

State switches basketball playoff setup

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We're prepared



MEDIA GENERAL NEWS SERVICE FILE ART

Maj. Clyde Deal (center), with the Hickory Police Department, talks with members of the Special Operations Team as they prepare to clear CVCC's East Campus recently after a gunman was spotted.

College officials say campus is ready for any emergencies

BY MATTHEW HENSLEY
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MORGANTON — It was just two weeks ago that Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory was locked down after someone reported seeing a gunman on campus.

Morganton's Western Piedmont Community College has yet to see such an on-campus emergency, but campus officials say they're prepared.

Scott Kerley is WPCC's security chief and he says the

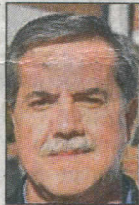
college is ready for the worst. The school has standing agreements with all local law agencies, evacuation and lockdown plans, and alert systems to let students and staff alike know if there's danger on campus.

Kerley's key to keeping the campus safe is "being proactive." On Thursday, campus officials went over safety

precautions with the staff. They plan to soon hold mock drills with Morganton Public Safety's help to test their preparedness.

Atticus Simpson, vice president of student development, says a key part is communication.

The college has a system that sends emergency alerts to the more than 2,000 computers on campus to let staff and students know when an issue is present.



Kerley

WPCC

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The alert is hard to ignore, Atticus said, as it causes computers to beep and will display the alert regardless of what the computer is doing.

Western Piedmont is also in the process of testing a text and phone alert system that will send out a text, phone or email alert

to anyone who signs up for the alerts, he said.

The system, called Re-group, is the same system CVCC used to alert its students and staff about the reported gunman on its campus.

WPCC spokeswoman Libby Barger added that the college is also working on other ways to alert people to an emergency.

A grant request for Western Piedmont was recently approved that will allow

the college to install a siren system to alert people to dangers on campus.

Kerley says the campus has been working on the grant request since last summer and hopes to have the system installed in the coming months.

Simpson said emergency manuals dictate to employees how to respond to each emergency, whether it's a gunman on campus or a tornado bearing down.

There are evacuation

plans for fires and designated shelters for storms, he said. When a threat, such as a reported gunman, is on campus, there are plans for lockdowns.

Simpson said regular interdepartmental safety meetings and annual rules overhauls keep those procedures current.

"I think we are doing everything we can to be prepared for situations that could arise," Simpson said.

Today's Weather

Local 5-Day Forecast

Fri 2/3	Sat 2/4	Sun 2/5	Mon 2/6	Tue 2/7
				
61/38	54/44	57/40	53/37	60/34
Plentiful sunshine. High 61F. Winds E at 5 to 10 mph.	Showers possible. Highs in the mid 50s and lows in the mid 40s.	Chance of showers. Highs in the upper 50s and lows in the low 40s.	Chance of showers. Highs in the low 50s and lows in the upper 30s.	More sun than clouds. Highs in the low 60s and lows in the mid 30s.