Summary:

On September 1, 2015 at 9:00 a.m., the IPFW campus conducted a campus-wide emergency fire drill, which included all campus buildings except the Dolnick Learning Center. Among the noticeable strengths were the quick response in building evacuations, the cooperation and expertise of the Fort Wayne Fire Department (FWFD) and the effectiveness of newly formed “Building Coordinator” program. Areas that require continued improvement are increased training and awareness of emergency procedures for all campus members and more frequent monitoring of systems in place for emergency situations.

PRE-EMERGENCY DRILL (Strengths and Challenges):

Personnel:

Prior to the emergency drill being conducted, a “Building Coordinator” program was implemented in June 2015. The program identifies staff and / or faculty assigned to a specific building or floor of a building to assist in preparing for emergency incidents. IPFW has over 50 volunteers in the role of building coordinator. They were of great assistance in preparing for the drill by guiding emergency personnel through their specific assigned areas and will continue in the future to monitor specific issues and report concerns on a quarterly basis.

The planned drill also prompted a discussion and potential solutions for students, staff and faculty who are unable to navigate stairs in the event of an emergency evacuation. An area that requires improvement is increased training and instructions for those who need help evacuating a building (currently included in the annual training provided through HR) and may be accomplished by working with the Services for Students with Disabilities Office. The limitation is that it will only be available for students who choose such services and with no impact on faculty / staff.

Buildings / Equipment:

During the visit to campus buildings, outdated or incorrect information was found in many of the buildings. Specifically, classrooms are required to have evacuation and occupancy information posted. With some significant changes in notification (emergency phone number and tornado siren), the information posted was outdated. Additionally, many areas still had outdated emergency response posters displayed with an outdated emergency number listed.
Staff from the IPFW Physical Plant was able to update and post the new evacuation and occupancy information in classrooms prior to the drill. Additionally, new updated emergency procedures posters replaced the outdated posters during the weeks that building coordinators escorted emergency personnel through their areas.

An observation was made that there is no handicap access to the Alumni Center or the IPFW Police Department. Other buildings on campus may have limited handicap access; however, there is generally a means for handicap entry into most campus buildings.

A complex fire alarm system equipment upgrade was made prior to the drill. Activation points were programmed into our campus system so that we can now conduct fire drills for all campus buildings or any groups, or individual buildings as needed. This can be done with one push of a button from the University Police office or the Campus Safety office. This can be used for fire drills or for testing fire alarm horns/strobe during the night time hours. With this system, we no longer need to go through the process of calling Fort Wayne Consolidated Communications Partnership (CCP) during normal business hours to have them put our buildings in test. Building fire alarms can remain active during the times that we conduct drills or horn/strobe tests. It would still be wise to notify the CCP if we are testing, just in case there is a malfunction of some type.

During the programming of the above drill system, Simplex discovered a corruption of the data in building C, and has since been able to correct that problem.

Preparation for the drill also included testing of “emergency” phones located in many Science Building classrooms, Neff Hall classrooms and the Gates Center Fieldhouse. These emergency phones provide a direct dial to the main IPFW Police Department phone line (481-6827) which is monitored from 7:00 a.m. through 8:00 p.m. (Monday through Friday) by office personnel. It is further monitored by officers who are on duty and carry a cell phone during the other weekly hours and on the weekends / holidays.

Notifications:
In an attempt to widely notify the campus community of the planned drill, it was announced at the Convocation on August 24, 2015. The RAVE Emergency Notification System was also used to send out an alert e-mail message to all campus subscribers.

Less formal means to announce the drill were used through building coordinators, department heads and other informal methods to make campus members aware of the emergency drill.
POST-EMERGENCY DRILL (Strengths and Challenges):

Personnel:
A significant strength is the support we received from the fire alarm system (Simplex) technicians – Dave Fritzel and Tim McMahon. They worked many hours of overtime to help make the test successful. They also cared enough to be present on campus for our first live fire drill.

There are several challenges for improved actions by students, faculty and staff. Included are issues that came about during the fire drill:

- A return of students, faculty and staff to buildings prior to being given the “all-clear” by designated personnel. Because the majority of the buildings were completely evacuated in five minutes or less, the fire system was silenced at 9:05. However, a silencing of alarms does not indicate that a building is safe to re-enter. The challenge is to emphasize the importance of not returning into a building after an evacuation until a formal “all clear” has been issued.

- Similarly, the concern was raised that the sound of a fire alarm in any given building often results in the occupants asking questions or waiting to find out if the alarm is false, rather than evacuating immediately.

- Additionally, a building coordinator noted that many people did not close office and classroom doors to prevent smoke damage and the spread of fire, which is an action that should be taken in both practice and real fire emergencies.

Each of the concerns listed are specifically addressed in the crisis training provided by Human Resources annually and are listed in the IPFW Crisis Response Plan. The challenge is to find ways to raise awareness and encourage regular practice of emergency procedures.

A review of the IPFW Crisis website and IPFW Crisis Response Plan (https://www.ipfw.edu/crisis/) reveals outdated material that should be reviewed and updated

Buildings / Equipment:
There were some immediate challenges noted during the drill itself, with the most notable challenge being the discovery that the Kettler Hall horns did not sound when activated by the all-campus alarm or by a manual pull of a fire alarm inside Kettler Hall by one of the IPFW police officers.

When this was investigated Simplex found an interesting issue. The new program (which was used during the drill) was not compatible with some very old programming in the Kettler Hall fire system. When activated together, no horns would sound and the system would basically lock up until it was reset. That problem has been fixed and tested successfully. It was also discovered during the drill that six circuit boards in the Williams Theatre building overheated and have since been replaced.
A common challenge at the conclusion of the drill was that many buildings needed to have the fire panel re-set individually. The problem may have been easily remedied by using the computer system in the Campus Safety or Police Department offices to re-set all systems simultaneously.

A challenge noted by the Fort Wayne Fire Department (FWFD) during their evacuation of a handicapped individual from the fourth floor of the Science Building related to the elevator. This elevator is accessible from the ground floor from one entrance (North) and is also accessible from the first floor from another entrance (East). In this type of situation, there should be a fire box next to the elevator on both the ground and first floor levels with the fire department elevator control keys inside both fire boxes. (Example: Science building northeast elevator). Within the fire boxes, all keys should be marked as to which rooms they unlock.

A failure noted by FWFD in the Science Building specifically is that the elevator did not return to the ground floor, as it is designed to do once a fire alarm in the building has been activated. Improvement across campus should be made by ensuring elevators are operating as intended and should be monitored on a regular basis.

A suggestion made by the FWFD is that an evacuation chair be maintained in one squad car or at the police department for a potential evacuation of a handicapped person. The FWFD personnel also suggested that all police officers be trained in opening an elevator that has a person trapped inside.

A request to adjust fire alarm horn volume came from a staff member in the LA building – specifically the ground floor. Apparently the volume was at a level described as “painful” and the staff member felt the volume was excessive.

**Notifications:**
A current faculty member reported that she did not receive the e-mail alert announcement. In working with IT, it was discovered that the specific faculty member had temporarily left IPFW, rejoined recently, as was still listed as a previous employee. This listing prevented her from receiving alert messages through the RAVE system. In addition to correcting the faculty member’s status, this information prompted two new IT procedures that are in place or in progress to ensure that notifications are received by subscribers.

**Conclusion:**
The planned and announced fire drill conducted at IPFW provided significant opportunities to improve emergency preparedness prior to the drill, increase personal awareness, provide a simple yet effective emergency response to a simulated fire, and identify areas that require continued improvement across campus. The objectives listed in the fire drill operational plan (to assess the ability for students, staff and faculty to appropriately evacuate buildings in a fire emergency and to evaluate emergency plans and response) were fundamentally accomplished.