Alert, Warning & Notification

Teller County Emergency Operations Plan - Annex A

November 18, 2021

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INTRODUCTION

The following Annex provides an overview of public warning mechanisms as well as internal key official and responder notification in the event of a large-scale emergency or disaster in Teller County.

TCSO is the lead agency responsible for the 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. Every effort shall be made to minimize and counter rumors, hearsay, and half-truth information.

Citizens have the responsibility to prepare themselves and their families to cope with emergencies and to manage their affairs in ways that will aid the County in managing emergencies.

SITUATION & ASSUMPTIONS

SITUATION

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 warning process provides accurate information and instructions to guide public response in taking appropriate protective actions.

Hazards vary in both predictability and speed of onset. The time available for warning varies from ample to none. Effective public response relies on public education measures taken prior to an emergency. (see Public Information Guide for more details.)

ASSUMPTIONS

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. Incidents 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.

The Wireless Emergency Notification System (NIXEL) will be considered the primary system for providing warning and emergency information to the public. This system is the fastest to initiate and will reach the most people in the event of an emergency as these are all done by the TCSO dispatch center. Internal agency notification will be from ReadyOp.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

The County will endeavor to release timely and accurate emergency information to the public concerning emergency preparedness, response, and recovery in a cooperative effort with the media. Given Teller County agencies are primarily dispatched by one Communications Center, the Teller County Sheriff's Office dispatch center. will coordinate warnings with Woodland Park and Cripple Creek Police Dispatch Centers, Pueblo Interagency Dispatch and Colorado State Patrol and surrounding County Dispatch Centers when appropriate.

Consideration must be given to the time sensitive nature of the information and the audience to afford adequate saturation. These means are vehicles of sharing information relevant to hazards, threats to public safety and risk reduction.

The concept of warning typically includes the activation of all or part of the emergency management organization and communicating with the general public and organizations such as schools, industry, employers, etc. 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, major news wire services, 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:
1. NIXEL, IPAWS or another Emergency Alert System (EAS), providing geographically based warning alerts.
2. Door-to-door alerting and warning, and roadway alerting and warning performed by TCSO, fire personnel, or other designated emergency personnel. Written warnings should be used to warn the hearing-impaired or non-English speaking persons.
3. Social and Mass media, i.e., radio and television, through public announcements, and/or the Emergency Alert System (EAS).

DIRECTION AND CONTROL

1. The TCSO is the main contact point for the receipt and dissemination of emergency alert and warning information for the citizens of Teller County. The TCSO will share information with the surrounding agency and counties Dispatch Centers to assure good situational awareness for both the public and emergency responders.
2. When time permits, e.g., in slowly developing disasters such as floods, the decision to disseminate the alert and warning to the general public will be made by the Sheriff or Director of Emergency Management or their designee.
3. 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.
4. 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.

5. The activation of the EAS <u>will</u> normally be authorized by the Sheriff/EM or designated representative. EAS is activated by contacting the NWS to initiate a public broadcast message.

OPERATIONAL ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director of Emergency Management 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, logistics and finance function for situational awareness and preparation for the next operational period.

EMERGENCY MANAGER

RESPONSIBILITIES
- ✓ 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 by contacting the dispatch center and/or using the NIXEL system.
- ✓ When notified of an emergency situation, may activate 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

In a prolonged emergency or disaster situation, public information activities will be directed and coordinated from the County EOC to the JIC for information distribution. 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:
- ✓ Community Alert System (NIXEL)
- ✓ Broadcast and Print Media
- ✓ Broadcast Media (Radio and Television)
- ✓ Internet Based systems (Websites, Email)
- ✓ Emergency Alert System
- ✓ Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)
- ✓ Variable Message Signs (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 Administrator and other involved officials.
- ✓ Ensures 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 Teller County JIC.

The following staff has been designated as Public Information Officers:

TITLE	DISASTER SCALE/TYPE
Teller County Sheriff/Administrator	All County, Public Works, Public Health or other disasters
Emergency Management Director	Small Scale County or Public Safety
Public Health Director	Public Health Disaster

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

The County has designated the BOCC Board Room or the Tamarac 224 Conference Room to serve as a Joint Information Center (JIC) as needed. Should the situation require, the JIC may be moved to another location to serve its purpose to ensure that it does not impact incident support functions.

The JIC will be used to gather, analyze, produce and disseminate information in the event of a threat or disaster affecting the County. Public Information Officers from municipal agencies not normally affiliated with emergency response may be called upon to assist the Joint Information System during a County emergency.

The JIC will be established during a high-visibility or high severity incident to serve as the central contact point for all news media and to coordinate all incident-related public information activities. All municipal agencies releasing information concerning their emergency actions will coordinate through the EOC or the JIC.

The Incident Commander or JIC will ensure that emergency information transmitted to the public clearly conveys the following information:

- The nature of the emergency

- The location of the emergency
- How the emergency can affect the public
- What protective action(s) to take
- Where to get help
- When the situation will be remedied

WARNING MECHANISMS

PHONE AND WEB COMMUNICATION
The County maintains a Public Information Line (PIL) that is either answered by a Teller County representative, or may contain a pre-recorded message. In addition, a webpage at www.co.teller.co.us , which is updated as conditions change or as the situation warrants.

SOCIAL MEDIA
Teller County will create event specific social media pages that will be managed by designated PIOs and updated at appropriate.

WIRELESS EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM (NIXEL)
The NIXEL system is used for general alerts regarding road closures, road conditions or severe weather and is primarily for commuters, visitors and residents. The Sheriff's Office may utilize this type of warning delivery system for geographic based incidents when the Incident Commander deems this necessary. Emergency notifications are sent to subscribers to the system by text message and/or email. A text message will be sent to your mobile number AND/OR email outlining the nature of the emergency. Sign up for NIXEL service by completing a simple online registration.

NIXEL EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM
NIXEL is a geographically targeted alert. The NIXEL Notification System will notify citizens via an incident-specific recorded message in emergencies that relate to a geographic area, such as if access to the City of Cripple Creek were to be blocked by rockslide. Traditional land-line phones are automatically enrolled; however, the public can now link their mobile phones based on their home address.

VARIABLE MESSAGE SIGNS (VMS)
Mobile Variable Message Signs (VMS) 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. The County has eight and the City of Woodland Park and Cripple Creek also have VMS boards that may be placed at multiple locations both in and outside the County, city or town lines. They are all field programmable for what they are needed to state. In addition, CDOT has several signs that could be obtained to provide additional notification information.

EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM (EAS)
The National Weather Service in Pueblo has established secure procedures for dissemination of Non-Weather Emergency Messages (NWEMs) issued by a county emergency manager or other designated officials through the Emergency Alert System (EAS).

NWEMs include such products as Civil Emergency Messages, Fire Warnings, Evacuation Messages, 911 Telephone Outages, etc., and cover any conceivable emergency which may produce a threat to life or property.

An NWEM disseminated by the National Weather Service will result in the automatic activation of NOAA Weather Radio receivers, as well as activation of the EAS on commercial radio and television broadcasts. Most radio and television stations within the County participate in the EAS by receiving and broadcasting emergency announcements.

AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES

AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	TITLE
Sheryl Decker	County Administrator
Jason Mikesell	Sheriff
Stan Bishop	Undersheriff
Don Angell	Director of Emergency Management

WEATHER RADIO COVERAGE MAP

RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities listed herein are not intended to be departmental checklists. Each agency will develop internal policies and procedures to perform its assigned duties. At the discretion of the Incident Commander, not all functions may be performed and nor all agencies used.

PRIMARY AGENCIES

TELLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE OR DESIGNEE

1. Disseminates warnings and emergency public information to affected areas in coordination with the Woodland Park and/or Cripple Creek Police Departments, Fire Department (s), Emergency Management or Public Health.
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 their affected areas in coordination with the Teller County Sheriff.
2. Supplements warning activities by door-to-door notifications, mobile loudspeakers, or other available means as necessary.

COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
(Under the Authority of the TCSO or BOCC)

1. Secures additional resources through local, state and federal agencies as needed.
2. Assumes strategic long-term planning for emergency public information and warning activities.
3. Coordinates overall strategic disaster response during a major emergency or disaster.
4. Dispatches emergency information to the EAS activation station including health warnings, emergency shelter locations, evacuation instructions, and other recommended actions.

INCIDENT COMMANDER AND JIC

1. Coordinates response to media inquiries regarding an emergency.
2. Establishes a means to monitor and respond to rumors.
3. Assists the establishment of a Joint Information Center when necessary.
4. Coordinates the gathering, verification, and dissemination of public information for distribution to media outlets.

SUPPORT AGENCIES

AMERICAN RED CROSS

1. Assists with public information dissemination at Mass Care facilities or mobile assistance units.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1. Issues general public health and response advisories, including air quality, food, water, and sanitation warnings in coordination with the EOC.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY/GIS DEPARTMENT

1. Places emergency information dispatches and bulletins on County websites as needed.
2. Generates maps for incident command as needed.
3. Supports EOC operations.

TELLER REGIONAL DISPATCH CENTER

1. Broadcasts emergency alerts to all employees during a workday emergency.
2. Serves as backup and provides technical assistance for public information and warning activities.
3. Coordinates with the EOC to communicate specific emergency information with applicable traffic signs.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

All state and federal assistance is coordinated through the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). The Director of Emergency Management or Sheriff may order public information resources for deployment from the SEOC. There may be a charge for these services.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Incident Commander with the JIC may create event specific social media accounts to update the public as appropriate.