



**GRAND COUNTY, CO
FUNCTIONAL ANNEX
PUBLIC ALERT AND WARNING**

*Grand County Board of County Commissioners
Adopted by Resolution 2021-5-1
May 4, 2021*

Office of Emergency Management

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Emergency Public Warning Annex, herein referred to as the Annex, is intended to facilitate the coordination of timely emergency information to the public. It describes the events that activate notification and the methods by which emergency alerts and warnings are communicated to the public. The Annex describes the continuum and integration of emergency public warning and transition to public information.

Scope

The Annex describes the roles and responsibilities of the countywide GCCC, GCOEM, and Public Information Officers (PIO). The GCCC is the Public Safety Access Point (PSAP) for Grand County. Agencies Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) within Grand County are operating under the Incident Management System (ICS) and have responsibility for public information activities and assignment of incident PIO. Emergency Public Warning activities include:

- Providing immediate warning information as dictated by the incident commander and/or pre-scripted by the agency having jurisdiction (AHJ);
- Providing the public with timely, accurate, consistent, reliable and coordinated information;
- Transitioning the development of message content to the (PIO) assigned to the incident or event;
- Utilizing multiple systems and methods of broadcasting warning messages to alert the greatest possible audience at risk:
 - CodeRED Emergency Notifications
 - Emergency Alert System (EAS) through NWS
 - Social media
 - Website notifications
 - Media releases
 - Information Line
 - Media channels

Policies

The provisions of this Annex seek to establish and maintain a consistent understanding and use of information, technology and relationships to communicate time and mission critical information among departments, emergency management and the general public to minimize the risk of death, injury, damage or disruption of essential services.

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) system is always under the management of the GCCC. The message development and content will not be developed by the dispatcher and must be provided by the Incident Commander, PIO or be pre-scripted by the AHJ.

Other notification technology exists in the County and depending upon the timeline of the incident may be utilized by GCCC, Emergency Management, or PIO from AHJ. It is the desired outcome that the use of these systems or processes be transitioned from the GCCC as immediately as practical.

Communications Terms

Crisis Communication: communications that are intended to protect the public with specific directions and actions for the public to take;

Risk Communication: communications or exchange of real-time information intended to inform the public about threats to their health or safety with the goal of enabling people to take informed decisions to protect themselves.

Acronyms and Definitions

Agency Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)

Office of Emergency Management (GCOEM)

Grand County Communications Center (GCCC)

Joint Information Center / Joint Information System (JIC/JIS)

Public Information Officer (PIO)

CodeRED

A public safety alerting system (formerly referred to as reverse 911) from OnSolve. The single step, single launch process is the most efficient means to help reach the broadest audience possible during emergencies. Time-sensitive geo-targeted information can be delivered to any individual opting into the service, using voice messaging (cell or landline), text messaging, and email.

Emergency Alert System (EAS)

The national public warning system commonly used by state and local authorities to deliver important emergency information, such as weather and AMBER alerts, to affected communities over television and radio. Emergency Alert System participants – radio and television broadcasters, cable systems, satellite radio and television providers, and wireline video providers – deliver state and local alerts on a voluntary basis, but they are required to deliver Presidential alerts, which enable the President to address the public during a national emergency.

The majority of Emergency Alert System alerts originate from the National Weather Service in response to severe weather events, but an increasing number of alerts are being sent by state, local, territorial, and tribal authorities. FEMA is responsible for any national-level activation and tests of the Emergency Alert System.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)

The Wireless Emergency Alert system delivers critical warnings and information to the public on their wireless devices. Participation by wireless providers is voluntary, but those that offer the service must adhere to the technical and operational requirements established by the FCC.

Authorized public safety officials send the alerts through FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) to wireless providers, which then push the alerts from cell towers to mobile devices in the affected area. The alerts appear like text messages on mobile devices.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

General

Some incidents occur with enough warning that notification can be issued to ensure the appropriate level of preparedness. In these instances, AHJ, GCOEM, and/or elected officials are responsible for issuance of public alerts, warnings, and information.

Other incidents occur with little or no advanced warning and do not provide enough time to adequately notify the public. In these instances the immediate warning information will be communicated by the Incident Commander to the GCCC and systems under their control utilized to broadcast the message.

Timely and accurate notice of hazards, threats and major service disruptions can prevent or reduce

harm by facilitating timely and appropriate response to hazardous situations. The following principles of effective risk and crisis communication should govern the issuance of public alerts and warnings:

- Message clarity – describe the hazard or threat in accessible and direct terms;
- Indicate intended audience – specify the geographic area affected or provide other information to indicate who is susceptible to the threat or vulnerable to its effects;
- Specify actions – tell people what they should do to protect themselves and others;
- Acknowledge impacts – specify what damage has occurred or is expected to occur as a result of the incident;
- Describe the response – let people know what the County and other agencies are doing to manage the incident and its impacts;
- Manage expectations – provide timely updates and closure messages when appropriate to inform the public when it is safe or reasonable to resume routine activities.

To alert the greatest audience at risk in an emergency requires the use of multiple systems to:

- Capture the public's immediate attention, regardless of their location or the time of day;
- Address functional and access needs that exist for people with restrictions that would inhibit a clear understanding of the threat and warning message;
- Communicate messages in all languages that represent the affected community.

As an incident becomes known, and based upon the circumstances and conditions that evolve, choices will be made to select:

- The best available methods to use;
- The appropriate emphasis in each message;
- The optimum format for each message;
- The most effective times for releasing each message.

Effective response to emergent situations requires communication of the nature, extent and expected impact of a hazardous event, as well as clear, concise and decisive information concerning appropriate protective measures. The timely and coordinated use of public warnings can reduce the impact of hazardous events by informing the appropriate response of individuals. The AHJ and GCOEM will address any gaps in information flow or understanding of the use of the information received. At times information obtained for situational awareness and operations planning may be held in confidence until release to the public is appropriate. The Incident Commander will establish incident specific rules regarding these information system policies for external and internal communication.

To the greatest extent practicable, alerts and messages informing the public of the nature of the hazard or event threatening harm or causing disruption should be uniformly categorized using the following format:

- Category (not in order): Avalanche, Geological, Weather, Safety, Police, Rescue, Fire, Health, Environmental, Utilities, Hazardous Materials, Other;
- Location
- Brief description of event, intended audience and recommended protective actions;
- Message expiration / event duration

The following table summarizes event categories and the lead entities responsible for originating notifications to the GCCC concerning public alerts and messaging for each event type.

Category	Description	Lead
Fire / Rescue	Urban, wildland, or urban/wildland interface/intermix fires, evacuation, can involve trauma or entrapment, and general public safety	Fire District, County SO
Hazardous Materials	Incidents involving weapons of mass destruction; nuclear, radiological, or chemical uncontrolled release capable of causing harm to people, property, or the environment; to include shelter in place and evacuation.	Fire District, County SO
Law	Civil disturbances, serious criminal/terroristic activity, evacuation and general public safety.	County SO, Police Chief
Weather	Meteorological events predicted, observed, or reported by National Weather Service forecast office. Conditions include extreme temps, severe weather conditions such as snow/ice, tornado, wind, lightening, flooding or other conditions.	National Weather Service, Emergency Management
Health	Human/animal disease outbreaks, epidemics, air quality, and suspected bioterrorism capable of spreading infectious agents or germs.	Public Health, Emergency Mgmt Animal Control, County Extension
Environmental	Incidents involving food-borne illnesses, suspected or confirmed contamination of drinking water supplies, threats to ground water, rock slides, avalanches, air or land quality that do not arise from the release of a hazardous material.	Public Health, Environmental Health
Utilities	Incidents involving the supply of gas or liquid fuels, power production or energy transmission, telecommunications, cable television, internet or other communications capabilities; disruptions to the drinking water supply or treatment of water or wastewater.	Utility Provider, local municipality, Public Health
Other	Any incident not described above that threatens the safety or health of the community or the quality of the environment	County Department / Elected Office

Notification

Warning is a two-part function: first learning of the event or threat of event and second, alert the public. On a daily basis the actions taken to warn the public may take place under this annex at an operational department level without the formal establishment of an Incident Commander. The table above assigns or acknowledges the responsibility for crisis and risk communications to the identified entity. This plan relies upon the Incident Commander or AHJ assigned to an incident or monitoring an event to notify the GCCC to make a public warning.

Activation

When the AHJ and/or Incident Commander receive a notification of a significant incident upon size up or under AHJ protocol, they will request the GCCC to make a notification. The GCCC will use CodeRED to send the messages. GCCC can easily become overwhelmed with messaging requests and will only be responsible for immediate warning messaging. GCCC will request assistance from GCOEM to continue management of the CodeRED Alerts if overwhelmed or burdensome by prolonged and complex events/incidents. The GCOEM or AHJ will immediately assign a PIO or other agency personnel who have access to these systems. The AHJ is responsible for use of other notification systems and message content. These systems and methods may include: CodeRED, Media, UnitedWay211, NWS, Public Address, Phone Bank, Social Media, and Face-to-Face.

Preliminary Notifications

Preliminary notifications in the form of texts or telephone calls will be used when needed to inform County Commissioners and County Managers of matters that are of significant safety or safeguard concerns, or have high public interest. This includes, but will not be limited to, natural, technological, and human-caused hazards, including highway closures due to traffic accidents, rockslides, landslides, and avalanches. Also, severe weather, power outages, cybercrime affecting County infrastructure, or anything substantial that could reach the media first.

Access and Functional Needs

The GCGCOEM recognizes the unique challenges created by access and functional needs. Coordination that strives to address the needs of this group are incorporated into the ESF #6 planning work and the system partners that are support services. A planning assumption is that pre-incident work with this group is best and occurs both through passive and active interactions with client based services. Direct contact with this group through the client based service providers is a significant element of notifying. The CodeRED system will identify TTY/TDD subscribers in the system and these can be flagged for further action during a notification. Community out-reach and inclusion in planning efforts are on-going efforts.

Public Alerts and Warnings

When an incident threatens the health or safety of the public or creates a significant service disruption to routine activities, the Incident Commander of the AHJ will determine the following, script the appropriate message, and direct the GCCC to broadcast:

- Necessity for giving public warning and extent of coverage required;
- Content of public warning messages;
- Extent of geographic area to be covered;
- Timing of message delivery and event duration;
- Appropriate public warning tools as described below.

CodeRED

A web based text, email and voice messaging system, with a reverse dialing database (EPN) in which a notification can be launched by GCCC, GCOEM, Public Health, or PIO Group.

Wireless Emergency Alerts

The Wireless Emergency Alert system delivers critical warnings and information to the public on their wireless devices. Authorized public safety officials send the alerts through FEMA's **Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)** to wireless providers, which then push the alerts from cell towers to mobile devices in the affected area. The alerts appear like text messages on mobile devices.

Emergency Alert System (EAS)

The access point to the EAS is through the Boulder National Weather Service.

Website Notification

Grand County Emergency Information Portal: <http://www.gcemergency.com/>

Media Releases

Verbal and written official statement by the AHJ, Incident Commander and PIO

Social Media

Provide appropriate information and brief updates authorized by AHJ and shared by supporting agencies through multiple platforms.

The methods of communication described above are the platforms readily available for the notifications of crisis and risk communication messages.

ORGANIZATION

Agency Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)

The AHJ is responsible for having available a liaison assigned to the event. Upon size-up of the incident, information, or event, the liaison is responsible for relaying messages from the AHJ Incident Commander. The AHJ will assign a PIO as soon as possible to coordinate with PIO group.

Emergency Management (GCOEM)

The GCOEM maintains the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) and serves as the coordination point for the County during incidents.

Joint Information Center / Joint Information System (JIC/JIS)

The PIO assigned to the incident, in consultation with the Incident Commander and GCOEM, may decide to establish a JIC. Upon this transition, the PIO will become the Lead PIO and be the manager responsible for operations of the JIC. Upon establishment of a JIC, the Lead PIO will assign a Liaison PIO to the EOC and that person will be assigned to work out of the EOC. Depending upon the incident management structure the JIC and PIO functions may exist in a number of configurations to include incident based or EOC based.

Public Information Officer (PIO)

The PIO is responsible to managing and responding to needs of public information. This includes development of message content and utilization of warning tools. The PIO should work to transition the messaging demands from the GCCC as soon as practical.

Grand County Communications Center (GCCC)

Serves as the Public Safety Access Point (PSAP) and their location is staffed 24 hours a day; are responsible for public warning in addition to receipt and assignment of all incidents and information to an AHJ, Incident Commander, or GCOEM. GCCC and GCOEM maintain the countywide access point to the CodeRED system and EAS notification tools.

ANNEX DEVELOPMENT, MAINTENANCE, SUPPORT, AND TRAINING

Development and Maintenance

1. The development and maintenance of the Annex rests with the GCOEM.
2. The GCCC will assist GCOEM in developing and maintaining this Annex.
3. This Annex will be reviewed periodically, re-validated, and necessary revisions incorporated. Appropriate signatures and approval dates will identify revisions to this plan. The revision process will include incorporation of changes based upon periodic tests, drills and exercises, as appropriate.

Annex Support – Organization SOG/ SOPs

All organizations that support this Annex will develop and maintain their own organization's updated

Standard Operating Guides (SOG) -- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), and mutual aid agreements, as appropriate, that are supportive of this ESF. This information will be coordinated with and provided to the Emergency Management Director as necessary.

Annex and SOG/ SOP Training and Exercises

1. GCOEM will train and exercise using this Annex, ensuring EOC partners understanding of it.
3. Training to and exercise of individual organization's SOG/ SOPs that support this Annex are the responsibility of each respective organization.

AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES:

Grand County Emergency Operations Plan, Adopted by Resolution 2018-9-20

FEMA Comprehensive Planning Guide 101 v2 (CPG101 v2), November 2010