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Functional Annex – Alert and Warning

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this annex is to describe the methods by which accurate and timely emergency and disaster related alerts and warnings will be issued to the public and affected government officials.

This annex does not address emergency public information. Alerts and warnings differ from emergency public information in the immediacy of delivery. Alerts and warnings involve life safety information that must be delivered immediately. Emergency public information involves less urgent health and safety information. Emergency public information is addressed in a separate annex to this plan.

2 Situation and Assumptions

2.1 Situation

- Washington County is subject to a number of natural and technological hazards that can threaten public safety and necessitate the implementation of protective actions for the public at risk.
- Emergencies may occur spontaneously and without prior warning (e.g., earthquake and hazmat release) or may develop slowly and allow sufficient time for advanced public warning (e.g., severe winter storm and flood).
- Timely warnings to the public of impending emergencies or those which are occurring may save lives, decrease injuries and reduce some types of property damage.
- A number of systems have been established to alert the public and local officials to emergencies and to provide appropriate instructions. Among others, these systems include the Emergency Alert System (EAS), the National Warning System (NAWAS), the Community Notification System (CNS), the Law Enforcement DataSystem (LEDS), and the Oregon Emergency Response System (OERS). These systems are more completely described in paragraph III of this annex.
- Route alerting procedures (i.e., street-by-street notification and/or door-to-door canvassing) are most effective in ensuring delivery of warning information but require the most time and labor to complete.
- Power outages may disrupt radio and television systems that carry warning messages and provide public response instructions.
- Some people who are directly threatened by a hazard may ignore, not hear, or not understand warnings issued by the government.

2.2 Assumptions

- Local broadcasters will automatically and immediately broadcast alerts received via the EAS.
- In the event that the Washington County Consolidated Communications Agency (WCCCA) suffers a catastrophic failure, one or more of the automated warning systems available in Washington County will still be functional and accessible from an alternate site.

3 Concept of Operations

3.1 Definitions

3.1.1 Community Notification System (CNS)

A telephone-based system that can deliver recorded messages to citizens living in selected areas of the county. Landline business and residential phones can be selected by zip code, by specific streets or addresses, and by use of Geographic Information System (GIS) tools. The Washington County CNS is operated by WCCCA and can be utilized for emergency notification purposes by county public safety officials.

3.1.2 Emergency Alert System (EAS)

An alert and warning system that uses the broadcast media to announce conditions that pose an immediate threat to public safety. The EAS is a national system that can be used by federal, state, and local officials to alert and warn the public. The primary method of accessing the system in Washington County is through WCCCA.

3.1.3 Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS)

LEDS is a system used to distribute criminal intelligence information to law enforcement agencies throughout the state. Although not a warning system per se, it is used to relay warning information such as weather watches and warnings. Within Washington County, LEDS terminals are maintained at WCCCA, the sheriff's office, and all of the larger police departments. The Oregon State Police and Oregon Office of Emergency Management also maintain LEDS terminals.

3.1.4 Local Warning Point (LWP)

A local facility designated to receive and relay warning information received via the National Warning System (NAWAS). WCCCA is the LWP for Washington County.

3.1.5 National Warning System (NAWAS)

The federal portion of the Civil Defense Warning System used for the dissemination of warning and other emergency information from federal and state warning points to local warning points. It is a dedicated, nationwide, party-line telephone system operated on a 24-hour basis. The primary NAWAS drop point (phone connection) in Washington County is located at WCCCA. The secondary drop (not currently active) is at the Washington County Law Enforcement Center (LEC).

3.1.6 Oregon Emergency Response System (OERS)

A 24-hour state notification system, staffed by Oregon State Police, used to receive and relay reports of incidents/emergencies occurring throughout the state. OERS provides notification (i.e., warning) of events to state and local officials typically via landline telephone.

3.1.7 Public Safety Official

Any fire, law enforcement, emergency management, public health, public works, or elected official managing a major incident, who has been delegated authority by his/her department to activate the EAS or CNS.

3.1.8 Weather Advisory

A general overview of current weather conditions that may impact transportation (e.g., "The National Weather Service has issued a fog advisory for low-lying areas in Washington County"). Weather advisories are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS).

3.1.9 Weather Warning

The alerting of emergency response personnel and the public to the threat of an extraordinary and imminent weather danger to a specific area (e.g., severe storm warning). Weather warnings are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS).

3.1.10 Weather Watch

The alerting of emergency response personnel and the public to conditions that are favorable for a specified type of severe weather to occur (e.g., flash flood, severe thunderstorm, snow/ice storm). Weather watches are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS).

3.2 General

- The primary objectives of a warning system are to notify key officials of emergencies and to disseminate timely and accurate warnings and instructions to the population at risk from the threat or occurrence of an emergency situation. Rapid dissemination and delivery of warning information and instructions may provide time for citizens to take action to protect themselves and their property.
- The focal point of the county warning function is the Local Warning Point (LWP), which operates 24/7. Washington County's LWP is WCCCA. The Washington County Law Enforcement Center provides a secondary LWP. The secondary LWP is only utilized if the county's alternate Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated or if WCCCA is forced to transfer dispatch activities to its alternate site.

3.3 Receiving Warnings

The county may receive warning of actual emergencies or the threat of such situations from the following:

3.3.1 State or Federal Authorities

- The National Warning System (NAWAS) is used for the dissemination of warning and other emergency information from federal and state warning points to the county (local) warning point (WCCCA). The primary state warning point for Oregon is located in the Operation Center for OEM and LEDS in Salem, with an alternate (backup) located in Central Point at the Southern Regional Command Center of the Oregon State Police.
- The National Weather Service (NWS) issues weather advisories, watches and warnings for the Portland metro area from its forecast office in Portland. Warnings are transmitted via various means including weather alert radios, the Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS), and the Emergency Alert System (EAS). Watches are transmitted over weather alert radios and LEDS.
- The Emergency Alert System (EAS) uses digital technology that allows federal, state, and local officials to interrupt radio, TV, and cable system broadcasts to deliver life safety messages to the public. Warnings issued by the state or federal governments for events affecting the Portland metro area are sent via a radio relay system that automatically notifies WCCCA while at the same time sending the message out over radio, TV, and cable broadcast systems.
- The Scoggins Dam Emergency Action Plan, prepared by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, outlines procedures to be taken by Scoggins Dam and Bureau personnel should the public require notification of a dam failure, potential dam failure, large inflows and releases and other serious conditions. The plan includes coordination with the National Weather Service; which issues flood warnings, and procedures to notify local agencies including WCCCA and county emergency management officials.
- The Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS) is used by the Oregon State Police and the Oregon Emergency Response System (OERS) to relay weather watches and warnings and homeland security alerts and advisories.
- The Oregon State Police, LEDS Division, which operates the Oregon Emergency Response System (OERS), relays incident information received via OERS to WCCCA and county emergency management officials.
- The Oregon State Police, Office of Public Safety and Security (OPSS), issues homeland security alerts and advisories and relays alerts and advisories issued by the Federal Government. These warnings are delivered via LEDS to WCCCA and the Washington County Sheriff's Office.

- The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) advises WCCCA of aviation in flight emergencies that may impact Washington County.

3.3.2 Local Authorities

- Local law enforcement, fire, EMS, public works, or health officials may observe or become involved in situations requiring notification of other local officials and/or warning of the public. Such incidents are typically reported to WCCCA.
- The Portland area Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) Plan includes a notification section that spells out procedures for alerting public safety officials in the region of incidents involving the use of weapons of mass destruction. WCCCA is the gateway for these notifications in Washington County.

3.3.3 Other Sources

- Businesses and industries that suffer a major fire, explosion, hazardous materials spill, or other emergency situation that may pose a threat to the public or property have a duty to notify local officials and the Oregon Emergency Response System (OERS). OERS staff ensures that WCCCA and county emergency management officials are notified.
- Citizens and other agency employees may provide warnings of emergencies, generally by calling 9-1-1. WCCCA will confirm information received in this manner with appropriate public safety officials and issue public alerts, warnings or directions for protective action as directed by these officials.

3.4 Originating/Delivering Warnings

- As the County LWP, WCCCA has a primary role in originating and/or delivering warning information. WCCCA evaluates all received warning information and relays it in accordance with agency guidelines.
 - The EAS is used to warn the public of life safety information only in response to a direct request from an appropriate public safety official.
 - The CNS is used to warn the public of life safety and other qualifying information only in response to a direct request from an appropriate public safety official.
 - The 800 MHz radio system, pagers, phones (cellular and landline) and other communications systems are used to alert local public safety officials of warnings, alerts, threats, and advisories requiring immediate government and/or public action.
- Two radio stations in the Portland/Vancouver area, known as Local Primary 1 (LP-1) and Local Primary 2 (LP-2), are authorized to originate EAS messages at the request of local public safety officials. This method of system activation

provides a back-up to the preferred method of activation through WCCCA. The LP-1 and LP-2 stations and procedures to use them are contained in the Washington County Alert System Operational Procedures.

- When activated, the County EOC may assume a role in authorizing or directing the issuance of public warning messages and will take a role in alerting other agencies to occurring or developing events.
- Local public safety officials, principally law enforcement and fire service, may implement route alerting procedures when appropriate to complement warnings delivered via EAS and/or CNS and when necessary to ensure notification of all residents in the potentially impacted area. Route alerting involves public notification by use of vehicle-mounted sirens or public address systems. It may also involve door-to-door canvassing to ensure message delivery.

3.5 Phases of Management

3.5.1 Response

- Activate appropriate warning systems to alert the public and government officials of an emergency situation and provide appropriate instructions.
- Monitor situation status, incident forecast information, and public response to the alerts and warnings to determine the need to clarify issues and distribute new/updated warnings.
- Discontinue warnings when they are no longer required.

4 Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities

4.1 General

The Alert and Warning function is organized as a tiered activity that is linked to the magnitude and/or type of emergency threatening the population.

At the highest level or tier, the Federal Government alerts/warns citizens about national security issues and threats for which they have statutory or regulatory responsibility. The President issues National Security Alerts, the Department of Homeland Security issues Homeland Security Alerts and the National Weather Service issues Weather Warnings.

At the middle level or tier, state governments alert/warn citizens of threats affecting their states. In Oregon, the Governor can issue alerts or warnings for a number of hazards or threats, the Oregon State Police can issue statewide homeland security alerts, and Oregon Health Services can issue public health alerts.

At the lowest level or tier, local governments alert/warn citizens of threats affecting their jurisdictions. Within Washington County, the sheriff serves as the County Warning Officer and has overall responsibility for management and maintenance of the county's warning systems. Operational control of most of those systems rests with WCCCA.

Authority to use the systems, however, is broadly vested in a number of the county's public safety officials. Collectively, these officials can warn the public of hazardous material spills, rapidly spreading fires, transportation and utility emergencies, geologic events, public health emergencies, and more. Responsibility for use of the most fundamental of the alert and warning systems, route alerting, rests with all local public safety agencies.

Although responsibility or authority for use of the county's alert and warning systems rests primarily with public safety officials, the County EOC, when activated, may also exercise control of the systems. That control may extend to the point of authorizing or directing the issuance of public alerts/warnings and will include the alerting of local government officials (county, city, and special service district).

4.2 Task Assignments

4.2.1 County Policy Group

- Monitor developing/ongoing events in coordination with the County EOC and Department Operations Centers (DOCs)
- Direct issuance of alert and warning information when appropriate
- Coordinate with policy level officials from other impacted local jurisdictions

4.2.2 County Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

- Monitor developing/ongoing events (Plans, Ops, PIO, IC)
- Direct activation of appropriate warning systems (IC, Ops)
- Notify the policy group, DOCs, phone bank, cities, and special service districts when activating any of the county's warning systems (Ops, Plans)
- Coordinate use of route alert procedures with other public safety agencies (IC, OPS)

4.2.3 Sheriff's Office Department Operations Center (SO DOC)

- Monitor developing/ongoing events (Plans, Ops, PIO, IC)
- Direct use of route alerting procedures as necessary or appropriate (IC, Ops)
- Coordinate use of route alerting procedures with other public safety agencies and the Washington County EOC (Ops)
- Recommend use of automated warning systems to the County EOC whenever appropriate (IC, Ops)

4.2.4 Department of Land Use and Transportation Department Operations Center (DLUT DOC)

- Monitor developing/ongoing events (Plans, Ops, PIO, IC)

- Coordinate with the SO DOC and the County EOC to provide current road status information and to support route alerting procedures (Ops)
- Recommend use of automated warning systems to the County EOC whenever appropriate (IC, Ops)

4.2.5 County Public Health Officer

- Monitor developing/ongoing public health events
- Direct activation of automated warning systems as appropriate
- Notify the County Emergency Manager or EOC when activating any of the county’s automated warning systems
- Direct use of route alerting procedures as necessary or appropriate
- Coordinate use of route alerting procedures with other public safety agencies and the Washington County EOC

4.2.6 Washington County Consolidated Communications Agency (WCCCA)

- Monitor developing/ongoing events
- Evaluate emergency information received from non-public safety sources and confirm the emergency situation with an authorized public safety official.
- Activate automated warning systems only in response to direct requests from authorized public safety officials
- Notify the County Emergency Manager or EOC when activating any of the county’s automated warning systems

4.2.7 Local Fire and Law Enforcement Agencies

- Monitor developing/ongoing events
- Direct activation of automated warning systems as appropriate
- Direct use of route alerting procedures as necessary or appropriate
- Coordinate use of route alerting procedures with other public safety agencies
- Notify the appropriate jurisdictional Emergency Manager or EOC when activating any of the county’s automated warning systems or implementing route alerting procedures

5 Direction and Control

- WCCCA has overall responsibility for management and maintenance of the county’s warning systems.

- The County Policy Group, County Sheriff, Public Health Officer and EOC may direct activation of any of the county’s warning systems.
- Local public safety officials may direct activation of any of the county’s warning systems and will implement route alerting procedures as appropriate.
- WCCCA will activate the county’s automated warning systems in response to requests from authorized public safety officials. They will also notify public safety officials of emergencies in accordance with agency guidelines.

6 Administration and Logistics

6.1 Supporting Guidelines/Procedures

The Emergency Management Office will work with WCCCA, local public safety officials, state and federal agencies, and local broadcasters to develop and maintain appropriate guidelines/procedures for activation of the county’s automated warning systems.

6.2 Reports and Records

The Local Warning Point will maintain activity logs recording any activation of the EAS or emergency activation of the CNS.

7 Annex Development and Maintenance

- The Emergency Management Office will maintain this annex in cooperation with the agencies and departments identified in Section IV (Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities).
- Each identified agency/department will develop and maintain procedures to implement their responsibilities under the plan.

8 References

- Washington County Hazard Analysis (April 2002)
- Guide for All-Hazard Emergency Operations Planning SLG-101 (September 1996)
- Scoggins Dam Emergency Action Plan (August 1999)

9 Tabs

- Tab 1 - Emergency Notification Systems Operational Procedures

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Tab 1 – Emergency Notification Systems Operational Procedures

[To be inserted by County at a later date (under development – will include activation procedures for EAS, CNS and Amber Alert)]

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