or use the VandySafe mobile app. Notifying VUPD is important to allow police dispatchers to direct other first responders to the correct Vanderbilt locations.

Divinity Emergency Coordinators

Vanderbilt emergency coordinators assist in verifying building occupants in the event of an evacuation and communicating with emergency personnel.

- Cheryl Williams, cell (865) 742-3860
- Helen Cannon, cell (615) 613-3812
- Jared Wonderly, cell (419) 487-0576

General Evacuation Procedures

The purpose of the Divinity Emergency Evacuation Plan is to provide protection of life, safety, and health of the Vanderbilt community. ***Building occupants should always evacuate the building in the event of a fire alarm or at the direction of building administration.***

Staff and faculty should evacuate the building and route occupants away from the parking lots to the assembly location (Divinity lawn near Heard Library) or secure in place and request building occupants remain in a refuge area. Surrounding parking lots and driveway areas must be kept clear for use by emergency vehicles.

Building Evacuation/Assembly Areas:

Emergency Exit Routes:

- Proceed to the nearest emergency exit.
- Proceed directly to the assembly area (Divinity lawn near Heard Library).

Other Evacuation Procedures

- Building occupants will be notified of the evacuation by the sound of the building fire alarm, by verbal instruction from building staff, emergency personnel, or by self-evident hazardous conditions.
- All occupants must leave the building immediately if the fire alarm is activated or if directed to do so by building staff.
- Divinity emergency coordinators will assist the evacuation to the extent possible.
- All occupants should exit the building through the nearest safe exit or exit stairwell. Elevators should never be used in an emergency.
- In Divinity, building exits and exit stairwells are located at:
 - Main entrance doors located on both sides of lobby
 - Hallway near All Faith Chapel
 - Loading dock
 - Student lounge
 - Stairwell by room G03
 - Narthex of Benton Chapel
 - Reading room (124)
 - Hallway near James Lawson Institute
 - Hallway near room 103
 - Exit stairwells are located by rooms G03, 103, 119, 203, 229, and main stairwell in lobby
- If nearest exit or exit stairwell is obstructed by smoke, fire, or other hazards, proceed to an alternate exit.
- During a stairwell evacuation, remove high heels and hold onto the handrails. Allow enough room for others to enter the flow of traffic in the stairwell.
- When outside Divinity, all occupants should move to the assembly area (Divinity lawn near Heard Library).

- Staff members should ensure that emergency assistance has been summoned by calling the VU Police Department at 911 from a Vanderbilt phone.
- Once assembled, emergency coordinators or designees will account for all occupants, using an employee roster to inform emergency services if anyone is missing or is still possibly inside the building.
- Emergency coordinators will provide emergency personnel with information about the emergency inside the building, including locations of hazards and any known problems.
- Building occupants will not re-enter the building until cleared by VUPD or on-site safety personnel.

Tornado/Severe Weather

If you are caught outdoors and hear the Vanderbilt sirens or receive an AlertVU notice that a tornado may be approaching campus:

- Immediately seek shelter in the closest substantial building.
- Never try to outrun a tornado. If you cannot seek shelter in a building, lie in a ditch or low-lying area and cover your head and neck.

Once you are indoors:

- Alert building occupants of the impending weather.
- Move quickly to a safe area indoors such as an interior hallway or an interior room away from windows.
 - Basements, which are often recommended for shelter in private residences, may not be practical for high rise buildings or some campus facilities.
 - Stay away from windows, doors, and exterior walls.
 - Close all doors leading to exterior rooms.
- Once you are indoors, stay indoors until the threat has passed. To determine when the threat has passed, monitor a weather radio, commercial radio/television station, internet, or other weather service. Even when a specific storm cell has passed beyond the area, conditions may still be right for high winds, lightning, and other hazardous weather conditions.

Shelter Options in Divinity

- Room G06
- Men's restroom and all gender restroom on ground floor across from GDR lounge
- Hallway on ground floor with lockers, up against the interior wall

If you are in a classroom or meeting area:

- The instructor or staff member should direct occupants to the nearest interior hallways and interior rooms away from windows.
- Monitor your weather radio, television, internet, or other weather service provider for additional information.

If someone is injured or there is damage caused by the weather, notify Vanderbilt University Police Department:

- Notify VUPD of the location and nature of injury or damage.
- Exit a building that smells of natural gas or chemical fumes.
- Do not tour damaged areas.
- Do not tour damaged buildings.
- If you must be outdoors, watch for downed power lines and possible falling debris.
- Use the telephone only to report emergencies.
- Monitor radio and television for reports and guidance.
- Assist persons with disabilities.

Fire Emergency

If you see smoke, see a fire, or hear a fire alarm:

- **IMMEDIATELY EVACUATE THE BUILDING.** Always use the stairs. ***Never use elevators during a fire.***
- If the fire alarm has not been activated, pull the manual fire alarm by the nearest exit.
- Before opening doors, check for heat:
 - **IF THE DOOR IS COOL:**
 - Open the door carefully and proceed to the nearest exit.
 - Close doors behind you and leave the lights on.
 - If there is light smoke, stay low and cover your face with cloth to filter out particulates.
 - **IF THE DOOR IS HOT, DO NOT OPEN IT!**
 - Seek another exit.
 - If you are on a ground floor, try to exit through a window.
- If you are trapped in a room on an upper floor:
 - Call 911 to report your building, floor, room number, and the number of people with you.
 - Prevent smoke from entering the room. If accessible, place wet towels or cloth material at the bottom of the door and cover any vents.
 - If the room begins to fill with smoke, you can open the window slightly. Never break the window because this might cause a chimney effect and help spread the fire.
- Assist the physically impaired as you evacuate the building.
 - Offer to guide the visually impaired.
 - Instruct the hearing impaired to evacuate with you. If you encounter a wheelchair-bound person, assist them to a refuge point and instruct them to wait for Fire Department assistance.

- The first choice for a refuge point would be a widened stairway landing that will accommodate a wheelchair without impeding patrons as they exit.
- If no stairway refuge exists, have them remain in a room with a window.
- Make every attempt to ensure they have a phone or cell phone available.
- Make note of their exact location and continue to evacuate the building.
- After you safely evacuate the building, report to the designated assembly area (Divinity lawn near Heard Library).
- Report to your supervisor or designated point of contact and tell them:
 - The location of anyone who could not be evacuated.
 - The location and phone number of any mobility impaired person you helped.
 - About any problems you witnessed while exiting the building, such as hallways/stairs filling with smoke or blocked by fire.
- DO NOT go back into the building until the Fire Department or VU emergency personnel give the *All Clear*.
- Fire extinguishers are located throughout the building on each floor. See specific locations at the end of this guide.

Active Shooter (Workplace Violence)

If you are involved in a situation where a person has entered the area and started shooting, the following actions are recommended.

If you have been a victim of violence or expect to have a strong response to the content of the training video linked below, you may want to plan to watch it when you are able to process it at your own pace or review the written guidelines below instead.

“Surviving an Active Shooter Event” video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VcSwejU2D0&t=11s>

RUN – If there is a way to escape the threat and you are reasonably sure you can do so without being harmed, do it. This is your first and best option.

Be sure to:

- Have an escape route in mind.
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow.
- Leave your belongings behind (keep your cell phone in your pocket).
- Help others escape, especially those with disabilities.
- Tell others not to enter the area where the active shooter may be.
- Always keep your hands visible.
- Follow the instructions of any law enforcement.
- Do not attempt to move injured people.
- Call 911 when it is safe to do so and provide the following information:
 - Your name and location

- Location of the incident (be as specific as possible)
- Number of shooters (if known)
- Number of persons who may be involved

HIDE – If evacuation is not possible, you should “secure in place,” or if the active shooter is outdoors, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you. Choose the best space that is available quickly.

Your hiding place should:

- Be out of view of the active shooter.
- Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., a room with a door that can be locked).
- Not trap you or restrict your options for movement.

To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place, you should:

- Turn off the lights.
- Lock all doors and windows, if possible.
- Place heavy furniture or equipment in front of any doors (especially if the door does not lock or opens into the hallway).
- If possible, wrap a belt or electrical cord around the closer mechanism at the top of the door to prevent the door from opening.
- Close blinds, and cover and move away from windows.

To keep yourself safe while hiding, you should:

- Remain quiet.
- Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks).
- Silence your cell phone and turn off vibrate mode.
- Turn off any sources of noise (i.e., radios, TVs).
- Don’t respond to voice commands or move barricades until you are sure that commands are coming from police.
- If you can speak to a dispatcher without being overheard by the assailants, dial 911 to alert police to the situation.
- If you cannot speak, mute the speaker, and leave the line open so the dispatcher can listen.
 - The VandySafe app allows for text chat with dispatchers. Select the “Contact VUPD” button then the “Chat with VUPD” option.
- Do not approach emergency responders; let them come to you.

If outside when a shooting occurs:

- Drop to the ground immediately, face down, and as flat as possible. If within 15-20 feet of a safe place or cover, duck and run for it.

- Move or crawl away from gunfire, trying to use any obstacle between you and the gunfire. Remember, obstacles may conceal you from sight but may not be bulletproof.
- When you reach the relatively safe place, stay down, and do not move. Do not peek or raise your head to try to see what is happening.
- Wait and listen for further instructions from law enforcement.

FIGHT – as a last resort if your life is in danger. If you cannot evacuate or hide effectively, or have been discovered, be ready to fight.

Take steps to incapacitate the active shooter:

- Act as aggressively as possible against him or her.
- Throw any items available at the intruder(s) to distract them (i.e., books, backpacks, etc.).
- Use improvised weapons such as a fire extinguisher or chair.
- Yell.
- Commit to your actions.

Medical Emergency

- Immediately call VU Police Department at 911 from any campus phone or (615) 421-1911 from any cell phone. Be prepared to give the name and location of the building as well as the nature of the medical emergency.
- In addition, notify building emergency coordinators.
- Remain with the person with the medical injury. Do not move them unless they are in immediate danger of further injury.
- Once the emergency has been dealt with, if the injured person is a University employee, the supervisor must notify the Vanderbilt Risk and Insurance Management Office and complete the First Report of Work Injury form: [Origami Risk - Welcome to the Vanderbilt University Intake Portal](#).
- If the injured person is a Divinity student, notify the Divinity Office of Student Affairs. If the injured person is a Non-Divinity Vanderbilt student, notify University Student Affairs.
- More information concerning a supervisor’s responsibility can be found at Human Resources Policy: Work-Related Injury and Illness Process & Return to Work <https://hr.vanderbilt.edu/policies/process-WorkRelatedInjury.php>.

Suspicious Letter, Package, or Other Items

If you notice protruding wires, strange odors, smoke, vapors, beeping, ticking, or a suspicious powdery substance on letters, packages, or any other unattended items that you discover, you should treat that item as suspicious, and follow these instructions:

- Do not open, shake, or disturb the contents.
- Do not try to smell the item.
- Do not pass to others or transport contents out of the area.
- If you are holding the item, set it down carefully and walk away from it, then wash your hands with soap and water.
- Call Vanderbilt Police and provide the location of the item, a description including size, and your location and contact number.

If the suspicious letter, package, or item has a powdery substance on the outside or is leaking:

- Follow the instructions listed above.
- Do not try to clean up powders or fluids.
- Place the envelope or package in a plastic bag or some other type of container to contain leakage of contents.
- If nothing is available, cover the item and leave it undisturbed. Close windows, turn off fans, close door, or section off the area to minimize exposure to others.
- Wash your hands with soap and water and move to an area that minimizes your exposure.
- Remain in the area and restrict others from entering until the arrival of Vanderbilt Police.
- Terminate response when directed by Vanderbilt Police.
- Complete a "First Report of Injury" report and contact Occupational Health. During off hours, call the VUMC Emergency Department if exposure occurred.
- If any of these characteristics are present, you may need to consider a letter or package to be suspicious:
 - No return address
 - Use of restrictive markings
 - Excessive packaging material
 - Addressed to title only, common words misspelled, poorly typed or written
 - Excessive postage
 - Oily stains, discolorations, or crystallization on wrapper
 - Strange odor or protruding wires

Bomb Threat

In you receive a PHONE CALL about a bomb threat, remain calm and follow these instructions:

- Attempt to keep the caller on the phone line as long as possible.
- Ask caller to repeat the message and record every word.
- Use the telephone bomb threat checklist (below).
 - Ask for the exact location of the device.
 - Get as much information as possible about the caller (i.e., vocal characteristic, race, sex, group affiliation, why the bomb was placed).

- Listen for clues from background noises which might indicate the caller's identification and location.
- Immediately after the caller hangs up, report the threat to the Vanderbilt University Police Department. Make this and other notifications on a different phone if possible. Officials may be able to trace the call from your device.
- Remain available when law enforcement personnel arrive. They will want to interview you.
- Do not spread rumors.

If you receive a WRITTEN MESSAGE about a bomb threat, remain calm and follow these instructions:

- Avoid handling the message unnecessarily in order to preserve evidence such as possible fingerprint(s), whether the message was handwritten or typed, the kind of paper used, and postal marks. This will prove essential in tracing the threat and identifying the writer.
- While written messages are usually associated with generalized threats and extortion attempts, a written warning of a specific device may occasionally be received; it should never be ignored.
- Immediately contact Vanderbilt University Police Department.
- Do not spread rumors.

Bomb Threat Notes

Exact time of call: _____ AM/PM

Exact words of caller: _____

Questions to ask the caller:

1. When is bomb going to explode? _____
2. Where is the bomb? _____
3. What does it look like? _____
4. What kind of a bomb is it? _____
5. What will cause it to explode? _____
6. Did you place the bomb? Yes/No
7. Why? _____
8. Where are you calling from? _____
9. What is your address? _____
10. What is your name? _____

Caller's Voice (Circle all that apply):

Calm	Disguised	Nasal	Angry
Broken	Stutter	Slow	Sincere
Lisp	Rapid	Giggling	Deep

Crying Squeaky Excited Stressed
Accent Loud Slurred Normal

If the voice is familiar, who does it sound like? _____

List any background noises you remember hearing: _____

Remarks: _____

Person receiving call: _____

Telephone number call received at: _____

Date: _____

Hostage Situation

If you witness or become involved in a hostage situation:

- Immediately remove yourself from any danger.
- Notify Vanderbilt University Police Department at 911 on any campus phone or (615) 421-1911 from any cell phone.
- Tell them the following:
 - Your name and location
 - Location of incident
 - Number of possible hostage takers.
 - Physical description and names of hostage takers, if possible.
 - Number of possible hostages
 - Types of weapons and threats

If you are taken hostage:

- Remain calm, be polite, and cooperate with your captors.
- Be patient and avoid drastic actions. Time is on your side.
- Do not speak unless spoken to, and then only when necessary.
- Do not talk down to the captor, as he or she may be agitated.
- Avoid appearing hostile.
- Maintain eye contact with the captor, but do not stare.
- Comply with instructions as best as you can.
- DO NOT draw attention to yourself with sudden body movements, statements, comments, or by looking hostile.
- Be observant, as you may be released or escape, and the safety of others may depend on your memory. Observe the captors and try to memorize their physical traits, voice patterns, clothing or other details that would help you to describe them.
- DO NOT attempt escape unless there is an extremely good chance of survival. It is safer to be submissive and obey your captors.
- If forced to present terrorist demands to authorities, either in writing or on a tape, state clearly that the demands are from your captors. Avoid making a plea on your own behalf.
- Try to stay low to the ground or behind cover from windows or doors, if possible.

In a rescue situation:

- DO NOT RUN. Drop to the floor and remain still. If that is not possible, cross your arms, lower your head, and stand still. Make no sudden moves that a tense rescuer may interpret as hostile or threatening.
- Wait for instructions and obey all instructions you are given.
- Do not be upset, resist, or argue if a rescuer isn't sure whether you are a suspect or a hostage.
- Even if you are handcuffed and searched, DO NOT resist. Just wait for the confusion to clear.
- You will be taken to a safe area, where proper identification and status will be determined.

Earthquake

Earthquakes strike suddenly, violently, and without warning. Most injuries result from collapsing walls, flying glass, and falling objects.

If indoors:

- Stay away from windows.
- DO NOT stand in a doorway.
- DO NOT use the elevators.
- DO NOT run for the exits or attempt to leave the building. Most injuries occur when people inside buildings attempt to move to a different location or exit the building.
- Protect yourself from falling objects such as light fixtures, books, and shelves.
- DROP to the ground; take COVER by getting under a sturdy table or other piece of furniture; and HOLD ON until the shaking stops. If no tables or desks are near, cover your face and head with your arms and crouch in an inside corner of the building.
- In laboratories, extinguish all flames (if possible) before taking cover. Stay clear of areas with large quantities of hazardous materials.

If outside:

- Move away from structures, power lines or other possible hazards.
- Lie down or crouch low to the ground (your legs will not be steady).
- Keep looking around to be aware of dangers, which may demand immediate movement.

When the shaking stops:

- Check for injuries to personnel in your area. DO NOT attempt to move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger.
- Check the area for safety hazards such as building damage, fires, chemical spills, or gas leaks.

- Exit the building and go to your designated assembly area. Stay at least 500 feet away from the affected building or other hazards. Keep streets, fire lanes, and walkways clear for emergency vehicles and crews.
- Take roll and report missing persons, injuries, damages, and/or potentially hazardous conditions to building manager or designated point of contact.
- Supervisors and designated points of contact should contact the Vanderbilt University Police Department to report any immediate emergencies.
- Once you have exited the building, DO NOT re-enter the building until the building has been inspected by trained emergency personnel.
- Use the telephone system only for urgent matters.

Locations of Fire Extinguishers and AED Devices

Fire extinguishers on the ground floor are located:

- Right outside the elevator
- In loading dock hallway across from room G15 (bike storage)
- Beside mechanical room near room G04

Fire extinguishers on the first floor are located:

- Right outside the elevator
- Outside the Admissions Office (room 135)
- Inside Benton Chapel in the fire extinguisher room
- Near the James Lawson Institute (room 119) next to the women's restroom
- Next to room 117 across from the James Lawson Institute
- Next to room 107

Fire extinguishers on the second floor are located:

- Right outside the elevator
- Across from room 252
- Toward the end of the hall across from room 221
- Next to room 207