

Communications Annex

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We are fortunate we now have a wide variety of communications systems available. Communication during a disaster will often be difficult, however, because extreme demands will be placed on systems that may be damaged or overloaded.

I. OBJECTIVES

To manage and coordinate communications systems to:

- A. Direct and coordinate emergency operations.
- B. Alert and warn government forces and the general public.
- C. Provide advice and instructions to the general public.

II. PHASES OF THE EMERGENCY

A. Before

During the warning phase, the systems used daily by most agencies, particularly public safety agencies, will be used for intra-jurisdictional communications. Also, such agencies will probably operate, at least initially, from their day-to-day offices and headquarters.

B. During

During larger disasters, the Emergency Operations Center will play a greater role in centralizing communications.

III. FACILITIES AND SYSTEMS

A. Emergency Alert System

The Emergency Alert System consists of radio and television stations that use specific procedures to provide emergency information to the public. The primary station for our area is KCST 106.9FM or 12.50AM. KCST is

the protected station and therefore the primary contact. The system is activated by designated local, state, and federal officials.

Priority for use is:

- 1. Presidential messages.
- 2. Local area programming.
- 3. State programming.
- 4. National programming and news.

B. County Law Enforcement Radio System

This system provides communications between the Emergency Operations Center and various law enforcement vehicles.

C. County Fire Radio System

This system communicates with all Fire Districts in the County

D. Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS), which includes the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES)

When requested by the EOC, licensed Amateur Radio Operators use amateur radio frequencies and networks. The system provides communications between the Emergency Operations Center and field units. Communications from the EOC to the State Office of Emergency Services, Mutual Aid. Further information may be found in the ACS/RACES Emergency Communications Plan.

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E. Telephone

Common carrier telephone service is available to support all emergency systems.

IV. POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

A. During peacetime emergencies:

1. Weak links

Telecommunications systems are composed of many subsystems, each interconnected and interdependent. A radio network for example, may use a combination of telephone lines, microwave circuits, satellite interfaces, underground and overhead cables, and secondary radio paths.

The failure of any one link in this electronic "chain" can effectively disable a large portion of the system. The Communications Center has several alternate methods of communications to decrease the possibility of a breakdown in the chain of communications.

2. Overloading

Communications systems may be overloaded or even rendered inoperable in an emergency. Telephone communications may be overloaded by calls within or into affected areas. The situation may be further complicated by physical damage to equipment, loss, of electrical power and subsequent failure of some auxiliary sources.

3. Loss of power

Loss of emergency power has been the primary cause of communications failure in past

disasters. Poor installations and poor generator maintenance contribute to a high failure rate. Scarcity of diesel and gasoline, which are primary fuels for backup generators, may limit the viability of surviving communications sites.

The Emergency Operations Center and Communications has an alternate power supply of one 300KW generator. Communications also has a UPS System (Uninterrupted Power Supply) to handle short duration interruptions if the generator fails.

C. Emergency Operations Center Systems

Communications systems installed at or controlled from the Emergency Operations Center will support field activities. Other available communications systems will provide links to nearby jurisdictions or to higher levels of the Statewide Emergency Organization.

D. Operators

Agencies that use licensed systems regularly will provide communications equipment operators. Communications Officers will provide service and maintenance personnel and operators for extra equipment.

E. Emergency Alert System

The Emergency Alert System will be used, to the maximum extent possible, for the dissemination of emergency information, advice, and action instructions to the general public. EAS activation will be made by the Public Information Officer or other authorized official, on the authority of the DES.

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F. Amateur Radio

Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) personnel will be assigned to back up any of several services in case regular communications paths become inoperative. Special considerations will be given to using ACS/RACES to support disaster medical care and emergency public information operations.

B. Peacetime Warning

1. Flood

A flood emergency is normally preceded by a buildup period which permits marshalling of forces as required to combat the emergency. During the buildup period, the Office of Emergency Services cooperates with the National Weather Service and the State Department of Water Resources by relaying pertinent weather information and river bulletins to local government officials in the affected areas. The State Office of Emergency Services receives this information over selected circuits and relays it to Office of Emergency Services Mutual Aid Regions via the Office of Emergency Services private line teletype system and to local governments.

2. Fire

Initial warnings of major conflagrations are normally issued by the affected area through the Operational Area and/or Office of Emergency Services Regional Fire Coordinator, using whatever means of communications are appropriate and available. Requests for mutual aid follow standard channels.

3. Earthquake

Earthquakes occur without warning. The Office of Emergency Services could receive notification of an earthquake, as well as subsequent information, including damage reports, from various sources.

The information may be received and transmitted via National Warning System, radio, teletype, or telephone. The State Warning Center has a seismic alarm system that activates during earthquakes, prompting duty personnel to investigate the disturbance.

4. Other Emergencies

Warning and/or information concerning emergencies other than those cited above is disseminated using any appropriate system or systems.

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