Alert and Warning Guide
Hinsdale County Emergency Operations Plan Annex

May 2019
INTRODUCTION
The following guide provides an overview of community Alert and Warning in Hinsdale County. Rapid dissemination of warning and emergency information about an imminent or occurring emergency is critical to protecting life, safety, and health during an emergency. The information provided before, during, and after a disaster/emergency should provide clear, concise, and accurate information on the existing situation in the disaster area, actions being taken by the authorities, and those to be taken by the general public.

When the public is threatened by an immediate or potential emergency situation, it is essential that timely alerting and warning be accomplished to protect the public. The alerting process draws the public's attention to a threat or danger. The alert and warning process provides accurate information and instructions to guide public response in taking appropriate protective actions.

A warning period will be available for most emergency situations although the amount of lead-time will vary from hazard to hazard. Proper use of adequate warning will save lives, reduce injuries, and protect property. A higher authority (State and/or Federal Government) may initiate warning whenever large-scale threat or emergency exists. Incident falling into this category include earthquakes, terrorist attacks, and biohazards or severe weather conditions.

Certain hazard-specific emergencies may require automatic emergency alerting, warning and notification of the general public and emergency response organizations. Telephone communications may be disrupted or overloaded. Local and regional radio/television stations without emergency power may be off the air for lengthy periods of time.

Emergency Notification System
The CodeRED Emergency Notification Network is the primary system used in Hinsdale County for providing alert and warning information to the public. This system is the fastest to initiate and will reach the most people in the event of an emergency. Consideration must be given to the time sensitive nature of the information and the audience to afford adequate saturation. The concept of warning typically includes the activation of Emergency Management staff. The Public Information Officer (PIO) should be included as they are tasked with communicating with the media and the general public (via social media and web platforms) and to ensure that they are aware of a dangerous situation.

Sources of Emergency Information
Reports of situations that may endanger the public may come from a variety of sources, including private citizens, responding emergency services personnel, the National Warning System, the National Weather Service, Emergency Management partners, major news wire services, neighboring counties, state and federal government agencies, industries, and utilities.
Dissemination of Alert and Warning

Public alerting and warning can be accomplished through one or a combination of means. These include:

Primary - Used Often
1. CodeRED Emergency Notification System, general and geographically based warning alerts (most widely used)
2. Social Media (Facebook and Twitter)

Secondary Alternatives
1. Siren alert & voice system
2. Virtual Message Boards/Signs
3. Emergency Alert System (EAS) via National Weather System (NWS) non weather alerts, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA),
4. Door-to-door alerting and warning, and roadway alerting and warning performed by law enforcement, fire personnel, or other designated emergency personnel. Written warnings should be used to warn the hearing-impaired or non-English speaking persons.
5. Mass media, i.e., radio and television, through public announcements, and/or the Emergency Alert System (EAS).

Lo-Tech Alternatives
1. Sign boards at common gathering places (Trap lines)
2. Deputy using PA system in localized area

Control and decision making
1. When time permits, e.g. in slowly developing disasters, the decision to disseminate the alert and warning to the general public will be made by the Sheriff or designee, Emergency Manager and County administrator or Town Manager.
2. In some situations, an Incident Commander may initiate alerting and warning. Any such situation requiring the warning of a substantial number of private citizens will be reported to the EOC in sufficient detail to permit them to evaluate the action that has been taken and to determine any additional actions to be initiated.
3. Incident Commanders are authorized to carry out community warning and evacuation on their own in fast-developing emergency situations, e.g., hazardous materials incidents, flooding or wildfire.
4. The activation of the EAS normally will be authorized by the Sheriff/EM/County Administrator or designated representative. EAS is activated by contacting the NWS to initiate a public broadcast message.
Alert, Warning and Information Sharing Mechanisms

CodeRED Emergency Notification System

The CodeRED system is both a geographically targeted alert system as well as a countywide general and emergency alert and warning system. CodeRED has the ability to notify citizens via an incident-specific recorded message in emergencies that relate to a geographic area, such as if access to the southern half of Lake City were to be cut off by a flood. Traditional landline phones are automatically enrolled; however the public is encouraged to link their mobile phones based on their home or work address.

CodeRED has the ability to launch Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) enables local-alerting authorities to warn the public about serious emergencies via the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Collaborative Operating Groups (COG to COG), and other public alerting systems, all from a single interface. To send a message contact the Hinsdale County Sheriff’s office or County Administrator. Gunnison County Emergency Management also can send a CodeRED message.

CDOT Variable Message Signs (VMS)

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) manages several Variable Message Signs (VMS) in the region which are a valuable and effective traffic control tool available for emergencies and incident management, as well as day to day information for traveler alerts and maintenance activities for day to day communications. In addition, they can be effective for large special events that significantly affect traffic flow. Hinsdale County can request a Mobile Variable Message Sign from CDOT for county use. Local CDOT staff can program messages into the VMS and maintain its use and functionality.

EOC Operational Roles & Responsibilities

The Emergency Manager is responsible for establishing the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in support of Incident Operations. The EOC will be used to gather and disseminate information, perform resource management as needed and act as the planning function for situational awareness and preparation for the next operational period.
Emergency Manager:

- Establish an effective County emergency alert and warning system
- Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate the public of how alerts and warning will be disseminated throughout the jurisdiction. Stress hazard awareness and personal preparedness.
- Exercise warning and notification procedures at least annually.
- Involve the media and the local jurisdictions in exercises and critiques.
- Test the EAS and other emergency communications at least annually.
- Review and update this annex.
- Ensure that warning of key personnel has been accomplished using the ReadyOp system
- When notified of an emergency situation, reports to the EOC.
- Ensure radio equipment is working and appropriate agencies and groups are contacted.
- Inform the public through the appropriate warning system. Ensure that the warning systems are not overly used to cause undue public concern.
- Ensure that special needs populations in the affected areas are being warned of the situation and taking recommended protective actions.
- Implements contingency plans to provide warnings if established warning systems fail to work.
- Appoints a PIO. If the primary PIO is not available, the new PIO should be experienced in the roles & responsibilities of a Public Information Officer.

Public Information Officer (PIO)

In a prolonged emergency or disaster situation, public information activities will be directed and coordinated from the County EOC. The designated PIO should use every possible outlet available with which to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of available information. These means should include, but are not limited to the following:

- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, website)
- Broadcast Media (Radio and Television)
- Internet Based systems (Website News Flash)
- Print Media (Newspapers)
- VMS Boards

Responsibilities

- Reports to the EOC, upon activation.
- Contacts the media and informs them about the emergency.
- Supervises the preparation of emergency announcements for warning system broadcast.
- Coordinates all public announcements with the Incident Commander.
- Issues news media releases from the EOC, or, if activated, establishes and coordinates all actions at the Joint Information Center (JIC).
- Provides for briefings with the participation of the County Manager and other involved officials.
- Insures that the Public Information phone lines have the most current information.
Coordinates news releases with jurisdictions involved in an emergency through the JIC or Joint Information System (JIS).

✓ Verifies the authenticity of incoming information.

✓ Verifies that duplicate or contradictory releases are not being made.

✓ Takes action to maintain control of rumors.

✓ These or similar responsibilities will apply to any PIO working in the Hinsdale County JIC.

Primary Agencies

Law Enforcement

1. Disseminates warnings and emergency public information to affected areas in coordination with the Fire Department.

2. Supplements warning activities by door-to-door notifications, mobile loudspeakers or other available means as necessary.

3. Addresses citizen warnings received through the emergency 911 system.

Fire Department

1. Disseminates warnings and emergency public information to affected areas in coordination with the Hinsdale County Sheriff’s office.

2. Supplements warning activities by door-to-door notifications, mobile loudspeakers, or other available means as necessary.

County Emergency Management

1. Secures additional resources through state and federal agencies as needed.

2. Assumes strategic long-term planning for emergency public information and warning activities.

3. Coordinates the gathering, verification, and dissemination of public information for distribution to media outlets.

4. Coordinates overall strategic disaster response during a major emergency or disaster.

5. Coordinates response to media inquiries regarding an emergency.

6. Establishes a means to monitor and respond to rumors.

7. Dispatches emergency information to the EAS activation station including health warnings, emergency shelter locations, evacuation instructions, and other recommended actions.

8. Assists the establishment of a Joint Information Center when necessary.
DATED THIS 17 DAY OF May 2019.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

By: [Signature]
Jami Scroggins

DATED THIS ___ DAY OF ______ 2019.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HINSDALE COUNTY COLORADO

By: [Signature]
Chairman

SHERIFF
HINSDALE COUNTY COLORADO

By: [Signature]
Sheriff

ATTEST:

_____________________________
County Clerk