

Village of Oak Park
Emergency Operating Plan

ANNEX C - WARNING and EMERGENCY INFORMATION

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to Village of Oak Park employees regarding the activation of the community warning system and/or outdoor warning system. This guidance serves as a foundation on which a common approach can be used to provide warning on impending damage or incidents impacting the Village residents.

This Annex will identify the role of the Warning/Emergency Information System and how the Village operates its warning system and specifies actions to be taken during emergency periods.

SITUATION

Key government officials and critical workers must be notified and the public warned, as soon as possible/appropriate, whenever a major emergency threatens or occurs. Warning capabilities and responsibilities need to be outlined to ensure that rapid alert and accurate dissemination of emergency information is accomplished.

ASSUMPTION

The Village of Oak Park assumes the following:

- A. A warning period will be available for many emergency situations, although the amount of lead time will vary from hazard to hazard.
- B. Warnings may be initiated by higher authority (State or Federal government) through use of the National Warning System (NAWAS) whenever a large area may be threatened by a major emergency (e.g., terrorist attack or severe weather conditions), or from the occurrence of the event itself (e.g., earthquake or explosion).
- C. Telephone, to the extent possible, will be considered the primary system for notification of key officials and critical workers.
- D. The electronic media will be considered the primary system for providing warning and emergency information to large numbers of the affected population, both through news bulletins and Emergency Alert System (EAS) broadcasts.
- E. The issuance of warning, and the approved signals that are used to convey that warning, as well as the procedures used to test those systems, are based on authority provide by Federal and State law and supporting guidance documents.

Pursuant to the provisions of federal law, the term emergency management is defined as:

... Those activities and measures designed or undertaken (1) to minimize the effects upon the civilian population caused or which would be caused by an attack upon the United States or by a natural disaster, (2) to deal with the immediate emergency conditions which would be created by any such attack or natural disaster, and (3) to effectuate emergency repairs to, or the emergency restoration of, vital utilities and facilities destroyed or damaged by such an attack or natural disaster. Such term shall include, but shall not be limited to, (A) measures to be taken in preparation for an anticipated attack or natural disaster [including ... The provision of suitable warning systems].

This statement charges federal, state, and local agencies with developing and maintaining the capability of warning the civilian population of impending disasters.

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The Illinois Emergency Management Act (Public Act 87-168 as amended) further clarifies and assigns these responsibilities to units of local government. The Act defines emergency management as:

... The coordination of such functions by the State and its political subdivisions, other than functions for which military forces are primarily responsible, as may be necessary and proper to prevent, minimize, repair, and alleviate injury and damage resulting from any natural or technological causes. These functions include, without limitation, ... warning services, communications, ... Together with all other activities necessary or incidental to protecting life or property.

Providing effective warning is accomplished by a variety of warning systems, which emanate from the federal government level and ultimately rest with units of local government.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

General

1. Existing communications systems available at the time of a major emergency shall be used for the dissemination of emergency information and warning. The warning function for Oak Park requires a coordinated effort between the various levels of government and numerous politically independent agencies as outlined below.
 - i. Communications Centers/Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) – The West Suburban Consolidated Dispatch Center serves as the public safety answering point for the Village and is the primary warning point for emergency messages for Oak Park.
 - ii. Emergency Services Disaster Agency - The ESDA is responsible for outlining the intergovernmental warning process and once notified or aware of a major emergency or hazard, for ensuring that the necessary dissemination of emergency information occurs throughout the Village to all levels of government and citizens that may be adversely affected by the hazard.
 - iii. The Village maintains its own Emergency Operation Plan (EOP) that is responsible for developing, maintaining and implementing a warning annex and procedures to implement the warning function for their jurisdiction, once the message is received.
 - iv. Police Department - The Police department, as a public safety emergency response agency, is responsible for supporting and implementing procedures to warn the general public in the Village.
 - v. Fire Department - As a public safety emergency response agency, fire personnel are constantly on the scene as first responders and may have to implement local warning procedures for Oak Park using public safety capabilities or assisting those that do.
 - vi. State and County Governments - State and County officials may issue warning information as a result of severe weather warnings or watches, or any major incident that may affect Northern Illinois. Such information may be transmitted over the National Warning System (NAWAS) or the Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS) to local communications centers and police departments and may be broadcast over the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to the public.

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- vii. Federal Government - Warning information may be initiated by federal officials and disseminated over NAWAS. This information may include attack warnings, severe weather warnings, or other incidents which threaten a large area.
- A. Dissemination of Emergency Information -The receipt and dissemination of warning information may utilize any or all of the following warning methods:
 - 1. National Warning System (NAWAS) - The National Warning System (NAWAS) is a nationwide private telephone communications system funded by FEMA, which originates at the National Warning Center at Colorado Springs CO (NORAD). The system has “drops” (telephone instruments with loudspeakers) located at strategic locations within each state. Each state, in turn, controls a system connecting the state with warning points in each County. State of Illinois’s NAWAS line is located at the IEMA Emergency Operation Center and is monitored on a 24 hour basis.
 - 2. Emergency Alert System (EAS) - The Emergency Alert System is composed of AM, FM and TV broadcast stations and non-government industry utilities operating on a voluntary, organized basis during emergencies at national, state or local levels. It provides for the alert of participating stations, dissemination of standardized emergency information, and/or termination of non-emergency station activities until the emergency subsides.
 - 3. Media - Print and electronic media can provide an effective method of disseminating emergency information. Community newspapers are effective in providing detailed self-help information in slow-developing emergency situations (i.e. inclement weather, drought, etc.). The electronic media can be helpful in issuing bulletins to inform the public of emergency conditions, with or without formal activation of the EAS.
 - 4. Online communications tools – Websites, social media venues and dedicated email lists can provide avenues for distributing timely information to the increasing share of the population that relies on the internet for information. Social media is especially effective for interaction with constituents and countering rumors and misinformation.
 - 5. Sirens –Oak Park has a village-wide outdoor siren warning system. Village vehicles equipped with sirens may be a viable means of getting the attention of the public in localized emergencies, but emergency instructions must be provided by use of public address systems.
 - 6. Public Address Systems - Most police and fire vehicles are equipped with public address systems that may be used for warning the public in localized emergencies. These would be effective as an alternative to door-to-door notification in small areas with limited populations. In most cases, the public will be instructed to tune in to local television or radio for emergency information.
 - 7. Door-to-Door Warning - In some emergencies, the most effective method of warning may be door-to-door contact. If time and emergency conditions allow, emergency services workers and volunteers can go door-to-door advising people of emergency instructions. This system would be effective only in those types of emergencies affecting limited areas and populations. Care must be given to keep unprotected workers from entering hazardous areas to disseminate warning.
 - 8. Telephone Warning - In some localized emergencies, it may be possible to disseminate warning to affected populations through use of the telephone. If the threatened area is small, and a directory of telephone numbers by address exists, calls can be made advising people of the protective actions they should take. The Village utilizes a reverse 911 system that can be utilized to disseminate preprogrammed information to the community.

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9. Functional Needs Populations – The Mass Care Unit is working with functional needs populations and may assist in the dissemination of emergency information to such groups as the hearing impaired, non-English speaking, physically handicapped, homebound, etc. Schools, hospitals and nursing homes have emergency plans under federal law that is adequate in slow developing emergencies. In immediate life threatening emergencies, such facilities, including parks and campgrounds, should be contacted at the direction of the Incident Commander or other responsible key officials. (FN-ADA).

DIRECTION AND CONTROL

Executive Actions

In emergency situations which pose an immediate threat to life, any public safety official in the Village serving as an Incident Commander or any other authorized Incident Management Team member may issue emergency information or warning by the most effective means. Such officials shall notify the ESDA Coordinator and Village Manager as soon as possible to facilitate further notifications and actions, as required.

Coordination

Overall coordination of the emergency information and warning process will be exercised from the EOC under the Incident Command System when activated.

The ESDA Coordinator or his designee may share responsibility for the communications function in the EOC and Incident Commander with WesCom. All Departments Heads are responsible for maintaining communication with their own operations.

MAINTENANCE, REVIEW AND UPDATING THIS ANNEX

It is the responsibility of the ESDA Coordinator and Communication Director for the maintenance, review and update of this Annex