



Emergency Alert System Tested At UALR

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In light of recent school shootings, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock installed an emergency instant notification system. It's designed to let students and staff know there's a problem on campus. The school put it to the test Tuesday.

UALR is the latest campus to install something called "AlertXpress." Northern Illinois University used this same system last week when shootings happened on their campus.

UALR students say they feel more comfortable knowing this system is in place.

With a few key strokes on a computer keyboard, UALR police officer Bill Reardon sends an emergency message test to every staff and faculty member and many students. Reardon and a handful of other officials on campus have access to the AlertXpress system.

It only took about 30 seconds for phones to start ringing.

Reardon says, "You're talking an excellent system here. We're talking within 2 to 3 minutes we got 1,490 people."

Spokesperson Judy Williams says the system was installed after last year's Virginia Tech shootings, but not tested until now.

Williams says, "If you're trying to communicate to 16,000 people, which is what our community consists of, then you want lots of different methods."

In addition to each student getting an email notifying them of what's happening on campus, every phone inside each UALR dorm room will ring. There will be an automated message alerting them to what's going on.

Some students say installing the system shows UALR is putting students first.

Sophomore Matthew Whitfield says, "As you know last week with Northern Illinois and so if something like that were to happen on our campus I would feel great knowing that if I weren't hurt I would at least get a message telling me to get off campus or go to a safer place."

Student CJ Hunt says, "I feel more comfortable with the alert system because when you have an alarm most of the time students don't know what an alarm is for. Is it a fire alarm? A tornado alarm? Is there a shooter on campus? So it's a lot safer if you have something telling you like a text message or an email saying there's a shooting on campus."

Next week, UALR administrators will test the email part of the system. This week is only a phone test.

Today's THV told you last week how UCA in Conway also uses this system. So far theirs is only hooked up to faculty and staff. They are currently collecting student phone numbers to add to the system.