

Somerset County Emergency Operations Plan

ANNEX C - WARNING

I. PURPOSE

The Warning annex establishes a system to alert emergency response agencies and to warn the public of any probable or immediate hazard situation and the actions to be taken to safeguard life and property. The annex describes the warning systems in place and the responsibilities and procedures for activating and using them.

II. SITUATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. SITUATION

The need to alert government officials and warn the public is common to all hazards and can occur at any time. Available warning time will vary with each hazard from no time to several days. The County and Municipal governments are responsible for notifying not only its own jurisdiction, but also adjacent jurisdictions that could be exposed to the in progress hazard.

B. ASSUMPTIONS

The Somerset County warning systems will survive and withstand the initial effects of the hazard.

Once the County has completed its warning procedures, the Somerset County municipalities will complete any and all warning notifications, as required.

Warning systems and equipment are established and maintained in operational condition. These systems will include the EAS, NOAA, radio and television stations, and telephone systems and Radio Pagers.

Some people located in the hazard areas may ignore, not hear, or not understand issued warnings.

Local radio stations are willing to transmit warning announcements.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. GOVERNMENT ALERTING

The methods used to notify Somerset County and Municipal Officials and alert Emergency Response Organizations include activating cell phones and pagers of key government officials, initiating the Somerset County Fan-Out Procedures, passed via the Somerset County All-Hazard/Homeland Security Alert Warning System or Incident Command Net; using NOAA and, activating the radio-pagers of local emergency responders, and contacting local radio and television stations.

The Somerset County Regional Communications Center (RCC) dispatchers will immediately contact the County Commissioners, EMA Director, and Sheriff by phone or pager.

The SCCC will initiate the County Fan-Out procedures when there is a need to alert municipal officials regarding hazard information. The need to alert will be decided by the EMA Director, or

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if the EMA Director is not available the designated alternate, or the most senior member in the EMA office.

Fan-outs are multi-directional from the point of origin. When initiated at the Federal or State level, alerting occurs through the County to the municipalities. Alerting initiated at the County level goes to the State and municipal levels. Alerting initiated at municipal levels goes to the local Emergency Director to pass to the local municipal officials and citizens and emergency service agencies and the County.

Weather information is received by links to NOAA, And Towns who have elected to receive weather watches and warnings by e-mail or by cell phone, are maintained.

If an emergency situation is in progress, then the RCC dispatchers have the authorization to alert, by radio pagers, any and all county and municipal emergency responders.

Upon authorization by the Somerset County EMA Director, Commissioners, or Sheriff, local radio and television stations may be contacted for the purpose of initiating an Emergency Alert System (EAS) broadcast of warning announcements.

The Somerset County RCC (phone 207-474-6788, fax: 207-858-4216 or 1-877-200-9070) is located at 8 County Drive in the Town of Skowhegan and is staffed on a 24-hour basis.

Should the Somerset County RCC be unavailable or inoperable, then the Franklin County RCC may be used as a backup RCC for Somerset County. The Maine State Police Barracks at Augusta will be used as a backup for all 911 telephone traffic.

Somerset County operated and/or supported radio/repeater system consists of an antenna at the Somerset County RCC; numerous Federal and State agencies depending upon a communication system and repeater towers located in remote areas of Somerset County, as well as the sister counties of Franklin and Piscataquis, all dispatching is centrally controlled by the RCC, but the radio repeaters use Different frequency for transmissions. To mention several of these sites would include Boundary Bald-Jackman, Durgin Hill-West Forks, Wilcox-Fairfield, Parkman Hill-Solon, Easton Mountain-Skowhegan in Somerset and Squaw Mountain in Piscataquis County, and Sugar Loaf in Franklin County.

Emergency Alert information may be received through the NAWAS system at the Somerset County Warning Point from the State Warning Point or from another County. Upon receipt of a NAWAS warning, the EMA Director shall be notified.

The National Warning System (NAWAS) is a 24-hour continuous private line telephone system used to convey warnings to Federal, State and Local governments, as well as the military and civilian population. Originally, the primary mission of the NAWAS was to warn of an imminent enemy attack or an actual/accidental missile launch upon the United States. NAWAS still supports this mission but the emphasis is on natural and technological disasters. NAWAS allows issuance of warnings to all stations nationwide or to selected stations as dictated by the situation. The primary NAWAS warning point for Somerset County is located in the RCC, with an additional phone located within the Somerset County EOC. Currently, there is no alternate NAWAS warning point.

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Title VI of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act authorizes the use of the NAWAS to support the All-Hazards emergency response mission of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

B. PUBLIC WARNING

The methods and warning devices used by Somerset County to disseminate emergency warnings to the general public include the Emergency Alert System, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio and mobile sirens/PA systems operated by local emergency responders.

The EAS is initiated by the EMA Director or his/her subordinate. The Director will initiate the EAS by contacting the Maine Emergency Management Agency, which is the State Primary Source. If unable to contact MEMA, the Director will contact the National Weather Service Forecast Office at Caribou to initiate the EAS. MEMA activates the State EAS by transmitting the EAS signals that are relayed through the State EAS Relay Network. The Network then alerts local broadcast stations and cable systems in the effected areas.

The NOAA Weather Radio system serves the entire county. It provides weather information and emergency warning of hazard situations such as severe weather, national security and nuclear power incidents. The County EMA Director will contact the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Caribou, Maine to initiate the system for Northern Somerset, and Gray, Maine to initiate Central and Southern Somerset.

If the emergency warrants the need, the Somerset County EMA Director may request that the Somerset County Sheriff utilize his/her personnel and vehicle PA/Siren systems for the purpose of performing mobile warnings within the communities.

Each municipality in the County is responsible for the dissemination of emergency public warnings. The mobile sirens/PA systems and door-to-door sweeps are operated and performed by their local emergency responders. The municipalities will operate their warning systems as outlined in their own respective procedures and guidelines.

Other organizations such as plants, schools, medical facilities, etc. are responsible for the development of warning systems to meet their needs.

The attention or alert warning is a 3 to 5 minute steady signal. It is used as authorized by the local government executive officers and EMA directors to alert the public of emergencies. Upon hearing this warning, the public may turn on the radio or television and listen for essential emergency information. Vehicles with public address systems shall advise the public of the specific hazard and the protective actions that may be taken when notified.

IV. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The following EOC Staff Positions are tasked with Warning duties during an emergency event:

County Commissioners: (COMMAND) (207) 474-7404) Have the authority to activate all county alert and warning systems. This responsibility will be performed by the EMA Director, unless the Director is not available.

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EMA Director: (OPERATIONS) (207) 474-6788 Oversees, directs and tracks progress of all Alert and Warning actions. Has the authority to activate all county alert and warning systems.

Warning Coordinator: (LOGISTICS) (207) 858-0523 The Director of the Somerset County Regional Communication Center will initiate and verify the necessary alerts and warnings during an emergency situation. The RCC will monitor the NAWAS national and state circuits on a 24 hour basis and relay all warnings to the EOC.

Communications Officer: (LOGISTICS) (207) 858-0523 Will test and operate all EOC communications systems, supervise EOC radio operations and will receive and release all radio messages.

Damage Assessment Coordinator: (PLANNING) (207) 858-4317 Will coordinate all damage assessment of damaged alert and warning systems during the incident.

Medical Emergency Services Coordinator: (OPERATIONS) (207) 474-6788 Will coordinate and verify that all medical units (EMS, Hospital and Pharmacies) have received and understood all alert and warning information.

Fire & Rescue County Coordinator: (OPERATIONS) (207) 474-6788 Will coordinate and verify that all fire service units have received and understood all alert and warning information.

Protection Services Officer: (OPERATIONS) (207) 474-6788 Will coordinate and verify that all law enforcement units have received and understood all alert and warning information.

Public Information Officer: (COMMAND) (207) 474-7404 Will work with local media to provide emergency information to the public.

Resource Officer: (LOGISTICS) (207) 858-4709 Will locate and acquire additional alert and warning systems, as needed to support the notification, response and recovery operations.

Shelter Coordinator: (LOGISTICS) (207) 858-4709 Will coordinate and verify that all shelter managers have received and understood all alert and warning information.

V. ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS

The individuals carrying out the fan-out are required to report all alert notifications received, actions taken, and times of completion to the EOC. Verbal and written reports of alert notifications are provided to the EMA Director and the Sheriff.

Report NAWAS system malfunctions to MEMA or the phone company as soon as possible.

VI. PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

REVISIONS: A continuous file on recommended changes or improvements will be maintained by the Somerset County EMA. The EMA Director reviews this annex annually and ensures that all procedures, policies, data and responsibilities are current and reflect actual assignments.

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: County and municipal agencies are responsible for the development and maintenance of their organizational policies and procedures.

VII. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

Currently, there are no agreements with the local Media, nor are there any contracts for emergency services with local communication system contractors.

Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.