Sam Houston State University will begin collecting data for its new KatSafe emergency notification system during nine summer orientation sessions this summer.

New and transfer students attending freshman and transfer orientation sessions from June 5 - Aug. 8 will be briefed on KatSafe purposes and procedures and will have the opportunity to enter contact information into the university's database. Students who have already registered for the fall semester will be notified by e-mail as to how they should enter their information and also prompted to do so when logging on to the university's SamWeb administrative service network.

Faculty and staff will be notified this summer by e-mail and through departmental channels on how to enter their contact information.

The KatSafe system is expected to be fully operational at the beginning of the fall semester.

Sam Houston State recently contracted with the NTI Group, Inc. to use the company's Connect-ED service, which is being used by more than 150 campuses throughout the United States. The service provides campus leaders and security professionals the ability to reach students with information and updates during unforeseen events or emergencies, within minutes, through phone calls, e-mails and/or text messages.

"Today we are forced to prepare for situations that we never could have anticipated happening and recognize the important role that immediate communication plays in keeping students safe," said Jim Gaertner, SHSU president.

"As part of our comprehensive security plan, we have added the Connect-ED service, which will be known on our campus as KatSafe. It was selected because of its successful track record and multi-modal capabilities that will allow us to keep students and staff informed whether they are in their dorms, sitting in front of their computers, or on their way to class."

KatSafe will enable SHSU to schedule, send, and track personalized voice messages to up to six phone numbers per person, and immediately send messages via four different modes of communication:

- Voice messages to home, work, and cell phones;
- Text messages to cell phones, PDA computers and other text-based devices;
- Written messages to e-mail accounts;
- Messages to TTY/TDD receiving devices for the hearing impaired.

"Notifying students and employees immediately is crucial in emergency situations, such as severe weather or campus closure for any reason," Gaertner said. "It is essential for students and employees to enter all of their contact information into the KatSafe database. The more means we have to contact them, the better our odds are of spreading timely information and updates and keeping everyone safe."

Contact information provided to the KatSafe system will only be used for campus emergency notifications and will not be made available for any other use.