



Municipal Emergency Plan (MEP) Communications and Warning Plan (CWP)

Function:	MEP Supporting Documentation		
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Document Library	MEP, CWP Annex		

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Approved By:

 DEM

 Date

Purpose / Background

As required under the LEMR and outlined in the MEP, Strathcona County shall develop a Communications and Warning Plan (CWP) to guide crisis communication and information management response components, and the activation and operation of all available public warning (alerting) tools in support of an extraordinary event.

Scope

This plan shall describe corporate policies, processes and procedures for crisis communication, alert system information and other related resources, but excludes those of departments responding to emergency sites as part of their daily operations (i.e. RCMP, SCES, TAS, Utilities and industrial response personnel).

For ease of reference, the CWP will be broken into specific components with interrelated and supporting plans and documentation. Detailed operational procedures, policies and decision trees are outlined in the various annexes linked and appended to this Plan.

Plan Objectives:

1. Provide a framework for effective crisis information and communication management, including accepted communication tools
2. Provide a guide for consistent and effective activation and operation of the County's public warning and communication tools, including:
 - a. Strathcona County Alert System (SC Alerts)
 - b. Alberta Emergency Alert System (AEAS)
 - c. EOC Satellite Phones
 - d. Alberta First Responder Radio Communications System (AFRRCS)
3. Identify processes for implementation, maintenance and continual improvement of both the Plan and supporting documentation

Crisis Information and Communication Management

As stated in the MEP, Strathcona County will follow ICS policy with regard to crisis information and communication.

- The IMT Information Officer (IO) will be responsible for information and communication from the incident site, in consultation with the EOC Information Coordinator if applicable
- The EOC Information Coordinator will be responsible for overall coordination of information and crisis communication for the incident, in consultation with the EOC Director, the D/DEM (SCEMA) and/or the EAC, as determined by the needs of the incident

In addition to the above general policies, crisis information and communication response functions shall operate according to the specific policies and processes set out in the Crisis Communications Plan, located in the Crisis Communications section of the Communications and Warning Annex.

Public Warning and Crisis Communication Tools

As stated in the MEP, Strathcona County shall use all available methods to address the needs for communication before, during, and after incidents and planned events, including but not limited to the following technologies:

- a) Strathcona County Alerts (SC Alerts)
- b) Alberta Emergency Alerts (AEA) / Wireless Public Alerting (WPA)
- c) AFRRCS radio system
- d) Available telephony (land lines, satellite phones and smart devices)
- e) email and various other web-based and social media platforms as outlined in the Crisis Communications Plan

The Strathcona communication strategy addresses the need for redundancy and interoperability. It will work in conjunction with County security policies for communication systems and shall be continually reviewed, assessed and updated, along with this MEP, as technology and communication systems evolve. Related policies and processes for all tools, including ongoing assessment and maintenance requirements, are outlined in the Communications and Warning Annex.

Strathcona's Public Warning Systems

The following provides an outline of the County's Public Warning capabilities and processes. For specific criteria used to determine the need and appropriate levels of public warning see the Strathcona Response Decision Chart in the EOP Quick Reference Guide Annex of the EOP. For information on the steps for activation and operation of public warning tools, including Authorized User Lists, refer to the Public Alerting Annex appended to this plan.

Step 1: Decide to Activate Public Warning and/or Notification

The decision to activate, and the responsibility for that decision is based on the criteria outlined in the Strathcona Response Decision Chart Quick Reference Guide (QRG) and other supporting documentation the Public Alerting Annex.

Step 2: Select the appropriate public warning tool

Strathcona County has access to two robust public warning tools:

- The Strathcona County Alert System (SC Alerts), is the preferred alerting method. Implementing the Everbridge Notification Platform, the system can efficiently send out multiple messages via multiple delivery methods, as chosen by the subscriber. It can be sent to all subscribers or targeted to certain groups or areas. For use only within Strathcona County municipal boundaries; subscription required.¹

¹ The County also has access to a similar Everbridge notification system through its annual membership agreement with NR CAER, however, as use of the Strathcona-specific SC Alert system is preferred, it is not addressed within the scope of this plan.

- Alberta Emergency Alerts System (AEAS), administered by AEMA, incorporates the wireless public alerting function. This system sends out two types of alerts: Critical or Information. A critical message will interrupt media broadcasts; an information message will not. For use when messages need to reach beyond Strathcona County municipal boundaries, interrupt broadcasts, or ensure inclusion of residents who have not subscribed to SC Alerts; no subscription required, but messages cannot be targeted to a specific group or location (these messages will go out to the entire province referencing the entire County).

Step 3: Broadcast, update and/or monitor the Alert or Notification

For full details on operational guidelines, user manuals and authorized user lists, refer to the Public Alerting Section in the Communications and Warning Annex.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Corporate Communications (COMC), in collaboration with SCEMA and other applicable County Departments, shall:

- a) Develop, implement and maintain the County's Crisis Communications Plan and associated procedures and documentation
- b) Develop and maintain capability for a robust Crisis Communication and web team based on training and credentials to ensure familiarity and comfort with assigned functions and roles.
- c) Contribute to comprehensive and mineable incident Archives
- d) Contribute to After Action Reports (AARs), make recommendations for improvements and/or implement corrective action plans as appropriate.

Strathcona Emergency Management Agency (SCEMA), in collaboration with all applicable departments, shall:

- a) Coordinate, develop, implement and maintain the County's Communication and Warning Plan, associated procedures and supporting documentation
- b) Develop, implement and maintain the County's Public Alerting (Warning) Plan, associated procedures and supporting documentation
- c) Administer the Strathcona County Alert System (SC Alerts); maintain accurate alerting and staff contact records; develop and maintain user reference guides; provide authorized user refresher training and/or new user training on an annual basis and/or as needed.
- d) Conduct an annual test of the SC Alerts system to test capabilities and processes and evaluate and respond to identified issues.
- e) Liaise with AEMA and coordinate the Strathcona County Alberta Emergency Alert (AEA) Authorized User program, maintain accurate records and user reference guides; nominate new authorized users as required and arrange for authorized user training or refresher training as needed.

The D/DEM (SCEMA) shall, in collaboration with the EAC and senior County Leadership:

- a) support the County's CWP and associated plans and procedures by activation of the appropriate response components and levels promptly and in accordance with the CWP, the EOP and associated plans and procedures

All County departments shall, in collaboration with Strathcona County Emergency Management Agency:

- a) support the County's CWP through prompt notification to the D/DEM (SCEMA) when an incident occurs, in accordance with the EOP and associated plans and procedures
- b) support the County's CWP and associated plans and procedures by providing resources, equipment and subject matter expertise as required and requested

- c) participate in periodic exercises and drills to maintain comfort and familiarity with roles, responsibilities and plans. Such training may include participation in functional or full scale operational exercises that test major portions, elements and responsibilities of the County MEP and supporting plans and processes, and regular drills that test readiness of warning and communication equipment

Participating County staff shall, in collaboration with SCEMA and their home department:

- a) support the County's CWP and associated plans and procedures by responding as required and requested
- b) participate in periodic exercises and drills to maintain comfort and familiarity with roles, responsibilities and plans. Such training may include participation in functional or full scale operational exercises that test major portions, elements and responsibilities of the County MEP and supporting plans and processes, and regular drills that test readiness of warning and communication equipment

Supporting Plans and Resources

This overarching Communications and Warning Plan (CWP) is supported by the CWP Annex, organized into the following components.

- Crisis Communications Plan Annex
- Public Alerting Annex
- Satellite Phones Annex
- AFRRCS Annex

Each component documents specific plans, policies and procedures for identification, development, implementation, tracking and maintenance of each specific response component and the overarching CWP, including general timelines, required resources and templates, and implementation of continual improvement of both the Plan and associated processes and records.

Evaluation

Audit and Review

Strathcona County Emergency Management Agency shall conduct annual audits and reviews to determine conformance and effectiveness of the implementation and maintenance of the MEP and its component parts. Such audits and reviews shall include, but not be limited to in-depth After Action Reviews (AARs), Quality Management annual internal and external ISO audits, and the annual AEMA audit as required under the LEMR.

Corrective Action

The County's Emergency Management Agency shall take corrective action on identified deficiencies, gaps, and limitations, to ensure that lessons documented in the various program evaluations, exercises, tests, and audit review processes become lessons learned and implemented.

Management Review

Senior Management Review

This Annex shall be included in the MEP Annual review by the County's Senior Leadership, including members of the EAC and SCEMA, as outlined in the MEP Executive Summary.

Continual Improvement

The program review process shall incorporate ongoing analysis and evaluation, as well as corrective action planning and review as outlined in the MEP.