

ANNEX U - COMMUNICATIONS  
ESF #2

I. MNWALK REQUIREMENTS

Item #: 1, 4, 28, 29, 30

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this annex is to outline communications responsibilities, capabilities and procedures to be utilized in the event of an emergency or disaster that affects Stearns County/City of St. Cloud. This annex also describes the methods for communication between on-scene command, 911 Communication Center and the Emergency Operations Center.

Interoperability describes a multi-disciplinary system of equipment, training and education for public safety communications. Interoperable communications allows for local, state, federal, private and public agencies to communicate and share information during times of emergency, through systems and coordination in the 911 Communications Center.

III. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

Situations

1. The Emergency Operations Center must be capable of providing rapid and reliable means of communications to support emergency operations for all emergency situations.
2. The 911 Communications Center is the primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for the county and cities within the county. Calls for services are received by the 911 Communications Center, prioritized and then assigned to public safety agencies.
3. Fire, Law Enforcement and EMS communications are integrated with the 911 Communication Center, the Emergency Operations Center and the Stearns County Command and Communication Trailer.
4. All emergency services interface through radio channels or leased phone lines in the 911 Communications Center.
5. The loss of some or all telephone service will reduce or eliminate the effectiveness of the 911 Communications Center and Emergency Operations Center public information lines.
6. Emergency communications are accomplished through established partnerships with government agencies, non-government partners and local businesses.
7. Communication methods include public safety radios, cell phones, Nextel/push to talk, landline telephones, email, fax machines, Amateur radios, pagers and text messaging.

8. The Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) Club is an important component to emergency communications throughout Stearns County. The radio club provides auxiliary communications for public, private and non-government partners through the community.
9. Volunteer amateur radio operators will be used to fill the void in those areas not covered by public safety radios, such as congregate care facilities, hospitals, joint information centers, reception centers and central resource receiving and distribution points.

#### Assumptions

1. A natural disaster may disrupt service to all or a major portion of both the telephone and radio systems.
2. A technological disaster may disrupt a local exchange in the telephone system.
3. Incidents involving radiation or chemical hazards may require evacuation of significant numbers of surrounding populations. Such evacuations may require extensive coordination of intra-state and intra-county communications and may exceed normal radio communications capabilities.
4. Traditional methods of communications may be unavailable (i.e. phone lines overloaded).
5. Existing radio communications capabilities from departments throughout the County may not be compatible but with the assistance of the 911 Communications Center communications equipment can be patched together without undue delay.
6. In the event of a major loss of communications a mobile communications van will be available to support emergency operations.
7. Agencies that have their own operational radio networks will be responsible for maintaining their own networks, services and equipment.

#### IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Stearns County and the City of St. Cloud have adopted the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to manage all emergencies and disasters regardless of the size or complexity of the incident. On-scene operations are managed in accordance with the Incident Command System (ICS) and are under the direction of an Incident Commander. An Incident Commander will most likely come from the department that has jurisdictional responsibility for the incident. Most often this person will be from a fire, law enforcement or public works department. The primary method for communication amongst emergency responders will be public safety radios and cell phone. Back-up methods include landline telephones and point to point communications with public safety radios.

The 911 Communications Center will receive initial emergency calls. Dispatchers gather information from the caller and take appropriate action to notify emergency responders and other response organizations. The 911 Communications Center is operational 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and is supported by an automatic switch generator to maintain continuity of operations. The generator at

the Law Enforcement Center has the capability to support uninterrupted services of electricity, ventilation, security and sanitation with a fuel supply for 14 days. This back-up system is tested on a regular basis. Another alternative would be to transfer 911 services to Benton County. With some modifications and programming changes the same system used by Stearns County dispatchers would be available for use in Benton County.

Public safety personnel and other responders maintain communications with the 911 Communications Center throughout the duration of the event to communicate arrival and departure information, to request additional resources, to activate mutual aid agreements, to alert Emergency Management, etc. This communication link is critical in keeping the Emergency Operations Center appraised of the on-scene situation. In addition to information that is conveyed through the 911 Communications Center Operational Liaisons will be located in the Emergency Operations Center to be a direct link to departments on the scene. This communication will likely occur through public safety radios and/or telephone.

The Emergency Operations Center is established to support field operations, to provide direction for an event that does not have a single point of impact and/or to coordinate emergencies that may cross multiple jurisdictions. The Stearns County Emergency Management Director (or designee) is responsible for the management and oversight of all operations in the Emergency Operations Center. The primary method for communications in the Emergency Operations Center will be telephone, public safety radios and email. Secondary communications include amateur radios. Tertiary forms of communications may include runners. Communications between the Emergency Operations Center and all outside activities will be by telephone, public safety radios, amateur radio or e-mail. Fax machines are also available at many locations. If all of these methods or communications fail, messengers/runners will be utilized.

#### Ensuring Interoperable Communications

All intra-county radio users are equipped and trained in the use of the 800 MHz radio system. This includes law enforcement, fire, EMS, and public works departments. Various shared talkgroups and standardized regional and incident command layouts are programmed into all entities radios. Local radio layouts, although necessarily not identical, were programmed with consistency in mind.

The Stearns County 911 Communications Center is equipped with necessary local, regional, and statewide talkgroups. Additionally, the centers staff is trained in the patching of 800 MHz resources upon request. The limited ability to patch VHF radio systems to the 800 MHz radio system is in place in the 911 Communications Center.

Dissemination of security sensitive information during response and recovery operations will be done in accordance with policies and procedures established by local law enforcement, fire departments and EMS providers throughout the County/City. Many departments currently have in place methods and procedures for disseminating secure information. Some methods for sharing secure information include encryption of email and radio talkgroups as well as discussions that occur face to face in private meetings. Packet communications by amateur radio operators is another way that secure information can be disseminated by trained radio operators. The determination for what is considered security sensitive information will be deemed appropriately by public safety officials at the time of the event.

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 (or designee). 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 located in the Basic Plan.

Communications is part of the Logistics Section, therefore the Communications Unit Leader will report directly to the Logistics Section Chief. The order of succession for the Communications Unit Leader will be established by the Sheriff's Office as required. The organization for emergency communications is identical to that which is used by law enforcement, fire departments, EMS and support organizations during normal daily operations and during emergencies.

## 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.

#### Communications Unit Leader

The Communications Unit Leader for the Emergency Operations Center is responsible for ensuring the operation of emergency communications and establishing and maintaining a link to the emergency response personnel on-scene. There are many systems for communications that may be utilized including public safety radios, cell phones, landline telephones, amateur radios, email, fax machines, etc. The coordination of this communication will be vital to ensure that clear and consistent messages, requests, reports, etc are clearly presented between the Emergency Operations Center, Incident Commander and any other response organizations. The 911 Communications Center is supervised and managed by the Sheriff's Office therefore requiring a link between the Communication Unit Leader and the Sheriff's Office Dispatch Supervisor. The Communications Unit Leader will also arrange for technical support in the Emergency Operations Center for phone and email communications.

#### Stearns County Emergency Management

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.

#### Stearns County Sheriff's Office

The Stearns County Sheriff's Office coordinates county wide public safety communications through 911 and public safety radios and supervises the overall operation of the 911 Communications Center. The 911 Communications Center makes contact and establishes a link with adjacent jurisdictions, as necessary. Emergency communications support is provided as requested. Normal day-to-day dispatching is administered by each responsible department in accordance with established procedures and agreements with the Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office is responsible for coordinating communications amongst responding agencies in support of response and recovery.

#### 911 Communications Center

The Stearns County 911 Center is made up of 23 dispatchers who work various shifts, including weekends and holidays. The center dispatches for 13 area police departments, 23 fire and rescue units, and six ambulance services. The 911 Center uses a CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch) system. Dispatchers enter all of the calls for all agencies that they serve, and thus can check for previous hazards or prior calls from the location, and can monitor the officers' location and status through this system. The radio control screen allows instant access to the deputies on duty, the police, fire, and ambulance services, the Public Works Department, and the Stearns County Dive Team and SERT Team as necessary.

#### St. Cloud Fire Department

The St. Cloud Fire Department is the primary responding Fire and Emergency Medical First Response entity within the City of St. Cloud. The Fire Department responds to calls for service including, fire suppression, emergency medical response, fire prevention, fire investigation, fire inspection, technical

rescue, auto extrication and water rescue. Emergency fire requests are received via 911 through the Stearns County Dispatch and transferred to the fire department by phone tie line. Fire resources are dispatched through the St. Cloud Fire Department dispatch center located in Fire Station 1 via the ARMER 700/800 MHz Radio system. The St. Cloud Fire Department utilizes one Gold Elite Dispatch console for dispatching of resources and for daily radio communications from station 1. The Fire Department has the interoperable abilities, within its current portable and mobile radio programming, to utilize local, regional and state wide talkgroups, as well as the statewide simple frequencies (SOA's), and the Federal resources of 8 Call/TACS 90-94 in the simplex mode. Limited console patching availability to VHF resources is present in the St. Cloud Fire Department Dispatch Center and Stearns County 911 Communications center.

#### St. Cloud Police Department

The St. Cloud Police Department is the primary responding law enforcement entity within the City of St. Cloud. The Police Department responds to calls for service including, criminal and non-criminal offenses, traffic issues, and medical emergencies. It is Radio dispatched through the Stearns County 911 communications center via the ARMER 700/800 MHz Radio system. The Police Department has the interoperable abilities, within its current portable and mobile radio programming, to utilize local, regional and state wide talkgroups, as well as the statewide simple frequencies (SOA's), and the Federal resources of 8 Call/TACS 90-94 in the simplex mode. Limited console patching availability to VHF resources is present in the Stearns County 911 Communications center.

#### Stearns County ARES

Stearns County ARES is responsible for recruiting, assigning and training individuals for radio operations (Net Control and mobile). Amateur radio operators will provide a communication link between the Emergency Operations Center and designated locations (i.e. congregate care facilities) throughout the County/City. Additional responsibilities include assigning net control operators, organizing nets, as well as establishing communication links throughout the County/Region as dictated by the emergency.

## 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 Communications Unit Leader 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. Resources will 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 Communications Unit Leader 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

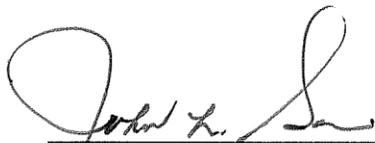
The Stearns County/City of St. Cloud Emergency Operations Plan, including the Basic Plan and Annexes, is updated on an annual basis. Each annex representative is responsible for participating in the full review process every other year and for independently reviewing the annex on an annual basis. The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

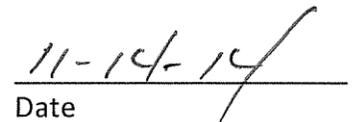
- Communication equipment for all Stearns County Law Enforcement, Fire Departments Public Works and Ambulance companies can be found in the Resource Manual
- Stearns County ARES Communications Plan
- [ESF 2 – Communications](#)
- Strategic Technology Reserve Transportable Tower and Repeater System Instruction and Setup Procedure Manual (This manual is on hand in the Stearns County Emergency Operations Center(EOC))
- Minnesota Central Region Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan

IX. AUTHENTICATION



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John Sanner, Sheriff  
Stearns County



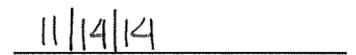
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Date



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Kristen Beste, Interim Director  
Stearns County Emergency Management



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Date