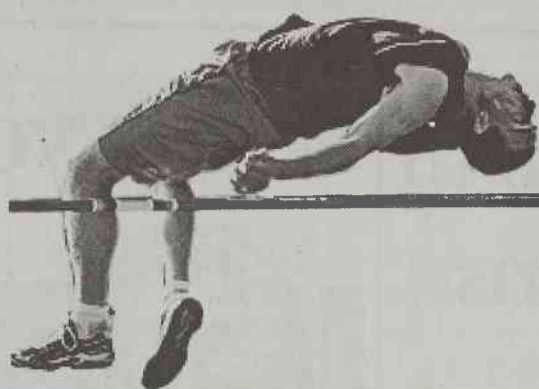


THE BLUE BANNER



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UNCA hosts 'Operation Highsmith' UNCA donates Highsmith Center for a terrorism, structural collapse exercise

Stuart Gaines
News Reporter

UNCA will host the largest terrorism and structural collapse exercise ever held in North Carolina. The university will donate the Highsmith Center for use in the multiple-agency testing exercises, which will take place May 20 through 24.

"It's altogether too rare for most emergency services to be able to practice their skills in an unfamiliar environment," wrote Stephen Baxley, director of facilities management and planning, in an e-mail. "We are proud to be able to support this effort, and the people that may benefit from it could be anywhere in North Carolina or the nation."

Response teams from a number of state and local agencies, including the State Bureau of Investigation, North Carolina Office of Emergency Services and local fire and police departments, will be on campus conducting a variety of skill-testing exercises, according to Reggie Goble, a safety officer with facilities management.

The exercises will take place before the massive Highsmith renovation project begins this summer, according to Merianne Epstein, public information director.

"The part I enjoy the most is seeing professionals from different agencies work together towards a common goal and develop a sense of teamwork," wrote Baxley.

"If these folks can work as a team and think their way through problems, then they can handle whatever is thrown at them," said Baxley.

Goble said the concrete, brick and steel structure of the 35,000 square foot Highsmith Center provides an ideal and rare setting for various skill and equipment testing exercises.

Exercises will take place in two 10-hour shifts each day. Each participating agency hones special skills by practicing multiple emergency response scenarios.

Some walls and ceilings may be destroyed as a part of certain exercises, including practices in floor-to-floor repelling, bomb threats, hostage situations and collapsed building scenarios.

"The building just won't implode on itself, by any means, but there will be lots of holes, and things falling and being knocked over," said Goble.

The week's exercises will not include the use of any live ammunition or explosives, but smoke machines will be used.

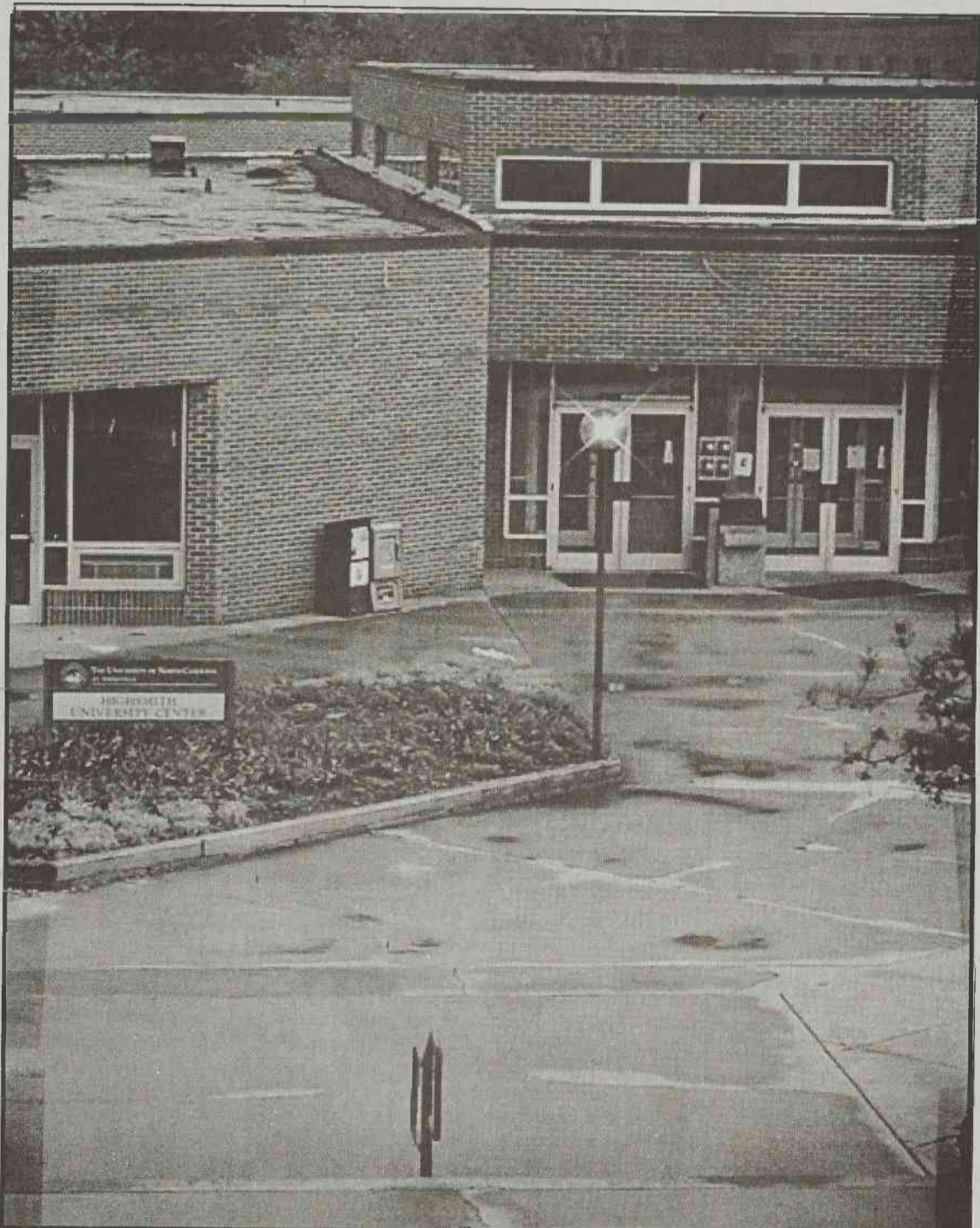
There will also be a viewing area set up for students, media representatives and the general public to observe the exercises, according to Goble.

"Obviously, there are some concerns," said Baxley. "But, we're convinced we can overcome them and that the benefits of this exercise more than offset the inconvenience."

Goble, along with the N.C. State Fire Marshal and Lou Caliendo, director of public safety, will monitor and control the week's activity.

They have the authority to stop any exercise at any time if any problems were to arise.

"These are people who will test their skills, their equipment and their stamina," said Goble. "It's a good time to determine if your teams are at the right mix of persons."



COMPOSITE BY ED FICKLE/ PHOTO EDITOR

The training group will use the Highsmith Center to practice structural collapse, bomb threats and repelling.

The university expects approximately 1,000 people from participating agencies to make the campus their home for the week, as all participants will eat and sleep on campus as part of the exercises.

In true emergency scenarios, response teams could work for as long as 48 hours before they would be released on break, and planned exercises will attempt to reflect those and other realities, according to Goble.

"Before (UNCA) even decided this was something that we could go forward with, UNCA, along with the fire marshal, the facilities management branch and other faculty, looked closely at the building to see if this was something we wanted to do," said Goble. "We looked at the scenarios described to us and felt it was within our

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Student charged with assault, resisting arrest and DWI

Whitney Setser
News Reporter

A UNCA student was charged with three misdemeanors for driving while impaired (DWI) under the age of 21, resisting arrest and assaulting an officer outside Founders Hall dormitory April 5.

"He chose not to cooperate," said Jerry Adams, public safety investigator and shift supervisor. "If he had cooperated, half these charges wouldn't have been necessary."

Public safety officer Steve Metcalf found Kevin Scott Simpson, an undeclared sophomore, sitting in the driver's seat of a car in the Founders Hall parking lot, according to the public safety report.

"It was actually good timing on (Metcalf's) part," said Adams. "From what I understand, (Simpson) was brought to campus in a vehicle by someone else, and he grabbed the keys out of this person's hand."

The car was sitting in the middle of the parking lot outside Founders Hall, according to Adams.

The engine of the car was running, and the headlights were off.

"The motor was running, and he was sitting in the road," said Adams.

"He had control of the vehicle."

Metcalf asked Simpson for identification and to perform two sobriety tests. Simpson refused to take the tests, so Metcalf said he was under arrest for suspicion of DWI, according to public records. Simpson also refused to place his hands behind his back.

As Metcalf was placing handcuffs on him, Simpson twisted away and shoved him in the chest, according to the public safety report.

Simpson ran through the shrubs in front of Founders Hall. Metcalf caught up with him, but Simpson continued to resist arrest, even as Metcalf told him to stop resisting.

"This is the second incident we've had this semester of officers getting assaulted, and it's rare," said Adams. "Both were alcohol related, and both were in, or close to, residence halls."

During the struggle, Metcalf's pants were torn, and his whistle chain was broken.

Metcalf also scraped his knees, according to public records.

"If Officer Metcalf had been injured, it would have been much more serious," said Adams. "But, (the charges) are just misdemeanors at this point."

Metcalf was able to call his dispatcher by radio and ask for assistance from the Asheville Police Department, since he was working alone that night, according to the public safety record.

"The best thing to do (for a stu-



Kevin Scott Simpson

UNCA's 15-passenger vans may be dangerous

Lana Coffey
News Reporter



ED FICKLE/ PHOTO EDITOR

UNCA uses 15-passenger vans to take athletes to their games.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NHTSA) issued a cautionary warning, which stated that fully loaded 15-passenger vans may have an increased rollover risk under certain conditions, according to injuryboard.com.

These vans are commonly used at many universities, including UNCA. "To date, we have not had the first problem with any of our 15-passenger vans during the eight years I

have been here," said Connie Schaller, customer service supervisor for facilities management.

NHTSA's analysis of the vans revealed that vans with 10 or more occupants had nearly three times the rollover rate of vehicles with fewer occupants and a lighter load.

The NHTSA study said 15-passenger vans roll over more often if they are weighted down with passengers, because the center of gravity moves higher and farther back.

NHTSA identified some of the vans at that may pose a risk, including the following:

- Ford Econoline E350

- Ford Club Wagon E350
- Dodge Ram Van/Wagon B3500
- Dodge Ram Wagon B350

While federal laws prohibit the sale of these vans for high school-aged and younger students, no prohibition exists on the transportation of college students.

UNCA has several 15-passenger vans, according to Schaller. The vans are part of the fleet of Motor Fleet Management, who supplies all state vehicles to state agencies. The university follows the recom-

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