

ANNEX C - EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION ESF #15

I. MNWALK REQUIREMENTS

Item #: 14, 34, 35, 36, 37, 96

II. PURPOSE

Provide for the development, coordination and dissemination of emergency public information. Public information is critical during times of emergency to provide important, timely and accurate instructions and information to those impacted by the emergency/disaster. This function provides rumor control, public education and may establish a hotline for public inquiry.

III. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

Situation

1. In an emergency there must be means of communicating with the public the response and recovery activities local government is providing and directions the public should take to assist themselves and public safety officials.
2. There are many modes of communication outlets available through the community. Some of these include, but are not limited to: radio, television, newspaper, newsletters, Twitter, email, emergency hotlines, cable TV, Emergency Alert System, etc.
3. Members of the community with access and functional needs are especially vulnerable during a disaster.
4. The Emergency Operations Center and/or Incident Command will need to provide information to the public in a unified and controlled manner.
5. Major needs for those with functional and access needs may include assistance with evacuation and transportation, sheltering, and receiving warnings and public information.

Assumptions

1. When multiple organizations are involved in an emergency response, the Incident Commander or EOC Director may establish a Joint Information Center (JIC).
2. All responding agencies will coordinate the release of any information to the public through the Public Information Officer (PIO) in the Emergency Operations Center.
3. All media will be directed to the designated PIO only for the release of information to the public.
4. Some members of the community, especially those who are homeless, may not have access to emergency warning and notification or to public information disseminated by the media.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

The Emergency Operations Plan has been designed based on the NIMS model utilizing the Incident Command System. The Command Staff includes a Legal Advisor, Public Information Officer, Liaison, and Safety Officer. The General Staff includes the Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief,

Logistics Section Chief and Finance and Administration Section Chief. The Command and General Staff all report to the Emergency Operations Center Director. The Emergency Operations Center Director is the Stearns County/City of St. Cloud Emergency Management Director. In the event where the primary impacts are health related, a unified command structure will be utilized in collaboration with Stearns County Public Health. In addition to these staff positions there are Branch Directors and Unit Leaders that represent the 21 annexes of this emergency operations plan. Branch Directors and Unit Leaders report to Section Chiefs, as outlined in the flow chart in the Basic Plan.

Emergency Alert System

The Emergency Alert System is utilized in collaboration with local media outlets to disseminate emergency information to the public via radio and television. This system is activated through procedures outlined in detail as attachment 6 of the Warning and Notification Annex. A test of this system is completed at 1:00 pm on the first Wednesday of each month. The Sheriff, Chief Deputy, Captain, Lieutenant, Shift Sergeant, Police Chief, Assistant Police Chiefs or Emergency Management Director (or designee) are authorized to activate the Emergency Alert System. Additional information about the activation of the Emergency Alert System can be found as an attachment to Annex A – Warning and Notification.

NOAA Weather Radio

The NOAA Weather Radio system is a tone activated system used by the National Weather Service to provide severe weather information, watches and warnings to the community. Public and private entities are encouraged to utilize weather radios as a primary warning tool for emergency situations.

Media

Print and electronic media can provide an effective method for disseminating emergency information. Community newspapers are effective in providing detailed information during emergency situations (flooding, drought, etc.). The electronic media (radio, television, and internet) can be helpful in issuing bulletins to inform the public of emergency conditions with or without a formal activation of the Emergency Alert System.

Social Media

Stearns County and the City of Saint Cloud will utilize social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter to provide information to the public. These tools are used on a regular basis and are readily available to provide emergency information as well. Access to these tools can be made through Stearns County and the City of St Cloud Administration. These social media tools will also give the City of St. Cloud and Stearns County the ability to monitor talk within the community that may include misinformation and/or rumors (pending available personnel and expertise).

Public Address System

Most law enforcement and fire vehicles are equipped with public address systems that may be used for warning the public in localized emergencies. This would be effective as an alternative to door to door notification in small areas with limited populations. The public may be given specific instructions or asked to tune in to government access channels or radio stations for emergency information.

Everbridge Notification

Everbridge is a notification system that enables emergency management and public safety personnel to communicate consistent messages in an expedient manner. Once a notification group has been selected, a message is created providing information for the call recipients. After the message has been created, it is delivered to the recipients via landline phone, cell phone, and email. Everbridge has the ability to make multiple calls at one time, increasing the speed and accuracy of emergency notifications throughout the affected area. The initiation of the calls can be made over the phone or through a web-based program that is password protected. A monthly test of the system is completed on the first Wednesday of each month.

GovDelivery

GovDelivery is a notification system that gives emergency management the ability to email important messages to a controlled distribution group. Upon selecting a distribution group(s), a message is developed and sent via email to the selected groups. GovDelivery is a web-based system, therefore it can be access from any device with internet access.

United Way 2-1-1

United Way 2-1-1 may serve as an alternate public information inquiry agency for calls relating to disaster response and recovery. 2-1-1 will support the community by providing and maintaining hotline assistance to relay disaster related information to members of the community, as well as gather information being requested by the community. (Life safety and emergency calls will be directed to 9-1-1). If 2-1-1 services are being requested by the Public Information Officer, that individual will need to ensure that 2-1-1 is briefed on all current and developing situations to be able to address inquiries in the community. Services provided by 2-1-1, in addition to hotline staffing include identifying unmet needs and services requested by community members, tracking of disaster related requests/inquiries from citizens and providing information and referral services to members of the community. 2-1-1 services are available twenty-four hours per day, 365 days per year. Interpreters are available as needed. Cell phone users and businesses with PBX phone systems will need to dial 1-800-543-7709.

Health Alert Network

When a disease or event threatens the health of Minnesotans, fast, efficient, and reliable communication is essential. The Health Alert Network of the Minnesota Department of Health enables public health staff, health care providers, emergency workers, and others working to protect the public to exchange information. Public health agencies are encouraged to use these communication tools routinely to ensure that the equipment and skills will work well during a health threat crisis. Although non-electronic methods are in place, email and the Web are the Health Alert Network's first line of communication strategies. Health Alerts are disseminated by Stearns County Human Services Division of Public Health.

ECHO – Emergency & Community Health Outreach

Emergency & Community Health Outreach (ECHO) is a collation of professionals across Minnesota including Public Health, Emergency Management, Social Services, ethnic community agencies and non-profit assistance agencies such as the American Red Cross. The objective of ECHO is to develop the public health system's capacity to communicate preparedness information, health and safety

advisories and emergency alerts to Minnesota’s limited-English proficient populations. ECHO provides health and safety information in multiple languages, including Khmer, Somali, Vietnamese, Lao, Spanish, and Hmong. These warnings and notifications are delivered by fax, phone, television, print materials, and on the web during emergency and non-emergency times to people with limited English language skills. ECHO information would be utilized during slowly developing or long term events (floods, drought, pandemic). Procedures for contacting ECHO can be found in Annex A – Warning and Notification.

Functional and Access Needs Communications

Stearns County/City of St. Cloud Emergency Operations Center would be trying to communicate with people who are seeking information and awareness about the situation, residents that do not have access to information and residents that do not have the technology available to receive messages. Communications will be accomplished through 2-1-1, radio, cable television, newspapers, Everbridge Notification System, GovDelivery, press releases, listserv, Human Services, Sheriff’s Office, government access channels, community organizations, Emergency Community Health Outreach (ECHO), Senior Linkage Line, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Provide official information and instructions to the community utilizing all available means (including, but not limited to TV, radio, websites, closed captioning, large print materials, brail, etc) of communication, before, during and after an emergency or disaster situations.

V. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Organization

1. Our emergency organization is described in Section IV of the Basic Plan.
2. Incident Command System – EOC Interface
 - a. The Incident Command is in charge of all on-scene operations. This coordination takes place at an Incident Command Post. On-scene logistics personnel will order supplies, resources and personnel to manage the scene in accordance with Incident Action Plan.
 - b. Not all emergencies require on-scene operations or the establishment of an Incident Command Post. For those emergencies that may be over a wide area (flooding, ice storm, winter storm) or are health based, the Command Post and Emergency Operations Center may be co-located.
 - c. A division of responsibility should be agreed upon between the Incident Commander and the EOC. The Incident Commander will manage operations on-scene, while the EOC coordinates operations beyond the incident site, taking into consideration the community at large, while supporting the Incident Action Plan developed by Incident Command.

B. Lines of Succession

1. Lines of succession for the Mayor, County Board Chair, and Emergency Management Director are outlined in the Basic Plan.
2. Lines of succession for each department and agency director shall be done in accordance with operating guidelines and delegations of authority within each department.

C. Responsibilities

Stearns County Emergency Management Director

The Stearns County Emergency Management Director (or designee) is responsible for carrying out the emergency management program for Stearns County/City of St. Cloud. The Emergency Management Director (or designee) will activate the Emergency Operations Center as required or requested to coordinate/support the activities of all departments/organizations assisting with response and recovery efforts. The Emergency Management Director (or designee) will establish response and recovery priorities through the Emergency Operations Center and will coordinate the resources needed to support emergency operations.

Public Information Team

The Public Information Team is responsible for providing timely and accurate information and instructions to the public prior to, during and following emergency situations. This information may come as a warning or impending emergency, such as a flood; may provide direction, such as evacuation guidelines; or may issue guidance such as debris removal protocols following a tornado. The team is comprised of a Public Information Officer, an Official Spokesperson, Subject Matter Expert(s), Hotline Supervisor and a Public Education Coordinator.

Public Information Officer

The Public Information Officer (PIO) will establish policies and procedures for the overall coordination and dissemination of information and instructions to the public on a timely basis. The PIO will create press releases and schedule press briefings with the media. All press briefings will be delivered by the designated official Spokesperson. The PIO is also responsible for making arrangements to establish and staff an emergency hotline. A hotline supervisor will be assigned to respond to all public inquiries and work with rumor control. The Public Information Officer will also ensure that educational materials have been compiled or created for distribution to community members.

Spokesperson

When a disaster impacts the unincorporated areas of Stearns County an official will be authorized to serve as the official Spokesperson, working in conjunction with the Public Information Officer. The Spokesperson may be the County Administrator, Emergency Management Director, Sheriff or a designated Department/Division Director. The Spokesperson will be designated due to their knowledge of the incident, technical expertise, and ability to answer questions related to the emergency. All media inquiries will be directed to the Public Information Officer.

For disasters affecting the City of St. Cloud, the Mayor, City Administrator, Fire Chief or Police Chief may serve as the official Spokesperson for the City. Additional technical advisors may be required to

address specific requests or concerns. These arrangements would be made by the Public Information Officer.

Subject Matter Expert

The Subject Matter Expert will be designated as appropriate depending on the nature of the emergency, to assist the Public Information Officer and Spokesperson. This position would be filled by a representative from the lead agency responding to the emergency/disaster. The Subject Matter Expert may assist in the development of press releases, provide detailed guidance on protective actions for community members, create fact sheets, answer questions not already addressed for hotline operators, etc. It is important that the subject matter expert have the authority and credibility to be making comments and providing direction to support the Public Information Team.

Hotline Supervisor

The Hotline Supervisor will work at the direction of the Public Information Officer. The Hotline Supervisor will set up and operate the emergency hotline and will be responsible for identifying staffing needs to accommodate call volume, will collaborate with the Subject Matter Expert to develop a script for hotline operators, provide training and education for incoming hotline staff, and ensure all calls and information are being documented in accordance with procedures outlined by the Documentation Unit.

Public Education Coordinator

The Public Education Coordinator will create publications, brochures, posters, flyers, etc. which can be provided as tools for educating the community. The development of this information should be done in conjunction with the Subject Matter Expert and with the approval of the Public Information Officer. In some instances it may be more appropriate to gather information developed by other agencies rather than creating new documents (i.e. health related information may be available through the Minnesota Department of Health). The release of this information to the public should be arranged by the Public Information Officer.

Policies and Procedures

1. If it becomes necessary to conduct press briefings for Stearns County, the County Board Room in the Administration Building will be used as the primary location. The Council Chambers at City Hall will be used as the primary site for the City of St. Cloud. An alternate briefing area may be chosen at the discretion of the Public Information Officer.
2. In the event of a protracted disaster/emergency, news releases would be issued on a regular basis.
3. Public information would be disseminated to the community through outlets such as radio, television, newspapers, newsletters, government websites, email, hotlines, Twitter, Facebook, Emergency Alert Systems, etc.

VI. ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT

A. Records

1. Records will be maintained on the use of all equipment, whether owned, leased, rented or borrowed. These records/contracts will be used as basis for possible recovery of emergency operations expenses from a responsible party or for potential reimbursement from the State or Federal Government. All records/contracts generated by the Public Information Officer should be provided to the Finance and Administration Section Chief for cost recovery and reimbursement documentation.
2. Each department, agency or service of government will provide for the maintenance of records during an emergency. These records include work hours, equipment hours, supplies and materials consumed, injuries to personnel, and damage to public facilities and equipment. All records generated during an emergency will be collected and maintained in an orderly manner so a record of actions taken is preserved for use in determining response costs, settling claims, and updating emergency plans and procedures.

B. Resources

1. Local resources can be found on file in the resource database. Record databases for resources and contacts of each department shall be updated on a regular, scheduled basis to keep the Resource Database current to reflect current capabilities. These resources are also to be reported to emergency management when there has been a significant change in a resource, in addition to the scheduled maintenance. This schedule is maintained by Stearns County Emergency Management. These resources still retain confidentiality within the Emergency Management Department and sensitive information will not be released without prior approval.

C. Post Incident Review

1. Following activations of the Emergency Operations Center or use of the Emergency Operations Plan, Emergency Management will coordinate a review of each annex of the Emergency Operations Plan to identify needed improvements, procedure changes, personnel and facility changes or resource needs.

D. Training and Exercises

1. Personnel identified in the Emergency Operations Plan and those who staff the Emergency Operations Center will receive National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) training. Although some personnel may receive more advanced training, everyone will receive IS-100, IS-200, and IS-700. A full list of personnel and required training can be found on file in the Emergency Management office. Personnel who staff the Emergency Operations Center shall also receive appropriate training on their role in the Emergency Operations Center and on the operations of the facility. This training should be arranged by the Public Information Officer or the Emergency Management Department.
2. Emergency Management follows the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) exercise requirements to exercise and evaluate the Emergency Operations Plan. Once every

three years a functional exercise including all components of the Emergency Operations Plan is conducted. In the remaining two years of the cycle tabletop exercises and community wide exercises will include additional opportunities to exercise components of the Emergency Operations Plan. A more detailed explanation of the County/City exercise plan can be found as Attachment 2 of the Basic Plan.

VII. ANNEX DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

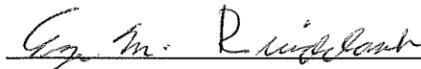
The Stearns County/City of St. Cloud Emergency Operations Plan, including the Basic Plan and Annexes, is updated on an annual basis. Each annex representative is responsible for participating in the full review process every other year and for independently reviewing the annex on an annual basis. The overall responsibility for maintaining the Emergency Operations Plan is that of the Stearns County Emergency Management Department.

Any standard operating guidelines, personnel directories, maps or other tools needed to support emergency operations should be developed and maintained by the responsible department. It is the department's responsibility to ensure access to this information during times of large scale emergency or disaster, to coordinate training for personnel in regard to these procedures and to inform Emergency Management of any changes that directly impact the Emergency Operations Plan.

VIII. REFERENCES

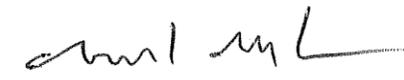
- United Way of Central MN 2-1-1 Emergency Plan is on file in the Emergency Operations Center
- Hotline Supervisors Handbook

IX. AUTHENTICATION



George Rindelaub,
Stearns County Administrator

11-14-14
Date



Mike Williams,
City of St. Cloud Administrator

11-14-14
Date