

SECTION 1

COMMUNICATIONS AND WARNING

Statement of Purpose

Operations during major emergencies or disasters place an increased demand on the Sangamon County Central Dispatch System (SCCDS). It coordinates all police, fire, medical and rescue communication in the county and must be prepared to switch from normal operations into emergency mode. Dispatcher/communications operations must be prepared to receive, analyze and distribute timely information to various departments, the general public and provide emergency communications to response units.

The purpose of this annex is to identify the role of the communications and warning operational plan and its operators within the county emergency preparedness program and to specify actions that will be taken during major emergency disaster situations.

Situation and Assumptions

Situation

Sangamon County operates a central communications facility (SCCDS Center) at 2000 Shale Road from which all police, fire, emergency medical and rescue operations are dispatched on a daily basis. This facility is manned with dispatchers on a 24-hour-a-day basis. The backup to the SCCDS Center is provided by the Auburn Police Department. In the event of a catastrophic failure of the primary site, this Auburn facility will answer incoming emergency 9-1-1 calls until SCCDS staffing can be relocated to its secondary site at #1 Sheriff's Plaza. The SCCDS Center is divided into 3 sections for its operations:

1. Springfield Police Dept. (SPD) consoles for law enforcement dispatch within the city;
2. Fire/rescue and emergency medical service (EMS) consoles for dispatch of Springfield Fire Department (SFD), OEM, 14 rural fire departments and 3 private ambulance companies; and
3. Sangamon County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) consoles for law enforcement dispatch outside of the city of Springfield.

Activities of the SCCDS are overseen by the SCCDS Executive Committee which is comprised of representatives from OEM, SCSO, SFD, SPD, the Sangamon County Board and the City of Springfield Bureau of Emergency Communications. The Executive Committee meets with the SCCDS Executive Director on a monthly basis in an open meeting to discuss all matters of dispatch and emergency communications.

Assumptions

The Incident Commander, when faced with increased demands on communications equipment and manpower, may request resources through the SCCDS Center to provide communications assistance and support. During periods of a major emergency or disaster, Federal or State governmental agencies, if requested, may provide their own communications and support capabilities to support local operations. The warning of the public preceding a major emergency or disaster may be misunderstood or ignored. Additional means for warning the public may be required.

Agencies in Sangamon County have acquired mobile data computers which are connected through a combination of networks used by the SCCDS Center and EOC. Such information management technologies will be used to tie together all command, tactical, and support units involved in incident management, to enable these entities to ensure that incident notifications and situation reports are standardized, and to share information critical to mission execution and the cataloguing of required corrective actions. This technology will also be used to disseminate indications and warnings and critical information constituting the common operating picture for involved agencies. Incident notifications and public communications will be made through more common mechanisms such as landlines, cellular telephones and other wireless communications devices as defined herein and in Incident Action Plans.

Concept of Operations

The Incident Commander is responsible for the overall management of an incident, including determining incident objectives and strategies and establishing the immediate priorities. Within the County, the SCCDS Center is the focal point for the operations of communications. Upon receiving notification of a major incident or an impending major emergency or disaster, the dispatchers will follow pre-determined procedures and a common communications plan with the Incident Commander.

This plan for incident communications will be implemented such that the least possible disruption is caused on existing systems and processes following the standards called for under the incident command system. At the scene, it will be managed by the Incident Commander from an incident-based communications center, using common terminology for communications with all entities.

Organization and Responsibilities

The Sangamon County 9-1-1 Board is responsible for all radio and dispatch equipment used by SCCDS in the SCCDS Center. The City of Springfield is responsible for its siren activation equipment and for the upkeep of its sirens. Likewise, all other outdoor warning sirens in Sangamon County are the responsibility of the community which they cover, either individually or in combination with its fire protection district.

The responsibility for the operation of the Sangamon County outdoor warning sirens rests with individual municipalities and their chief executive officers or their designees. SFD is responsible for the activation of Springfield's warning sirens according to standard operating procedures it has written for monthly testing, severe weather, impending attack and special circumstances. All incorporated cities and villages in Sangamon County cover their boundaries with outdoor warning sirens, except Berlin, Cantrall and Thayer.

The OEM Coordinator will assist local communities in times of tornado warning in making determination of whether to sound their sirens. Additional warning for severe weather is available to the public through the National Weather Service (NWS) alert radios and through private services which alert subscribers via their computers, wireless tablets or cellular telephones.

OEM subscribes to such a cellular service and, upon notification of a severe weather threat, will open the EOC if the threat appears valid for Sangamon County. If the threat of severe weather appears imminent for Sangamon County, OEM will deploy weather spotters from the county's volunteer fire departments and local village ESDAs.

Direction and Control

The Sangamon County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), located at 2801 North Fifth Street shall be the primary direction and control facility for all emergency operations within the county. The EOC will be manned as required during a major emergency or disaster by key officials.

The communications dispatchers will receive instructions from the Incident Commander regarding the dispatch and operation of the county emergency resources. The OEM Coordinator will be consulted to request the commitment of any vehicles, manpower or other resources from Federal or State governmental agencies unless mutual aid agreements are already in place for their provision.

Following determination that a major emergency or disaster exists, a forward command post will be established. Representatives from each responding department will report thereto, and command the field operations from this location. The forward command post shall be the source of official information and the communication link between the EOC and the emergency or disaster scene.

A mobile communications unit is available for emergency operations throughout the county from the Sangamon County Sheriff's Office. The City of Springfield also has a mobile communications unit which is available for limited deployment outside of the city. Information on these units and other communications resources within the county are compiled in the Sangamon County Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) which was adopted in 2010.

Continuity of Government

The line of succession for the communications and warning plan shall be as stated in the Concept of Operations section of the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. The OEM Director shall be responsible for the regular review of the communications and warning plan. The OEM Director also maintains the Sangamon County TICP.