Evaluation praises UL system emergency plan

From staff reports

The University of Louisiana System is the model for systemwide emergency planning and preparedness, according to the Board of Regents’ associate commissioner heading up higher education’s statewide campus security plan.

Last fall, the UL System hired an independent evaluator, Dewberry and Davis to review its system and individual campus emergency preparedness plans as part of the Board of Regents call for campus security reviews in the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings last year.

“The University of Louisiana System is the only system that has contracted with an external evaluator to provide a standards-based plan and is the only system to bring the right people together to work collaboratively. You are the model,” stated Mike Ablatti, Board of Regents associate commissioner for information and learning technology.

The system unveiled the results of Dewberry’s evaluation of campus plans on Friday. The report included 26 recommendations, including the formation of an emergency preparedness steering committee, which met for the first time on Friday.

While evaluators noted coordination within the system, recommendations included a systemwide emergency communication system.

The reviewers found that those employees responsible for emergency management on the campus have multiple duties that extend beyond emergency planning.

The plan recommends that each university consider hiring a full-time emergency management coordinator.

Reviewers also recommended that the system designate two centers — one in the north and one in the south — where resources would be directed following a disaster.

The evaluators also recommended that campuses review lessons learned from the Virginia Tech shootings and Hurricane Rita and Katrina.

The steering committee will meet quarterly to review best practices for professional development and to continue the implementation of the Dewberry report’s recommendations, said Robbie Robinson, Internal Auditor who co-chairs the committee along with Devin Broome.

The system’s campuses will also soon implement an emergency text messaging system through Firstcall Networks, one of three vendors the Regents have selected for text messaging services at all of the state’s public colleges and universities.

While UL has implemented a free emergency text messaging service, Firstcall goes beyond text messaging and also allows for text to voice features that will send messages to landlines, will interface with campus signage, and will be able to trigger an alarm.