

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to outline the process for alerting and warning local officials and the public of impending or occurring emergency situations and the actions required of these officials, citizens, and guests in order to maximize life safety and minimize personal suffering and property damage.

SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

SITUATION

Key government officials, employers, citizens, and visitors must be notified as soon and as effectively as possible whenever an emergency situation threatens, occurs, or has occurred. Warning capabilities and responsibilities need to be specified and understood by all parties to ensure rapid and accurate alerting to all Routt County residents and guests of pertinent emergency information.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. A warning period will be available for many emergency situations, although the amount of lead time will vary from hazard to hazard. Some hazards will provide no warning period at all.
2. Warnings may be initiated by higher authority through the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Colorado Crime Information Center (CCIC), or by the Federal government through the International Justice and Public Safety Network, whenever a large area may be threatened by an emergency (e.g., terrorist attack or severe weather conditions) or from the occurrence of the event itself (e.g., earthquake or explosion).
3. The primary system for notification of key officials, employees, and the general public is Routt County Alerts, currently provided by Everbridge. While landline phone information is automatically loaded to the Routt County database, this system requires registration in order for subscribers to receive alerts via mobile phones and e-mails. The Routt County Communications Center (RCC), Routt County Office of Emergency Management (RCOEM), and local first responder organizations will continually seek opportunities to encourage Routt County residents to register with this system at Routt County Alerts.
4. Routt County also utilizes the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) as necessary for major emergencies or disasters when it is critical to reach all residents or visitors within a specific area, regardless of whether they are registered through Routt County Alerts, in order to inform them of immediate action required.
5. RCOEM will follow up all Routt County Alerts or IPAWS emergency notifications with additional information on social media sites and the county web page.
6. As the situation requires, such as alerting and warning residents and visitors in more remote locations where connectivity may not support electronic communications means, Emergency Support Function 13 personnel (county and municipal law enforcement), as well as other Routt County departments as necessary, may be required to personally notify communities of impending or occurring emergencies.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

GENERAL

All existing communications systems available at the time of an emergency may be used for the dissemination of emergency information and warning. This includes Routt County Alerts, IPAWS, telephones, social media, and use of personnel going door-to-door as required. The warning function for Routt County requires a coordinated effort between the various levels of government and several independent agencies as outlined below.

1. Routt County

a. Routt County Communications Center (RCC)

The RCC serves as the public safety answering point for 9-1-1 and is the primary warning point for emergency messages for Routt County.

b. Routt County Office of Emergency Management (RCOEM)

RCOEM is responsible for outlining the intergovernmental warning process and ensuring that the necessary dissemination of emergency information is occurring throughout the County to all levels of government and citizens that may be adversely affected by the hazard. RCOEM is also responsible for following-up on emergency warnings and alerts with additional and amplifying information via print media, radio spots, news releases, social media, and public meetings. RCOEM will also provide significant event information on the statewide board in WebEOC for increased awareness by state and neighboring jurisdiction emergency management and response personnel.

c. Routt County Sheriff's Office (RCSO)

The RCSO, as a public safety emergency response agency, is responsible for developing and implementing procedures to warn the general public in the unincorporated areas of the county and any cities by agreement, or as a secondary warning means should electronic means be unavailable or ineffective.

2. Incorporated Cities/Towns

a. Cities and towns maintaining their own Emergency Operations Plan are responsible for developing, maintaining and implementing a warning annex and procedures to implement the warning function for their jurisdiction once the message is received.

b. Cities and towns may have to use their law enforcement or other departments to go door-to-door to notify residents of pending or occurring emergencies. Assistance may be requested of the RCSO for these efforts.

c. Cities and towns without an Emergency Operations Plan may utilize the Routt County Public Alert and Warning Plan as a guideline and work with local agencies in developing, maintaining, and implementing warning procedures for their jurisdiction.

3. Fire Protection Districts and Law Enforcement

As public safety emergency response agencies, fire and law enforcement personnel are normally on the scene as first responders and may have to initiate emergency messages by submitting emergency message requests to the RCC or RCOEM, or assist in the process with those that disseminate the emergency messages.

4. Support Agencies

Support agencies and volunteer groups can provide assistance in the dissemination of warning information, especially to special populations (i.e. seniors, the access and functional needs population, non-English speaking, etc.). This includes Horizons, Northwest Colorado Center for Independence, United Way, Integrated Communities, and Routt County Council of Aging.

5. State Government

- a. State officials may issue warning information as a result of severe weather warnings or watches, or any major incident that may affect a large area. Such information may be transmitted over the Colorado Bureau of Investigation network through the use of Colorado Crime Information Center to local communications centers and police departments and may be broadcast over the national Emergency Alert System to the public.
- b. Colorado Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management personnel post significant events occurring throughout the state on the statewide board of WebEOC. RCOEM personnel and those in other Routt County departments or organizations that may participate in the Emergency Operation Center, when activated, have access to WebEOC and will receive WebEOC alerts for incidents that may have an impact on Routt County.

6. Federal Government

Warning information may be initiated by federal officials and disseminated through the International Justice and Public Safety Network. This information may include attack warnings, severe weather warnings, or other incidents which threaten a large area.

DISSEMINATION OF EMERGENCY INFORMATION

The receipt and dissemination of warning information may utilize any or all of the following warning methods:

1. Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) / Colorado Crime Information Center (CCIC)

The CCIC is a computerized information system established as a service to all Colorado criminal justice agencies. The mission is to provide and maintain accurate and timely documented criminal justice information in an effort to prevent crime and protect life and property by enabling the rapid exchange of valid, complete information among criminal justice agencies. CCIC also serves as the conduit by which criminal justice agencies obtain access to the [National Crime Information Center](#) and the [International Public Safety and Justice Network](#) information systems.

2. The International Justice and Public Safety Network (Nlets)

Nlets is an interstate justice and public safety network for the exchange of law enforcement, criminal justice, and public safety-related information. To accomplish this, the Nlets system provides a network built to endure threats without impacting performance. Nlets is a private not for profit corporation owned by the States that was created more than 50 years ago by the 50 state law enforcement agencies. The user population is made up of all of the United States and its territories, all Federal agencies with a justice component, selected international agencies, and a variety of strategic partners that serve the law enforcement community-cooperatively exchanging data.

3. Emergency Alert System (EAS)

EAS is a national public warning system that requires broadcasters, cable television systems, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio radio service providers, and direct broadcast satellite providers to provide the communications capability to the President to address the American public during a national emergency. The system also may be used by state and local authorities to deliver important emergency information, such as AMBER alerts and weather information, targeted to specific areas. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), in conjunction with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Weather Service (NWS), implements the EAS at the federal level. The President has sole responsibility for determining when the EAS will be activated at the national level, and has delegated this authority to the director of FEMA. FEMA is responsible for implementation of the national-level activation of the EAS, tests, and exercises. The NWS develops emergency weather information to alert the public about imminent dangerous weather conditions.

4. Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)

RCC and RCOEM personnel are authorized and trained to use IPAWS in conjunction with the local public alert and warning system via Common Alerting Protocol standards with the IPAWS infrastructure. IPAWS provides public safety officials with an effective way to alert and warn the public about emergencies using EAS, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), NOAA Weather Radio, and other public alerting systems from a single interface.

5. Routt County Alerts

Routt County utilizes a commercially-provided public alert and warning system to alert registered users of pending or on-going emergencies and actions required by the citizens and guests to best ensure their safety. While landline phone information is automatically loaded to the Routt County database, this system requires registration in order for subscribers to receive alerts via mobile phones and e-mails and select the means (landline telephones, mobile phones, texts, or e-mail) that they prefer to be notified. Routt County can use this system for selective information sharing via tailored user groups or for special events. This system also provides an interface to use IPAWS for the most serious emergencies, particularly when a large percentage of the population affected by the disaster is not expected to have registered with the local public alert and warning system.

6. Media

Print and electronic media provide effective methods of disseminating emergency information throughout Routt County. These methods are most effective in providing detailed self-help information in slow-developing emergency situations (i.e. inclement weather), as well as for general emergency preparedness information. RCC and OEM routinely post emergency preparedness information in the local Steamboat Pilot and Today newspaper, county websites, Facebook, and Twitter. Electronic media can be helpful in issuing bulletins to inform the public of emergency conditions with or without formal activation of the EAS.

7. Door-to-Door or Face-to-Face

Routt County must always be prepared to provide public alert and warning personally, such as door-to-door or face-to-face. Many of the most rural areas of the county have poor connectivity and cell phone coverage, and as such, may not receive alert messages provided electronically. While this is a primary responsibility of law enforcement, all county departments can be expected to assist in this effort if required.

8. Special Populations

Routt County will coordinate with groups working with special populations to assist in the dissemination of emergency information to such groups as the hearing or vision impaired, non-English speaking, those with access and functional needs, homebound, etc. In Routt County, this includes the Department of Human Services, Northwest Colorado Center for Independence, Routt County United Way, Routt County Council of Aging, Integrated Communities, and Horizons Specialized Services. Schools, hospitals and nursing homes have emergency plans adequate in slow developing emergencies. In immediate, life-threatening emergencies, such facilities, as well as parks, campgrounds, local Chambers of Commerce or Resorts, and local commercial lodging, should be contacted at the direction of the Emergency Operations Director or Incident Commander (once established).

DIRECTION AND CONTROL**1. Executive Actions**

In emergency situations posing an immediate threat to life or personal safety, any public safety official in Routt County or Incident Commander (if assigned) can request the RCC to issue an emergency alert or warning by the most effective means available. Normally, emergency message release approval resides with the Emergency Operations Director, the RCC Manager, or the Routt County Manager's office. However, for local emergencies requiring immediate action by the public to best ensure their safety, a fire department or law enforcement supervisor trained in the Routt County Alerts process and tools may coordinate directly with RCC for the release of the required message while the Routt County authorities mentioned above are being notified. RCC will not delay in the release of these messages if approved by the trained fire or law enforcement supervisor.

2. Coordination

Coordination of the public alert and warning process will be exercised from the Emergency Operations Center when activated. However, it is expected that this public communication will be required before the Emergency Operations Center is fully operational. Verbal authorization from the Emergency Operations Director or Routt County Manager’s office is the standard operating procedure. However, the RCC Manager should not delay the release of a message if any delay would increase the potential loss of life or property. As stated in the previous paragraph, trained fire and law enforcement supervisors may also authorize release of emergency messages for local emergencies when the Routt County Emergency Operations Director or RCC Manager is not immediately available.

ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

ORGANIZATION

1. The Routt County Emergency Operations Director, acting under the authority provided by the Board of County Commissioners, is responsible for the Routt County public alert and warning process and all emergency messages communicated to the public. While the Emergency Operations Director has emergency message release authority, every attempt will be made to notify the Board of County Commissioners, County Manager, or Deputy County Manager, prior to message release (if time permits), or as soon as possible once the message(s) is released.
2. The RCC Manager is the executive agent of the Emergency Operations Director and is the primary designated party to draft and disseminate emergency messages. The RCC Manager may authorize message release without specified permission from the Emergency Operations Director or the Routt County Manager’s office if initial attempts to contact are unsuccessful and immediate release is required to potentially save lives. RCC dispatchers and supervisory personnel are trained to prepare and deliver emergency alerts and warning messages as required and can do so in support of fire and law enforcement personnel for local emergencies requiring immediate action by the public.
3. Once the Emergency Operations Center is activated and operational, continued public messaging will be coordinated with the appropriate Emergency Support Functions, the Emergency Operations Director, the Incident Commander, and the Joint Information Center (JIC) if established.
4. First responders within Routt County, to include the RCSO, Steamboat Springs Police Department, Hayden Police Department, Oak Creek Police Department, and the five Fire Protection Districts (Steamboat Springs, West Routt, North Routt, Oak Creek, and Yampa), can directly request the dissemination of emergency messages from the RCC if the situation warrants. First responder supervisors trained in the Routt County Alerts process and tools may authorize RCC personnel to release emergency messages when required and the Routt County Emergency Operations Director and RCC Manager are not immediately available.

5. Personnel that are not part of fire or law enforcement departments in the incorporated areas within Routt County may request an emergency message release for incidents within their jurisdiction via the Emergency Operations Director or the RCC Manager.

KEY TASKS

Routt County Office of Emergency Management

1. Update this plan regularly and promulgate to all emergency response and management stakeholders in Routt County.
2. Incorporate plan into annual training and exercises.
3. Conduct regular community outreach to inform public of Routt County's public alert and warning system and encourage registration with Routt County Alerts.
4. Educate incorporated area officials on Routt County public alert and warning policy and capabilities.
5. Upon discovery of a pending or occurring emergency requiring public notification, consult with RCC to determine optimum method(s) of message dissemination.
6. Develop emergency messages as required, or approve emergency messages developed by RCC.
7. Ensure the agencies and organizations supporting those with Access and Functional Needs are made aware of all emergency messages occurring within Routt County.
8. Directly inform the Board of County Commissioners and County Manager office of situation and the public alert and warning efforts in progress.
9. Ensure supporting information is posted to Routt County websites and social media pages.
10. Coordinate and conduct press releases and media interviews.
11. Inform Colorado Public Information Officer of situation and public alert and warning efforts in progress and planned.
12. If Emergency Operations Center is activated, serve as lead agency for Emergency Support Function 15 (Public Information), recall additional Public Information Officers as required, and establish Joint Information Center.
13. Develop/approve follow-up messages as situation progress.

Routt County Communications Center

1. Ensure RCC personnel are trained and prepared to develop and disseminate public alert and warning messages via IPAWS and the local public alert and warning system.
2. Provide training on the internal coordination of the public alert and warning system to Routt County departments and local fire and police department supervisors as necessary.

3. Develop user groups for the Routt County public alert and warning system for critical emergency response and management partners, including government, private, and volunteer entities, to enable effective coordination prior to and immediately following an emergency.
4. Establish key words for special events or standing functions or services to allow Routt County citizens and guests to receive special alerts for these events, through the Routt County Alerts Everbridge/Nixle Community Engagement module.
5. Participate in Routt County exercises and develop emergency messages as required by the situation.
6. Develop emergency messages as directed by the Emergency Operations Director, as deemed required in the absence of the Emergency Operations Director, or as requested by fire or law enforcement supervisors.
7. Notify representatives of the agencies and organizations supporting those with Access and Functional Needs of all emergency messages occurring within Routt County. Ideally this will be via the alert and warning system employed by Routt County, but may include manual notifications if required.
8. Notify the Board of County Commissioners and County Manager office as soon as possible after the release of any emergency messages in the absence of the Emergency Operations Director.
9. Support alternate means of public communication pending feedback reports from Routt County Alerts.
10. Prepare follow-up emergency messages for Emergency Operations approval as the situation progresses.

Incorporated Areas

Coordinate with Routt County Emergency Operations Director or RCC when emergency messaging requirements exceed capabilities of city or town.

Routt County Sheriff's Office, Incorporated Area Police Departments, and Fire Protection Districts

1. Ensure supervisors are trained in Routt County Alerts process and tools in order for them to coordinate directly with the RCC for preparation and delivery of emergency alert and warning messages for local emergencies requiring immediate life-saving action by the public.
2. Be prepared to provide timely and accurate risk analysis, the impact on a community, and required community actions.
3. Be prepared to conduct door-to-door emergency notifications where electronic means are ineffective or incomplete.
4. Determine the extent of emergency notifications required due to law enforcement or fire activity.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

The Emergency Operations Director is responsible for coordinating the public alert and warning function throughout Routt County and updating/revising this plan as needed. Each organization identified in this plan will develop and maintain standard operating procedures that address assigned tasks. This plan will undergo a formal review every other year in conjunction with the bi-annual Emergency Operations Plan review. However, changes may be made at any time and recorded in the Record of Changes section.