

ANNEX A - WARNING AND NOTIFICATION
ESF #15

I. MNWALK REQUIREMENTS

Item #: 1, 4, 14, 16, 31, 32, 33, 43

II. PURPOSE

This overview is intended to provide for the proper receipt and dissemination of all warnings and notifications of natural or technological disasters. Warning and Notification is provided for the general public within the jurisdictional areas of Stearns County and/or the City of St. Cloud to ensure that immediate action is taken to minimize the effects of an impending or actual disaster.

III. SITUATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Situations

1. In an emergency, the County and City must have a means to warn the public of a potential or imminent threat to life and property so they can take proper measures to protect themselves.
2. There are many modes of warning outlets to the community: radio, television, newspaper, Everbridge, outdoor warning sirens, Emergency Alert System, weather radios, computer internet services, or door to door notifications.
3. Members of the community who are deaf and hard of hearing, totally and legally blind, have limited English proficiency, have physical, cognitive, or developmental disabilities, and persons with mental illness are especially vulnerable during a disaster.
4. Some residents are in hazard prone areas such as flood plains and may require warning specific for their areas.
5. Residents with limited English proficiency may not have access to warning information in multiple languages.
6. The 800 MHz radio system will be the primary source to notify emergency response organizations concerning warnings about to be issued.
7. Some people who are directly threatened by a hazard may ignore, not hear, or not understand warnings or important instructions that are issued.
8. Major needs for functional and access needs populations may include assistance with evacuation and transportation, sheltering, and receiving warnings and public information.

Assumptions

1. Stearns County and the City of St. Cloud utilize Skywarn Weather Spotters, local law enforcement and fire departments to monitor threatening severe weather.
2. The NAWAS (National Warning System) is used to pass on any national security warnings and any natural or technological incidents at the State level to the county warning points.

3. Residents in Stearns County/City of St. Cloud have access to warnings through radio, television, newspapers, Everbridge, outdoor warning sirens, computer internet services, Emergency Alert System, weather radios, door to door notifications and special weather radios with adaptations for the blind and deaf or hard of hearing.
4. Residents in Stearns County/City of St. Cloud expect their local units of government to provide means for them to know of potential or imminent threats to their lives and property.
5. Every attempt will be made by the county and city warning points to pass on any threat information they receive to the public via the local media and outdoor warning sirens.
6. NOAA Weather Radios will automatically disseminate messages when watches and warnings are issued by the National Weather Service.
7. Some members of the community, especially those who are homeless, may not have access to emergency warning and notification or to public information disseminated by the media.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Emergency Alert System

The Emergency Alert System is utilized in collaboration with local media outlets to disseminate emergency information to the public via radio and television. This system is activated through procedures outlined in detail as attachment 6 to this annex. A test of the system is completed at 1:00 pm on the first Wednesday of each month. The Sheriff, Chief Deputy, Captain, Lieutenant, Shift Sergeant, Police Chief, Assistant Chiefs or Emergency Management Director (or designee) are authorized to activate the Emergency Alert System.

NOAA Weather Radio

The NOAA Weather Radio system is a tone activated system used by the National Weather Service to provide severe weather information, watches and warnings to the community. Public and private entities are encouraged to utilize weather radios as a primary warning tool for emergency situations.

Media

Print and electronic media can provide an effective method for disseminating emergency information. Community newspapers are effective in providing detailed self-help information in slow-developing emergency situations (i.e. flooding or drought). The electronic media (radio, television, internet, newspaper) can be helpful in issuing bulletins to inform the public of emergency conditions with or without a formal activation of the Emergency Alert System.

Outdoor Warning Sirens

Outdoor Warning Sirens are intended to provide notification to the public to go indoors and turn on the television or radio to listen for instructions. The system is activated through a computer system located in the Stearns County Dispatch Center. Some communities have the ability to manually activate their sirens. The sounding of outdoor warning sirens is done in collaboration with the Emergency Alert System to provide important information to the affected populations through pre-scripted messages that apply to many emergency situations. A test of the sirens is completed at 1:00 pm on the first Wednesday of each month.

Public Address Systems

Most law enforcement 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 should be instructed to tune to local television or radio for emergency information.

Everbridge Notification

Everbridge is a notification system that enables emergency management and response personnel to communicate clear and consistent telephone messages in an expedient manner. Once a notification group has been selected, a message is created providing instructions on actions to be taken. After the message has been created, it is delivered to the recipients via landline phone, cell phone, fax machine, pager and email. Everbridge has the ability to make multiple calls at one time, increasing the speed and accuracy of emergency notifications throughout the affected area. The initiation of calls can be made over the phone or through a web-based program that is password protected.

Health Alert Network

When a disease or event threatens the health of Minnesotans, fast, efficient and reliable communication is essential. The Health Alert Network of the Minnesota Department of Health enables public health staff, health care providers, emergency workers, and others working to protect the public to exchange information during a disease outbreak or disaster. Public Health agencies are encouraged to use these communication tools routinely to ensure that the equipment and skills work well during a health threat crisis. Although non-electronic back-up methods are in place, email, and the Web are the Health Alert Network's first line of communication strategies.

ECHO – Emergency & Community Health Outreach

Emergency & Community Health Outreach (ECHO) is a coalition of professionals across Minnesota including Public Health, Emergency Management, Social Services, ethnic community agencies and non-profit assistance agencies such as the American Red Cross. The objective of ECHO is to develop the public health system's capacity to communicate health and safety advisories and emergency alerts to Minnesota's limited-English proficient populations. ECHO provides health and safety information in multiple languages including Khmer, Somali, Vietnamese, Lao, Spanish and Hmong. These warnings and notifications are delivered via fax, phone, on the television and on the web during emergency and non-emergency times to people with limited English proficiency. ECHO information should be utilized during slowly developing or long-term events (floods, drought, pandemic influenza, and health related emergencies).

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

Existing communication systems available at the time of a major emergency shall be used for the dissemination of emergency information and warnings. The warning function for Stearns County/City of St. Cloud requires a coordinated effort between government departments.

Stearns County Emergency Management

Emergency Management is responsible for outlining the intergovernmental warning process and once notified of a major emergency or hazard, for ensuring that the necessary dissemination of emergency

information is occurring throughout the County/City to all levels of government and citizens that may be adversely affected by the hazard. Emergency Management shall coordinate the development and maintenance of plans and procedures, to ensure an effective countywide warning process is in place.

Emergency Management maintains the Resource Database; however each individual department or agency is responsible for providing the information within the database to the Emergency Management Department on a regularly scheduled basis. These resources are also to be reported to emergency management when there has been a significant change in a resource, in addition to the scheduled maintenance. The Database schedule will be maintained by the Emergency Management Department. These resources still retain confidentiality with our department and sensitive information will not be released without prior approval.

Sheriff's Office

The Sheriff's Office, as a public safety emergency response agency, is responsible for developing and implementing procedures to warn the public in the unincorporated areas of the county and cities by agreement. The Stearns County Dispatch Center serves as the public safety answering point for 911 and is the primary warning point for Stearns County. Stearns County Dispatchers will assist in the dissemination of warnings and notifications to the public to ensure that immediate action is taken to minimize the effects of an impending or actual disaster.

The Sheriff's Office is the warning point for Stearns County. The County Warning Point is responsible for the receipt and proper dissemination of all notifications received. The Sheriff is the Warning Point Supervisor. As such the Sheriff has the overall responsibility for ensuring that all warnings and notifications received by the warning point are handled correctly. The Stearns County Warning Point is located in St. Cloud, at the Law Enforcement Center, which has twenty-four hour warning capability. The Stearns County Warning Point is responsible for ensuring that all warning and notifications are properly received and disseminated (see attachment 1g – Diagram of County Warning System).

Upon receipt of a warning, the Stearns County Warning Point is responsible for notifying key Stearns County and City of St. Cloud officials as indicated in attachment 2a. Notification of the affected municipalities may also be required (attachment 2c). Lastly the Warning Point may be required to activate the Emergency Alert System by following the steps outlined in attachment 6, for weather emergencies, hazardous materials incidents, or other emergencies.

St. Cloud Police Department

As the City warning point, the St. Cloud Police Department is responsible for ensuring that all warnings and notification which it receives are disseminated expeditiously. The Stearns County Sheriff's Office provides dispatching services for the City of St. Cloud. The City of St. Cloud Warning Officer is the Police Chief. The on-duty Sergeant and the Emergency Management Director (or designee) is authorized to activate the City's outdoor warning system. In their absence, the City 911 Dispatcher is authorized to activate the City's siren system.

Incorporated Cities

Cities maintaining their own emergency operations plans are responsible for developing, maintaining and implementing a warning annex and procedures to implement the warning function in their

jurisdiction. Cities without required emergency operations plans will utilize the County’s Warning and Notification Annex. City officials are responsible for ensuring that agreements and procedures outlining the warning process are in place with their respective warning points and that current notification information is provided and maintained. The municipalities in Stearns County are responsible for relaying warnings they receive, from the County Warning Point, to their public officials and residents.

All municipalities in Stearns County are responsible for activating their own outdoor warning sirens. Stearns County has the capability to sound sirens in the cities of Avon, Cold Spring, Freeport, Kimball, Melrose, New Munich, Rockville, Richmond, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, St. Augusta, St. Cloud, St. John’s University, St. Joseph, St. Martin, St. Rosa, St. Stephen, Sauk Centre and Waite Park.

Fire Protection Districts

As a public safety emergency response agency, fire personnel may have to implement local warning procedures for municipalities without public safety capabilities or assist in the process with those that do.

Support Agencies

Support agencies and volunteer groups may provide assistance in the dissemination of warning information, especially for functional and access needs populations. School districts may also be able to assist with disseminating warning information to schools within their districts.

State Government

State officials may issue warning information as a result of severe weather watches/warnings, or any other major incident that may affect a large area. Such information may be transmitted over the National Warning System (NAWAS) to local Communications Centers/Public Safety Answering Points. This information should then be disseminated to the public through the use of the Emergency Alert System. The National Warning System is a nationwide private telephone communications system. The State of Minnesota has a specific answering point that is monitored on a twenty-four hour basis. The NAWAS is used to pass on any national security warnings and natural or technological incidents at the state level to County warning points.

VI. ANNEX DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

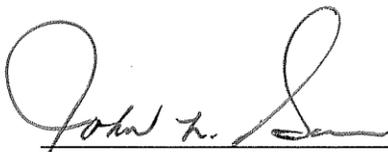
The Stearns County/City of St. Cloud Emergency Operations Plan, including the Basic Plan and Annexes, is updated on an annual basis. Each annex representative is responsible for participating in the full review process every other year and for independently reviewing the annex on an annual basis. The overall responsibility for maintaining the Emergency Operations Plan is that of the Stearns County Emergency Management Department.

Any standard operating guidelines, personnel directories, maps or other tools needed to support emergency operations should be developed and maintained by the responsible department. It is the department’s responsibility to ensure access to this information during times of large scale emergency or disaster, to coordinate training for personnel in regard to these procedures and to inform Emergency Management of any changes that directly impact the Emergency Operations Plan.

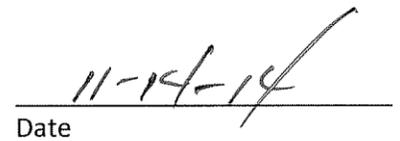
VII. REFERENCES

- Nuclear Power Plant Ingestion Pathway Contamination Incident Notification List (attachment 2e)
- Media contacts can be found in the Resource Manual
- Minnesota West Central Emergency Alert System Plan on file Dispatch and Emergency Management
- Emergency Plans for dams on the Mississippi can be found on file in Dispatch

VIII. Authentication



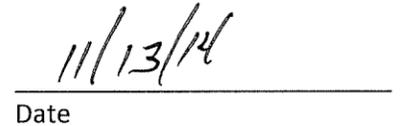
John Sanner, Sheriff
Stearns County



Date



Wm. Blair Anderson, Chief
St. Cloud Police Department



Date