

PRESS RELEASE FACILITATION GROUP 2

Details:

- Crisis media kit
 - Initial news release taken
 - One page profile of your organization (Backgrounder, Pg. 80) Mae Shaw
 - A page of quotes from spokespeople, including contact info (Pg. 65)
 - Biographical details about key figures involved in some way with the crisis (Pg. 82)
 - Relevant visual materials
 - Detailed description of organization's facilities
- Target audience is journalists
 - Material included needs to be relevant, newsworthy, timely, clear and concise
 - All materials should be included in one document. Scan visuals and include in doc. Resolution needs to be as high as possible
 - Crisis media kit will be graded on grammar, spelling, punctuation, editing, style and format errors. Errors are 4 pts each

3 core themes:

- Safety is our number one priority
- Moving forward this is what we have in place
- Reassurance and sensitivity towards those affected

The crisis:

The **sold-out Auburn Arena** is packed with basketball fans as the undefeated Auburn Tigers (28-0) host the Kentucky Wildcats (27-1) for the SEC title. A national television audience has tuned in and multiple media outlets are present to cover the game.

Ten minutes before tipoff, an explosion occurs at one of the crowded **concession stands**. There are mass casualties.

It is now 5 p.m. Here is what we know:

- **5 people** have been **killed**, including **2 Auburn students**
- At least **20 are injured**
- The explosion appears to have been caused by a **gas leak** near an open flame, but fire officials continue to investigate

- After initially **delaying the tipoff for two hours**, a decision was made to **postpone the game until Monday**.
- As recently as **Friday (Feb. 25)** the **head of catering was aware of a leaky gas** line in that same kitchen. A **student interning** with campus catering was **also aware** of it.

Timeline of Explosion:

3:07pm Head of Catering notices leaky gas line in the Half-Court Cafe kitchen

3:42pm Student intern made aware of the same gas leak

5:15pm Explosion (killed: couple in their 30's, 2 Auburn students, and man in his 60s)(injured: 20)

5:17pm Auburn band member dials 911

5:17pm University Public Safety and Security notified – Athletics Director receives call from them

****Need to figure out how everyone was notified? What platform/medium?**

5:21pm Fire department arrives

Key Themes:

Safety. Transparency. Prevention.

- A. Empathy (lives lost)
- B. What happened:
- C. What we're doing right now
- D. How we will prevent it in the future:
- E. End with condolences:
- F. Thank the first responders:

How we are solving:

- Different Arena. TBD on location.
- Structural engineer inspection
- All medical expenses covered for those injured
- Suspending class this week for our students' mental health and well-being
- Counseling services through Auburn University Student Counseling and Psychological Services

- Use your Auburn ID to have all expenses paid for
- Students and Families planned memorial service tonight at Samford Lawn
 - Come bring a candle

What are we not disclosing:

- Employee and student intern

Individual Roles and Script: (under this section we will write what we will say during the press conference initially)

Moderator:

- I'd like to thank everyone for being here today. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims and their families affected by this tragedy.
- What happened
- What is Happening Now
- What is happening in the future
- Committed to promptness and openness

Fire Chief

*

What measures we're taking to make sure there's no gas leaks in the future

- Structural engineer to check out arena

President:

- Free Counseling services using Auburn ID

Head of Campus Safety and Security

*

Athletic Director:

- In light of recent events, the SEC title game has been temporarily rescheduled to Monday. However, we are currently evaluating whether it will be held at the arena as scheduled, pending a thorough safety review. Our aim is to ensure that the chosen venue meets the highest standards of safety and security for all attendees. This decision is made to prioritize the safety and well-being of our fans, staff and athletes.
- In addition to game postponement, we have taken proactive measures to enhance safety throughout the arena. All concession stands have been closed to undergo thorough inspections, ensuring that they meet safety standards. Our

Basketball Coach:

- Student planned memorial at stamford lawn tonight to honor the victims

News Release:

2/25/24

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contacts:

Stewart Massey, Office of Communications and Marketing, 334-844-9999 or
jsm0119@auburn.edu

Explosion incident at Auburn Arena during SEC title game

In a devastating turn of events the packed Auburn Arena, buzzing with excitement for the SEC title game between the Auburn Tigers and the Kentucky Wildcats, was struck by a tragic explosion just prior to the anticipated tipoff time.

At approximately 5:15 p.m., an explosion occurred at the Half-Court Cafe in the arena causing chaos among attendees. The explosion resulted in the loss of five lives, including two Auburn students. At least 20 individuals have been reported injured, with some in critical condition.

Initial investigations indicate a gas leak near an open flame as the cause of the explosion, though investigations are ongoing.

Quick action was taken in response to the emergency. A member of the Auburn band called 911 at 5:17 p.m. and the fire department arrived at 5:21 p.m.

“We have delayed the game until further notice — safety comes first. We have shut down all concession stands for further inspection and called in all faculty and staff members operating the stand to gather information,” said Auburn Athletics Director, Katie Patrick.

The decision was made to postpone the SEC title game until Monday, after an initial delay of two hours.

Information regarding the investigation will be provided as it becomes available.

Quotes from Spokespeople

**Stewart Massey, jcm0119@auburn.edu
Auburn University Public Information Officer**

“We sympathize with the students, families and fans that have been affected by this situation. Auburn University designed this conference to relay the latest and accurate information to the public as soon as possible.

We are closely monitoring and investigating the situation and we will go the extra mile to ensure that this does not affect our campus again.”

**Anna Carson Wagner
City of Auburn Fire Chief**

“We received the call and our team immediately sprung into action. We located the gas leak and escorted victims in an ambulance to East Alabama Medical Center. We have created a new checklist for each concession to complete before and after games.”

Our community’s safety is our number one priority. Our commitment is to provide the most efficient service for our city by acting in a safe, courteous and professional manner.”

**Sophia Reagan
Auburn University President**

“Auburn University is mourning right now, and our faculty wants to offer our deepest condolences for the lives lost in this horrible accident. Our student’s safety is our top priority, and we will handle this issue to the best of our ability. Our services will be organizing a memorial soon for those who are no longer with us.

We will pay all medical expenses for those injured. In addition, we are suspending class this week for our students’ mental health and well-being. We promise to do everything in our power to help keep Auburn’s campus and community safe and do so with excellence.”

**Tiffany Osborn
Head of Campus Safety and Security**

“We have alerted all parents and faculty members of the students who have been affected by this horrible incident. If you have not been contacted, there is no need to stress about the safety of your student.

We have been in contact with families of victims, injured attendees and healthcare in the surrounding areas. We are doing all that we can to ensure that their well-being is a top priority and that they are being taken care of.”

Katie Patrick

Athletics Director

“We have delayed the game until further notice – safety comes first. We have shut down all concession stands for further inspection and called in all faculty and staff members operating the stand to gather information.

Mae Shaw

Auburn Basketball Head Coach

“This is a tragedy. Our thoughts and prayers go out to every student, faculty member and family member affected. We have educated and equipped the team on fire safety tactics and ways to prevent further issues.”

AUBURN UNIVERSITY PROFILER

Auburn University, located in Auburn, Alabama, is a renowned public research institution known for its rich history, academic excellence, and vibrant campus life. Founded in 1856, Auburn is one of the oldest universities in the South and has evolved into a leading center for education, research, and innovation.

Auburn University is a nationally ranked land grant institution recognized for its commitment to world-class scholarship, interdisciplinary research with an elite, top-tier Carnegie R1 classification, life-changing outreach with Carnegie's Community Engagement designation and an undergraduate education experience second to none. Auburn is home to more than 30,000 students, and its faculty and research partners collaborate to develop and deliver meaningful scholarship, science and technology-based advancements that meet pressing regional, national and global needs. Auburn's commitment to active student engagement, professional success and public/private partnership drives a growing reputation for outreach and extension that delivers broad economic, health and societal impact.

With over 30,000 students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs, Auburn offers a wide range of disciplines and degree options, including engineering, business, agriculture, and the arts. The university's iconic campus spans over 1,800 acres and features state-of-the-art facilities, including the Jordan-Hare Stadium, Neville Arena and so much more. Committed to student success, Auburn provides numerous opportunities for hands-on learning, research and community engagement, preparing graduates to excel in their chosen fields and make meaningful contributions to society.

Auburn University athletics are a source of pride and excitement for the Auburn community. The Auburn Tigers compete in the Southeastern Conference at the NCAA Division I level, fielding competitive teams in a variety of sports, including football, basketball, baseball, and more. The university's football program, led by the iconic War Eagle battle cry, has a rich history of success, including multiple conference championships and a national championship. Auburn's basketball teams have also enjoyed success, with both the men's and women's programs competing at a high level in the SEC. The university's commitment to athletic excellence is evident in its state-of-the-art facilities, passionate fan base, and the dedication of its student-athletes and coaching staff.

VISUAL MATERIALS

Neville Arena



Neville Arena replaced the old Beard-Eaves Memorial Coliseum as home of Tiger basketball for the 2010-11 season.

Inside Neville Arena



The Arena features a team store, six concession stands, three elevators, 94 HD televisions plus family restrooms and customer service kiosks on all seating levels.

Neville Arena Seating Map



LEGEND	
■	Students

PLEASE NOTE
- Auburn University is a smoke-free campus. Thank you for not smoking.
- Map information is subject to change. Visit AuburnTigers.com for updates to this map and other gameday information.

The furthest seat in Neville Arena is just 43 feet away from the court. A full two-thirds of the seats in the facility are less than 27 feet in elevation from the courtside.

Auburn Faculty

Neville Arena opened in 2010 and was named after Bill and Connie Neville, members of the Pat Dye Society, Tigers Unlimited's highest level of giving. Neville Arena replaced the old Beard-Eaves Memorial Coliseum as the home of Tiger basketball.

Built at a cost of \$86 million, Neville Arena seats 9,121 fans for basketball games, bringing Tiger fans close to the action. A full two-thirds of the seats in the facility are less than 27 feet in elevation from the courtside. Auburn students have their own entrance, lobby, and concessions area at the Arena to service 1,500 floor-level seats.

The Arena features a team store, six concession stands, three elevators, 94 HD televisions family restrooms, and customer service kiosks on all seating levels. For special events, 12,000 square feet of banquet space, including tailgate and super suites, is available.

Q's:

- 1) I believe the dean of veterinary sciences mentioned there are missing students. Is this correct and what is your strategy in locating these students?
- 2) The VP of Student Affairs mentioned that students cannot return to their places of residence. How will you accommodate housing for students who are not able to return to their residences?
- 3) How are you tackling the "fluke in our system?"
- 4) What does damage control look like?

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Anna Carson Wagner, City of Auburn Fire Chief

Anna Carson Wagner is the fire chief for the city of Auburn. Wagner began working for the Auburn Fire Department in 2009 as a candidate firefighter and was promoted to fire chief in 2019. Wagner is originally from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and moved to Auburn to complete her firefighter training in 2007. Wagner has dedicated the past decade and a half of her life to protecting and serving the Auburn community.

Tiffany Osborn, Head of Auburn University Public Safety and Security

Tiffany Osborn is the head of public safety and security at Auburn University. Osborn is an Auburn University alumna and Georgia native. Osborn has worked for the university for nine years. She was promoted to public safety and security head two years ago. Osborn is responsible for security and emergency response, compliance management, policy development, team leadership, budget allocation requests, stakeholder engagement and data analysis and reporting.

Sophia Reagan, Auburn University President

Sophia Reagan is the president of Auburn University. Reagan began working for Auburn University after graduating as a student in 2015. Reagan was promoted to president in 2020. Originally from Mobile, Alabama, Reagan moved to Auburn to attend college in 2011. As President of Auburn University, Reagan is responsible for managing, directing and conducting all affairs of the University, except those which by law or the board's by-laws are made the specific responsibility of other persons.

Katie Patrick, Auburn University Athletic Director

Katie Patrick is the campus athletic director at Auburn University. Originally from Alexandria, Virginia, Patrick moved to Auburn to obtain her position as athletic director in 2019. Patrick's prior experience includes serving as the athletic director for Mississippi State University from 2013-2018. As campus Athletic Director, Patrick oversees all student-athlete engagement, maintains administrative oversight, oversees olympic sport recruiting, represents Auburn University Athletics Department on National Collegiate Athletic Associations (NCAA), Southeastern Conference (SEC), Auburn University's Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics (CIA) and other external committees as assigned.

-more-

Mae Shaw,

Auburn University Men's Basketball Head Coach

Mae Shaw is the current Auburn University Men's Basketball Head Coach. Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, Shaw moved to Auburn in 2011 to attend Auburn University. Shaw graduated with her bachelor's in exercise and sports science. She obtained the position as the Auburn Tigers head coach in 2017. This is her first head coaching job as well as her first university crisis during her time at Auburn.

Stewart Massey,

Auburn University Public Information Officer

Stewart Massey is the public information officer for Auburn University. Massey is originally from Valley, Alabama and moved to Auburn in 2013 and graduated in 2017 with a bachelor's in public relations. Massey started his career at Auburn University in the Office of Student Affairs and was subsequently promoted to public information officer in 2022. This will be his first crisis on the job.