

ANNEX C: EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

Primary Department/Agency: The Communications Group in the City Managers Office

Support Agency: Office of Emergency Management, Fire Department, Police Department

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Emergency Public Information Emergency Support Function is to provide timely, accurate, useful information and instructions concerning severe weather to residents and visitors of Newport News.

II. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

- A. Annual public awareness campaigns coordinated by the Newport News Office of Emergency Management will be needed to assure the public is aware of the threat of severe weather.
- B. The Office of Emergency Management maintains a website with emergency preparedness information for natural hazards that affect Newport News.
- C. Newport News Radio Station AM 1700 will be utilized to disseminate non-life threatening emergency information. Additionally, severe weather preparedness information and evacuation routes for a hurricane appear in the telephone book yellow pages for the Peninsula.
- D. Severe weather may cause the isolation of communities or disruption of essential services. Residents will need to be prepared to be self sufficient for a minimum of 72 hours, and can expect impacts of a severe storm to last longer than anticipated.
- E. Severe weather information needs to be presented to the media by the Newport News Communication's Group several days before an event, in order for citizens to implement appropriate precautionary measures to mitigate against the anticipated effects and ensure an efficient recovery.
- F. Citizens will want the latest information available concerning restoration of utilities and city services, and the location of necessary resources being provided by the City. Demands for information from media outside the City will be significantly increased in a disaster.
- G. In a state or locally declared disaster, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) to coordinate federal, state, and local information.

III. ORGANIZATION

The Management Staff of the City Manager's office is the primary agency and will broadcast all emergency information to the public as described in the Emergency Public Information ESF of the City of Newport News Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).

The Office of Emergency Management will coordinate annual public awareness campaigns in order to prepare the public for hurricane season and the threat of severe weather. They will also perform life threatening notifications using emergency overrides of the Newport News television cable system, activations of the EAS system and emergency notifications through the use of the City Communicator Emergency Notification System when necessary.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

The City emergency public information team maintains the Emergency Public Information ESF position in the EOC during disaster events. The on duty representative is responsible for coordinating pertinent non-life threatening emergency information with the local news media, with the Emergency Information Center (EIC) staff, City departments and agencies, and for airing the information on the City’s 1700 AM Radio Station.

The EIC is equipped with a computer, printer/fax and phones. This center provides non-life threatening disaster related information to citizens’ inquiries.

The Public Information Officer (PIO) will advise the public concerning locally unique emergency public information, and will coordinate media releases with the appropriate parties.

The Office of Emergency Management will coordinate and activate emergency notification systems for life threatening emergency alerts.

The Public Information Officer maintains a series of news release templates for events such as hurricanes. Objectives of the news releases for severe weather are outlined in Appendix 1.

The PIO is responsible to track through the EIC staff citizens inquires for purposes of identifying trends and possible information that citizens require.

The on duty ESF representative is responsible for maintaining event information in the Incident Master system.

The ESF is responsible for coordination of news releases with other ESF’s in the EOC and obtaining the Director of Emergency Management “City Manager” approval prior to making event related media releases.

EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIONS

The National Weather Service starts issuing statements 5 days in advance, in the case of a hurricane. The following readiness conditions are based on time periods before landfall. In the case of Nor’easters and other severe weather events, conditions may not be applicable and responsibilities outlined in those conditions may or may not be completed within the lead up time to the event.

CONDITION 5 Routine Operations	
Forecast: Normal Weather Conditions	Period: None
Actions	Methods
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct awareness campaigns on hurricanes and severe weather conditions.	Educate the general public regarding city evacuation zones and routes
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct awareness campaigns on Inland Flooding and Flood Damage Mitigation	Educate the public about interpreting flood maps and predicted flood levels.
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct awareness campaigns on Tornados, Winter Storms, Drought/Heat Wave	Educate the public of protective actions warnings and AM 1700 Radio System.
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop and maintain severe weather plans and procedures	Severe Weather Response Plan
<input type="checkbox"/> Review and update Incident Master procedures and checklist	Each ESF will need to review and update their procedure and checklist on the Incident Master server.

CONDITION 4 Alert and Notification Status	
Forecast: Tropical Storm Force Winds Expected	Period: 3-5 Days
Actions	Methods
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide an Emergency Public Information Officer (PIO)	Communications Group personnel
<input type="checkbox"/> PIO monitors national, state, and local coverage of the severe weather emergency	Internet, cable television, local radio and television stations
<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor all Severe Weather Alerts and notify government agencies	Monitor NOAA Weather Radio, National Weather Service (NWS), AM 1700 Radio Station. Use Incident Master for updating City agencies and the AM 1700 Radio Station to update citizens.
<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor and broadcast statewide storm system advisories	National Weather Service, EAS station
<input type="checkbox"/> Disseminate city specific information to the media	Contact local television stations
<input type="checkbox"/> Disseminate emergency information to the public	Advise citizens to be self-sufficient for 72 hours
CONDITION 3: Emergency Mobilization Phase	
Forecast: Tropical Storm Force Winds Expected	Period: 72 Hours
Actions	Methods
<input type="checkbox"/> Continue to monitor national, state and local media	Contact appropriate news media on noted discrepancies.
<input type="checkbox"/> Alert and augment Emergency Information Center	Contact EOC PIO staff, AMST supervisors.
<input type="checkbox"/> Assemble Emergency Information Team	Continue staffing Emergency Information Center, 24 hour basis as necessary
<input type="checkbox"/> Review PIO procedures with EOC staff	ESF# 3 Emergency Public Information SOP
<input type="checkbox"/> Review public information materials	ESF # 3 Emergency Public Information SOP
<input type="checkbox"/> Disseminate hazard information and recommended protective actions.	Local media, EIC, AM Radio Station.
Continued	
<input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate and prepare locally unique, supplementary public information news releases with appropriate parties when deemed necessary	Emergency Information Center (EIC)
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish citizen inquiry/rumor control	Emergency Information Center (EIC)
<input type="checkbox"/> Continue/complete Condition 4 activities	Severe Weather Response Plan
CONDITION 2: Emergency Mobilization Phase	
Forecast: Tropical Storm Force Winds Expected	Period: 48 Hours
Actions	Methods
<input type="checkbox"/> Continue and complete Condition 3 activities	Severe Weather Response Plan
<input type="checkbox"/> Disseminate news releases as determined to meet the public needs additional information.	Media, EIC, City Website, AM Radio Station
<input type="checkbox"/> Mobilize Emergency Information Team	Emergency Information Center (EIC)
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct media briefings	Emergency Information Center and EOC Training Rooms

<input type="checkbox"/> Process media response and citizen inquiry	Ensure the EIC Supervisor is updated frequently on pertinent public information. EIC provide emergency information to citizens upon request.
CONDITION 1: Emergency Response Phase	
Forecast: Tropical Storm Force Winds Expected	Period: 24 Hours
Actions	Methods
<input type="checkbox"/> Respond to EOC activation	Recall essential staff and begin 24-hour emergency operations status
<input type="checkbox"/> Assist in activating Emergency Information Center	Recall 911 Center staff and begin EIC Ops.
<input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate activities with federal and state officials	Participate in Joint Information Center (JIC)
<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor storm conditions and weather advisories	National Weather Service (NWS)
<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor City Manager's directives for ordering evacuation	Direction and Control ESF
<input type="checkbox"/> Disseminate warnings of evacuation if directed	Communicator Emergency Notification system, EAS, Siren trucks and public address equipment
LANDFALL Emergency Response Ceased	
Forecast: Tropical Storm Force Winds are Present	Period: Current Time
Actions	Methods
<input type="checkbox"/> PIO develops accurate and complete information regarding incident size, current situation, and resources committed	Complete VDEM Situation Report Forms
<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare for re-entry and recovery information	Public Information staff
REENTRY AND RECOVERY Recovery Response Phase	
Forecast: Normal Weather Conditions Resume	Period: Within 24 after storm passes
Actions	Methods
<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in local, state and federal disaster relief	Stay in contact with VDEM and/or FEMA

PUBLIC INFORMATION OBJECTIVES

1. TO INFORM THE PUBLIC AND CITY EMPLOYEES OF THE PRESENCE OF A SEVERE WEATHER EVENT, ITS EFFECTS, AND PROPER COUNTER-MEASURES. INCLUDE:
 - 1.1. A description of the hazard.
 - 1.2. Estimated time of impact and anticipated effects.
 - 1.3. Areas that will be affected, i.e. coastal areas.
 - 1.4. Personal and property protection measures (shelter-in-place, food/water safety).
 - 1.5. Instructions for the special needs population.
 - 1.6. Instructions on how to care for boats and pets.
 - 1.7. How to put a disaster kit together and what personal items you need if it is necessary to evacuate.
 - 1.8. Disaster supplies for a minimum of 72 hours, but preferably enough supplies for a week.
 - 1.9. When necessary, provide evacuation advisory and routes, shelter locations and time of openings.
2. TO COORDINATE THE CITY'S RELEASE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION TO THE MEDIA.
 - 2.1. As a major storm approaches, the public's need to know will increase.
 - 2.2. When the Emergency Information Center (EIC) will open and close.
 - 2.3. Public inquiry number.
 - 2.4. Telephone numbers for specific needs, i.e. 911 for emergencies only, and public inquiry number for information concerning event.
 - 2.5. City services closures and changes.
3. TO CONTROL RUMORS AND REASSURE THE PUBLIC.
4. TO PROVIDE ONGOING INFORMATION ABOUT EMERGENCY OPERATIONS AND EMERGENCY SERVICES.
 - 4.1. How to get information if utilities are down
 - 4.2. How to report problems concerning city services.
5. TO INSTRUCT THE PUBLIC ON DISASTER ASSISTANCE AND RECOVERY SERVICES AND PROCEDURES.