*Client Background*

My client is my current employer, the University of Minnesota Public Safety Emergency Communication Center (PSECC). I have worked here since 2003 and we have never had a functional, up to date website in that entire time. Even the current version has information that was incorrect at the time of its last revision and has further changed since. To make matters worse, it looks nothing like the other sites with Public Safety, potentially leading a user to be directed to it and believe they went to the wrong page.

*Client Interactions*

The client interactions for this project primarily involved short interviews with the current employees of the PSECC. The most common complaints revolved around the incorrect information about who to call in what situations and the absence of several phone numbers that would direct calls to their proper location. Some but not all employees commented on the layout of the page and how hard it was to quickly find the desired information. The consensus was that the content of the page was severely lacking in terms of availability and accessibility.

Over the past week I spoke with several current UMN students and alumni about their experiences with the previous page. Only one person out of twelve had ever been to it and that one person had only looked it up to see where I worked. Upon looking at the site, all twelve agreed the information needed to be grouped together is a better fashion with clear headings or images.

*Client Goal*

The goal in this project is to create a usable site with more information than is currently available and with current information. Several of the phone numbers listed on the site are incorrect and lead to confusion for user when they call. The header and toolbars look nothing like the publicsafety.umn.edu site that links to it or most other University of Minnesota sites as well. In the center is an image of a snow-covered campus that doesn’t relate to any of the information listed on the page.

*What has been done?*

The first issue to address was the ease of use of the site. In its current layout, the user must browse the entire page to find the content they are seeking. This wall of text model is not user friendly for an individual coming to the page in a time of stress. I have attempted to give the sections more purpose by consolidating them into related service categories. The purpose of a site like this should be to provide quicker access to people seeking info during or after an incident to properly direct their phone call. This type of problem was quite accurately addressed by Redish when she asked “And what will they do if the web content doesn’t help? Call up – and cost the company more money?” (Redish, p.26). A great deal of time in our center is already spent dealing with phone calls that were not made to the correct number or improperly forwarded and the current site does nothing to address this. I have attempted to resolve this by providing the correct phone numbers at the top of each information column on the three pages that are linked to from the main page.

The next issue to address was the navigation, or rather the lack there of. The homepage itself has nearly all the information and most people will simply skim through it. As Redish states “We hurry from the home page through pathway (landing, gallery, navigation) pages, reading as little as possible.” (Redish, p.4). I have attempted to put as little of the pertinent information as possible on the home page itself. By consolidating phone numbers onto pages with related services, I am attempting to reduce the number of situations where user call the first number they see, thinking it is correct.

The issue of continuity has been partially addressed by making the header, navbar, and overall color scheme more similar to other Public Safety sites. In future revisions I will possibly attempt to change the current column profiles layout to resemble the text link boxes found on publicsafety.umn.edu. Several of the images themselves were taken from the Public Safety site to avoid confusion that these services were domehow different.