

Annex B (Communications & Warning)

I. PURPOSE

This annex identifies the procedures and resources used to provide interagency communications between responders. The annex also identifies the county's procedures and resources used to provide warning to all county residents in the event of a disaster.

II. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

The county will provide the appropriate communications and warning systems, facilities and procedures. The county is responsible for authorizing users and ensuring the 24-hour readiness of their communications and warning systems in the event of an emergency.

During a large-scale incident (e.g., mass care, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), the overall emergency management communications and warning system would require a greatly enhanced capability. Consideration of the following will be necessary:

- Identification of other agencies that would require communications
- Identification of new gaps in communications capabilities.
- Deployment of interoperable communications equipment.
- Collect, review and disseminate threat information.

During the recovery phase, all agencies are expected to support continuing operations with equipment and staff.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES AND TASKS

A. County Emergency Management

Response:

1. Receive and disseminate 24-hour emergency warnings to the public and emergency response personnel via the established primary or secondary warning systems (e.g., sirens, local television and radio broadcasts, EAS system, door-to-door, mobile address systems) and procedures.
2. Coordinate initial warnings to alert special needs groups (e.g. mobility, visually or hearing impaired; non-English speaker) within the county.
3. Utilize, as necessary to support disaster operations, the communications equipment located in the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), the 9-1-1 Center and any alternate EOCs to communicate with other appropriate response facilities (e.g., State EOC, field teams, reception centers, shelters.)
4. Request communications and warning assistance from state and federal agencies as needed.

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5. Utilize volunteer communications/amateur radio networks as necessary to support disaster operations.

Resources

1. County Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

The Portage County EOC is located in the basement of the Law Enforcement Center at 1500 Strongs Avenue, Stevens Point. See Attachment 9 for EOC equipment list and EOC activation information.

2. Other Public and Private Communications Systems/Equipment/Capability

- A. National Warning System (NAWAS)

The National Warning System (see Attachment 2) is a dedicated, open-wire telephone system that links the Wisconsin State Patrol, Wisconsin Emergency Management state and regional offices, National Weather Service offices and twenty-eight county warning centers. The National Weather Service issues watches and warnings over NAWAS in addition to broadcasts over the NOAA Weather Radio Network.

- B. NOAA Weather Radio Network

NOAA weather radio is a 24-hour a day, 7 days a week continuous broadcast of weather information. Broadcasts originate from National Weather Service offices (see Attachment 3 for National Weather Service warning areas). Weather radio broadcasts provide current conditions, 5-day forecasts, and watches and warnings. Generally, each NOAA Weather Radio transmitter has a listening area of approximately 40 miles from the transmitter site. See Attachment 4 for locations of transmitter sites. Reception of the signal varies depending on quality of the receiver, local terrain, and distance from the transmitter. Weather radios with SAME (Specific Area Message Encoding) technology can be programmed to receive watches and warnings for specific counties.

- C. Emergency Alert System (EAS)

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as a means of notifying the public, through broadcast media and TV cable systems, that an emergency situation is occurring or imminent, established the Emergency Alert System. It is intended to alert the public with a two-minute message and tell them what media to turn to for further information. County-level EAS alerts are issued by the County and City Dispatch/9-1-1 Centers or Emergency Management office. See Attachment 7 for County's EAS Plan.

- D. Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM)

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WEM has communications equipment that may be available during an emergency. Contact the WEM Regional Director for assistance.

- Mobile radio network (i.e., VHF repeaters, control stations, mobile and portable radios)
- Handheld radios {70 – 5 watt radios (30 –State EOC, 18 - Emergency Police Service Director, 5 - each regional office except for the Southwest Region)}
- Portable repeaters {2 – 165 lb. GE Master II. Each has either the WEM statewide or the Mutual Aid Radio Channel (MARC) frequency pair. They can be used with WEM's portable tower or at pre-positioned WEM antenna sites in Seneca (Crawford County) or Wheeler (Dunn County.)}
- Separate, trailer-mounted, thirty-foot tower that may be used with either of WEM's transportable repeaters to set up a localized communications center
- 2 – 6.5 KW generators self-contained in a stand-alone trailer
- Mobile Command Center
 - Forty foot trailer towed by a pickup truck
 - Mobile data terminal (no print, not computer)
 - Radios (VHF and UHF)
 - 2 - Facsimile machines (Cellular and land line)
 - Telephone service (Cellular and land line)
 - Copy machine
 - TV/VCR/Satellite Dish
 - 10 KW generator
 - Tripod halogen lighting device
 - Computers (desktop and laptop, with printer)

E. Amateur Radio

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) is a division of the American Radio Relay League and consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes. ARES is organized into national, section, district and local levels, with managers or coordinators at each level. Emergency Coordinators have jurisdiction over communities, an entire county, or a group of counties

A ham RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service) operator is a licensed amateur who has registered with the state to make their talents and abilities available in case of emergency. The Chief Radio Officer and person responsible for the RACES database is Dr. Stanley Kaplan.

The Portage County ARES/RACES activation list can be found in Attachment 5.

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B. County/City Law Enforcement Dispatch/9-1-1 Centers

Response

1. Receive warnings/notifications of events (e.g., hazardous materials, dam failure, and natural disaster) and disseminate to appropriate response agencies.
2. Activates sirens in the City of Stevens Point and several outlying communities. See Attachment 6 for locations of warning sirens and communications towers.

Resources

1. Enhanced 9-1-1 equipment with TDD capability.
2. TIME System accessibility.
3. NAWAS Direct Line (County Sheriff's Dispatch Only).
4. County and City communications towers are listed in Attachment 6.

C. Other County Agencies:

1. Village of Plover Mobile Command Post
2. Portage County Public Health Dept.