Emergency Support Function #2 - Communications

Primary Department(s)
Office of Communications
Department of Technology
Emergency Communications Center
Telecommunications Support
Radio Technology Division

Secondary/Support Departments
Police Department
Emergency Management
Sheriff's Department
Fire-EMS Department
Amateur Radio Emergency Services
The Council of Community Services

I. Introduction

A. Purpose:

Emergency Support Function #2 – Communication supports public safety and other City agencies by maintaining continuity of information, tele-communication equipment, and other technical resources. ESF #2 is responsible for keeping the public and City employees informed in regards to an emergency situation, provide guidance when appropriate to help save lives and protect property, and support City agencies with the restoration and reconstruction of tele-communications equipment, computers, and other technical resources. This section describes the City emergency communications/notification and warning system. The City will coordinate with the State Emergency Operations Center should outside assistance be required.

B. Scope:

ESF #2 works to accurately and efficiently transfer information during an incident and is also responsible for the technology associated with the representation, transfer, interpretation, and processing of data among people, places, and machines. Communication includes transmission, emission, or reception of signs, signals, writing, images, and sounds or intelligence of any nature by wire, radio, optical, or other electromagnetic systems.

C. Policies:

1. The Emergency Communications Center (ECC) operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and serves as the 911 center and the locality warning point;

2. The ECC is accessible to authorized personnel only;

3. The EOC, if staffed, will consist of the Director, Coordinator of Emergency Management, as well as key department heads or their designated representatives acting in appropriate emergency support functions as deemed necessary. Support personnel to assist with communications (to

include amateur radio); designated logistics, and administration will also be designated. The Emergency Management Director will be available for decision-making as required; and

4. The ECC will initiate notification and warning of appropriate personnel.

II. Concept of Operations

A.   General:

1. The Emergency Operations Plan provides guidance for managing emergency communications resources.

2. The City Emergency Communications Center is the point of contact for receipt of all warnings and notification of actual or impending emergencies or disaster. The dispatcher(s) on duty will notify other key personnel, chiefs and department heads as required by the type of report and standard operating procedures (SOP).

3. The ECC is accessible to authorized personnel only. The ECC is most often the first point of contact for the general public. The ECC has the capability to access the Emergency Alert System and REVERSE 911 © to broadcast warnings to the public.

4. The telephone companies will ensure that communications essential to emergency services are maintained. During a major disaster, additional telephone lines may be utilized in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to coordinate emergency operations. The Council of Community Services (CCS) will coordinate '2-1-1' locally and disseminate disaster specific information obtained from operational period briefings with Emergency Management Coordinator and EOC staff.

5. Amateur radio operators may provide emergency backup radio communications between the EOC and the State EOC, should normal communications be disrupted. They may also provide communications with some in-field operators.

6. Common terminology will be used so that multiple agencies are better able to interact and understand each other.

7. Should an evacuation become necessary, warning and evacuation instructions will be put out via radio and TV. The Public Information Officer (and Joint Information Center) will develop and provide public information announcements and publications regarding evacuation procedures to include recommended primary and alternate evacuation routes, designated assembly points for those without transportation, rest areas and service facilities along evacuation routes, if appropriate, as well as potential health hazards associated with the risk.

8. Note: Evacuation routes, procedures, and information should be obtained from the Roanoke Valley-Allegheny Regional Commission Evacuation Study Findings.

B.   Organization:

1. The Coordinator of Emergency Management will assure the development and maintenance of SOPs on the part of each major emergency support function. Generally, each designated agency should maintain current notification rosters, designate staff to participate in EOC or Joint Information Center, and establish procedures for reporting appropriate emergency information, develop mutual aid agreements with like agencies in adjacent localities, and provide ongoing training to maintain emergency response capabilities. When an emergency threatens, available time will be used to implement increased readiness measures as listed in each annex to this plan. The Coordinator of Emergency Management will assure that all actions are completed as scheduled. The Public Information Officer will represent and advise the Incident Commander on all public information. This includes rumors that are circulating the area, what local media are reporting, as well as warnings and emergency public information.

2. The EOC support staff may include a Documentation Unit, Situation Unit, and other support personnel as required relieving the decision-making group of handling messages, maintaining logs, placing maps, etc.

3. The City emergency communications are heavily dependent of the commercial telephone network. Technical failure or damage to tele-communications equipment could hamper communications or the ability to communicate with emergency personnel and the public throughout the locality. Mutual aid repeaters in contiguous jurisdictions may not be available or may not be able to provide sufficient coverage or channel loading to compensate for technical failure or damage to telecommunications resources in the locality during an emergency.

4. Amateur radio operators and other non-governmental volunteer groups used to assist with emergency radio communications support will be under the authority of the Director or Coordinator of Emergency Management. The amateur radio and other non-governmental volunteer operators will be required to be NIMS compliant and actively participate in regular training and exercises established by Emergency Management and the Department of Technology/ECC.

C.   Actions

1. ESF #2/Office of Communications will establish a working arrangement between all participating agencies, the local Emergency Operations Center, and local news media;

2. The ECC will initiate notification and warning of appropriate personnel. Landline telephones, voice or data-2 way radio, and wireless telecommunications devices may be utilized to notify public officials, EOC staff, emergency personnel and others, as required;

3. Emergency service vehicles equipped with public address systems maybe used to warn the general public using alert routing;

4. Council of Community Services will assist in the collection and dissemination of information to include:

    a. Rumor Control

    b. Special Needs Registry

    c. Donations Information

    d. Disaster/Recovery Assistance

5. The Emergency Management Director or his/her designee must authorize the use of the Emergency Alert System (EAS);

    a. Per the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), all commercial radio and television stations and cable television companies must participate in EAS and use their facilities to relay warning and instructions from government to the public.

    b. Activation of EAS by the City is governed by the *Virginia EAS Plan* and the Roanoke Valley EAS plans. The general guidelines for local activation of EAS include severity of the situation, timeliness, and lack of adequate alternatives.

    c. The local EAS stations are listed in Tab 3 of this document. The City has coordinated with these stations to establish procedures for accessing the EAS, which are included in that plan. Authority to release EAS messages for broadcast is restricted to authorized personnel. The following methods will be used to transmit emergency messages to EAS stations for broadcast:

        1. By telephone, with the station generally recording a verbal message and then broadcasting it; or

        2. By fax, with the station receiving written message and reading it on the air.

    d. Pre-scripted emergency messages have been prepared for use with those warning systems that are capable of delivering a verbal or written message. As EAS messages are limited to two minutes, the pre-scripted messages include short warning and instructional messages that may be transmitted by EAS and amplifying messages that will be distributed to the media as Special News Advisories.

6. Emergency warning may originate at the Federal, State, or City level of government. Timely warning requires dissemination to the public by all available means discussed previously and including:

    a. Route Alerting and Door-to-Door Warning
    The public may be warned by route alerting using vehicles equipped with sirens and public address systems. Warnings may also be delivered by response personnel going door-to-door. Both of these methods are effective in delivering warning, but are labor-intensive, time-consuming and may be infeasible for large areas. Fire-EMS, Police, and the Sheriff's departments maintain vehicles equipped for route alerting.

b. NOAA Weather Radio
Pursuant to an agreement with the National Weather Service (NWS) Forecast Office in Blacksburg, those designated officials authorized to release EAS messages may request that the NWS activate the NOAA Weather Radio system to broadcast civil emergency messages. This system can broadcast voice messages to individuals who have a NOAA Weather Radio or receive Weather Radio broadcasts on cable television. Cable television also displays the emergency message. See procedures for messaging in Warning Support Annex to this ESF.

c. Emergency Communications Center
The ECC is staffed 24 hours a day and will make initial notifications to key staff or ESF leaders. The ECC also manages the Reverse 911 system

d. REVERSE 911 ©
Reverse 911 is GIS/database driven software purchased by the City using Homeland Security funds. This program is operated through the internet and allows the secure user to select specific geographic areas, record a message, and have it sent to all the listed residences and businesses within that selected area. The City maintains 8 phone lines solely for Reverse 911 and has the capability to utilize the vendor emergency system that would enable 40,000 messages to be sent out per hour.

e. RoanokeAlert.com
City managed website that will become the redirected main city webpage during disasters. This site will provide specific information regarding situation reports, shelter and distribution site locations, debris removal issues, recovery and financial assistance information.

f. Amateur Radio Volunteers
Through the NWS, 'SkyWarn' Spotters are amateur radio operators trained to identify and report weather hazards to NWS staff. These spotters also share findings with Amateur Radio Emergency Services personnel staffed in City EOC.

D.   Responsibilities

1. Primary Department (Communications)

   a. Develop and maintain primary and alternate communications systems for contact with local jurisdictions, State agencies, nongovernmental and private sector agencies required for mission support;

   b. Provide additional staffing in the EOC (or off site) to assist with communications functions;

   c. Develop and maintain an emergency communications program and plan;

   d. Coordinate all press releases, briefings, and congressional inquires with ESF #15 External Affairs;

   e. Provide telephone service providers with a restoration priority list for telephone service prior to and/or following a major disaster; and

    f.   Maintain records of cost and expenditures and forward them to Finance Section Chief.

2. <u>Department of Technology</u>

    a. Ensure the ability to provide continued service as the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP)/local warning point for incoming emergency calls;

    b. Ensure communication lines and equipment essential to emergency services are maintained by the appropriate vendor;

    c. Maintain Emergency Notification Procedures as identified in Tab 1; and

    d. Support and promote interoperability to any local public safety responders responding within the City (Radio Technology Division).

3. <u>Support Departments</u>

    a. <u>General</u>

        1. Support Primary Department in mission of ESF #2;

        2. Maintain resource roster, inventory, and standard operating procedures;

    b. <u>Police Department</u>

        1. Augment City and statewide communications in support of emergency management operations;

        2. Assist in dissemination of warnings in coordination with the ECC, Emergency Management and other departments;

        3. Provide Public Information Specialist to support Joint Information Center as needed;

        4. Communicate using common terminology (omit ten-codes); and

        5. Develop Canvass/Evacuation warning procedures.

    c. <u>Sheriff's Department</u>

        1. Assist in dissemination of warnings in coordination;

        2. Communicate using common terminology (omit ten-codes); and

        3. Provide Public Information Specialist to support Joint Information Center/ESF #15 as needed;

    d. <u>Fire-EMS Department</u>

        1. Assist in dissemination of warnings in coordination;

        2. Communicate using common terminology (omit ten-codes); and

        3. Provide Public Education Specialist to support Joint Information Center/ESF #15 as needed;

    e. <u>Amateur Radio Emergency Services</u>

        1. Maintain Memorandum of Agreement (see Tab 4)

2. Staff Amateur Radio Desk in Emergency Operations Center, as needed; and

3. Provide communications support staff at identified Fire-EMS stations, as requested.

f. The Council of Community Services

1. Activate #211 hotline for disaster specific related callers;

2. Coordinate, provide, and maintain necessary staff to handle call volume; and

3. Collect and share information with Emergency Operations Center.

g. Emergency Management

1. Serve as Point of Contact with State EOC;

2. Manage and maintain EOC Operations;

3. Assure the development and maintenance of SOPs on the part of each major emergency support function; and

4. Delegate and manage Documentation Unit, Situation Unit, and other support personnel as required.

Tab 1 to Emergency Support Function #2

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

Until the EOC is activated, the Emergency Communications Center will notify the following officials:

Director of Emergency Management/City Manager

Coordinator of Emergency Management

Police Chief/Designated on-call representative

Fire-EMS Department Chief/Designated on-call representative

Director of Public Works/Designated on-call representative

Sheriff/Designated on-call representative

Public Information Officer

upon receipt of:

Severe weather announcement;

Flash flood watch or warning;

Tornado watch or warning; or

When directed by an on-scene incident commander:

***See Tab 1 to Warning Support Annex 'Emergency Notification Matrix'

Once operational, the EOC will receive messages directly from the State EOC. It is then the responsibility of the Emergency Communications Center to monitor message/call traffic and ensure that messages reach that designated agent.

Tab 2 to Emergency Support Function #2

Emergency Operations Center Phone Numbers

STATION*	FUNCTION	PHONE #
C	ESF-1 Transportation	853-2482
D	ESF-2 Communications (JIC)	853-2316
C	ESF-3 Public Works	853-2753
A	ESF-4 Firefighting	853-2273
E	ESF-5 Emergency Management	853-2862
B	ESF-6 Mass Care Human Services	853-2567
B	Red Cross	853-2664
C	ESF-7 Resource Support	853-2788
A/B	ESF-8 Public Health/Medical	853-2884
A	ESF-9 Urban Search and Rescue	853-2273
A	ESF-10 Oil & Hazardous materials	853-2273
B	ESF-11 Agriculture & Natural Resources	853-2567
C	ESF-12 Energy	853-2609
A	ESF-13 Public Safety & Security	853-2463
C	ESF-14 Long Term Recovery	853-2609
D	ESF-15 External Affairs	853-2550
D	Call Taker	853-2550
	HAM Radio Station	853-2308
	Administration Counter	853-2308

*Stations will be established by Branches.

Branch A: Emergency Services

Branch B: Human Needs

Branch C: Service & Support

Branch D: Communications Branch

Tab 3 to Emergency Support Function #2

EAS Stations
(as of 2005)

Local Primary Station 1

Call-sign: **WSLQ-FM**   Frequency: **99.1 mHz**
Location: Roanoke
Telephone: 772-2300
Fax: 389-0837

Local Primary Station 2

Call-sign: **WROV-FM**   Frequency: **96.3 mHz**
Location   Roanoke
Telephone: 725-1220
Cell 540-239-4579
Pager 777-8646 (numeric)
Fax: 725-1245

Local Primary Station 3

Call-sign: **WRVL-FM**   Frequency: **88.3 mHz**
Location   Lynchburg
Telephone: 434-582-3688
Cell 434-258-4859
Cell 434-426-4096
Fax: 434-582-2994

Tab 4 to Emergency Support Function #2

Amateur Radio Emergency Services Memorandum of Agreement to be attached