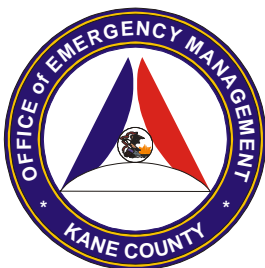


GUIDELINES FOR THE OPERATION OF OUTDOOR WARNING SYSTEMS



FOR KANE COUNTY
COMMUNITIES



PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to Kane County municipalities for the operation of community outdoor warning systems. This guidance is not a policy statement, but is presented to serve as a foundation on which a coordinated approach can be used to provide warning on impending danger to County residents.

LEGAL BASIS FOR WARNINGS

The issuance of community warnings and the approved signals that are used to convey these warnings, as well as the procedures used to test warning systems, are based on authority provide by Federal and State law and supporting guidance documents.

Pursuant to provisions under 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.

The Illinois Emergency Management Act (20 ILCS 3305/4), 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.

LOCAL WARNING SYSTEMS

The local portion of the system includes local government controlled warning and/or communications systems that are used to disseminate warning and emergency information to local government officials, the general public, and special facilities including schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and other facilities that require special warnings. These local systems include outdoor warning sirens, tone alert radio systems, and indoor warning systems supported by the Emergency Alerting System (EAS) and the All-Hazards NOAA Weather Radio System.

Outdoor Warning Systems

The outdoor warning system includes sirens and public address systems that are used to alert residents who are outdoors when a warning is given.

Standardized signals, for outdoor warning devices, have been established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These standardized signals are used to alert the public and indicate

survival actions to be taken in an emergency. These signals are ATTACK WARNING and the ATTENTION or ALERT WARNING signal.

Attack Warning Signal

An attack warning is a three (3) to five (5) minute wavering siren tone. The ATTACK WARNING signal means that an actual attack or missile launch against the United States has been detected and that protective action should be taken immediately. Per *federal guidance*. **"this signal will be used for no other purpose and will have no other meaning"**.

Attention or Alert Warning Signal

An ATTENTION or ALERT WARNING signal is a three (3) to five (5) minute steady signal from sirens. This signal may be used by local government officials to alert the public of peacetime emergencies, including the occurrence of severe weather. In addition to any other meaning or requirement for action, as determined by local government officials, the ATTENTION or ALERT signal shall indicate to all persons **"turn on your radio or television and listen for essential emergency information"**.

Indoor Warning Systems

Indoor warning devices are necessary for a well-balanced warning system. Outdoor warning systems are not effective for warning in air conditioned and tightly insulated buildings, and it is not economical to use such devices in areas of low density population. Indoor warning systems include: commercial broadcast radio and television stations, the Emergency Alert System (EAS), tone activated radio receivers (EARS), and the All-Hazards NOAA Weather Radio System.

SYSTEM TESTS

It is especially important that local warning systems be tested on a periodic basis to be certain that they are operating properly and to help the public learn to recognize the warning signals.

Frequency of Tests

FEMA recommends regularly scheduled tests of warning systems accompanied by advance publicity to inform the public of the tests. FEMA also recommends testing once a month, at a minimum.

The Illinois Emergency Management Act (20 ILCS 3305/112) specifically indicates:

"... the testing of disaster warning devices, including outdoor warning sirens, shall be held only on the first Tuesday on each month at 10 o'clock in the morning and during disaster training exercises that are specifically and expressly approved in advance by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency".

Activation of the countywide EAS should also occur as part of these regular monthly tests. The purpose of this activation is to educate county residents of the association between outdoor warning sirens and the EAS. A schedule for EAS tests is outlined in the Kane County EAS Plan.

Siren Test Procedure

Federal guidance (CPG 1-17/ VII-B) indicates that monthly warning systems tests should occur in the following manner.

"The ATTENTION or ALERT WARNING signal should be sounded for one (1) minute. This should be followed by one (1) minute of silence, followed by the ATTACK WARNING signal sounding for one (1) minute."

This testing procedure will establish a test pattern different from that used in an actual emergency, when the ATTENTION / ALERT WARNING or ATTACK WARNING signal will be sounded for three (3) to five (5) minutes.

EMERGENCY ACTIVATION OF OUTDOOR WARNING SYSTEMS FOR SEVERE WEATHER

As indicated previously, the ATTENTION / ALERT WARNING signal may be utilized by local government officials for peacetime emergencies including severe weather. During a severe weather incident, local siren warning systems should be activated in the event of the following:

1. A confirmed sighting of a tornado, or funnel cloud aloft reported by a trained weather spotter within five (5) miles of the community. This five mile perimeter should be extended geographically around the perimeter of the community from the farthest northern edge to the farthest southern edge, at minimum.
2. A confirmed sighting, by a trained weather spotter, of severe winds causing structural damage within five (5) miles of the community.
3. The receipt of a tornado warning, issued by the National Weather Service, indicating that the community is in the direct path of an oncoming tornado.

A CONFIRMED sighting is defined as a sighting that is observed either by a National Weather Service trained municipal or county employee or a National Weather Service trained Skywarn weather spotter.

An UNCONFIRMED sighting is a report that is received from one or more members of the general public. A radio equipped municipal or county vehicle should be dispatched to investigate an unconfirmed report, to determine if the report is valid or not. In the absence of a county or municipal vehicle, a radio equipped trained spotter can also provide such verification. Confirmation of the sighting will result in a CONFIRMED report issued by the governmental official or spotter.

Activation Procedure

Following the occurrence of a weather event meeting the above criteria, the dispatch center should activate their outdoor warning siren system.

Once activated, the warning system **should not** be re-sounded for the same storm or sighting.

The warning system should be re-sounded for an new confirmed sighting, from a second storm cell, that meets the activation criteria described above.

All Clear Procedures

In keeping with the policy of the National Weather Service, the issuance of an "all clear" statement **should not** be issued by local government.

Severe weather watches, whether severe thunderstorm or tornado, are traditionally issued for a period of four (4) to six (6) hours. The Weather Service may terminate a "watch" early if weather conditions change and the threat of severe weather no longer exists.

Severe weather warnings, whether severe thunderstorm or tornado, are traditionally issued for periods of thirty (30) minutes to one (1) hour. Warnings are usually allowed to expire on their own, without early termination by the Weather Service.

Residents requesting "all clear" information should be advised to monitor commercial radio and television stations for further weather information, but local government should not issue an "all clear" statement.

No activation of outdoor warning signals should be used to signify the termination of a weather watch or any kind of an "all clear" advisory.

REFERENCES

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| Public Law 93-288 | The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief Act |
| Public Act 87-168 | The Illinois Emergency Management Act of 2002, as amended |
| FEMA Manual 1550.2 | National Warning Systems Operations Manual |
| FEMA CPG 1-17 | Outdoor Warning Systems Guide |