

Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan



Section 6-Communications Annex

January 2019

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Annex 6 – 5 Communications Annex

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this annex is to describe the communications systems and capabilities available during emergency operations. To provide information technology systems to support the response and recovery phases of a disaster and to provide for the coordination of related personnel, equipment, and supplies, to ensure that all reasonable efforts have been made to protect the County's computer hardware, software and data.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of Horry County Emergency Management that:

- A. Emergency response activities will be given priority use of all communication systems and resources.
- B. Each function represented in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) operation will ensure an ability to communicate between the EOC Functional Representative and their department operations center, or with their operational units.
- C. Normal communications systems will be utilized as much as possible during an emergency or disaster. Some needs will be met by reprioritizing day-to-day frequency use to special emergency use.
- D. In the event of disaster, all departments will ensure the security of computer hardware and software located in their area.
- E. Priority will be given to restoration of communication systems in the event of an emergency or disaster.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Responsibilities include:
 - 1. Assign and train personnel in the operation and maintenance of emergency communications equipment.
 - 2. Identify volunteer and private sector communications available to augment emergency requirements.
 - 3. Describe how communication capabilities are to be enhanced during emergencies (e.g., by augmenting telephone services, using amateur radio communication networks, taking measures to protect equipment from lightning strikes, etc.).
 - 4. Describe the primary and backup methods of communication (radio, telephone, fax, Email, pager, runner, etc.).
 - 5. List the provision or maintenance of emergency power and generator fuel for radio communications center.
 - 6. Describe the methods of communications between command posts, field forces and shelters, lodging and feeding facilities, etc.
 - 7. Determine condition, status of municipal information technology facilities and systems.
 - 8. Prioritize and coordinate restoration of County information technology facilities and systems.
 - 9. Provide voice and data support to disaster recovery operations.

B. Primary:

1. Horry County Communications Department

- a. Provide radio frequencies and communication protocols for Emergency Operations Center (EOC) use.
- b. Equip the communications room in the EOC with the appropriate communication equipment.
- c. Maintain the 800 MHz radio system.
- d. Provide staff to the EOC.
- e. Maintain list of radio frequencies.
- f. Schedule tests, exercises.
- g. Develop emergency action checklists.

C. Support:

1. Horry County Information Technology Department.

- a. Maintain the VoIP telephone system in EOC.
- b. Provide technical support for EOC communications.
- c. Provide staff to the EOC.

2. Commercial Radio and Television Stations.

- a. Maintain Emergency Alert System (EAS).

3. Radio Amateur Communication Emergency Services (RACES).

- a. Provide back-up communications support.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. General

1. A coordinated, effective response to emergencies/disasters requires communications among emergency responders, between incident sites and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and linkages to the general public and other levels of government. The communications function aims to provide a structure whereby all public, private, and volunteer communications capabilities are linked to and coordinated by the EOC.
2. Post-emergency or disaster routine modes of communications and information systems that are operational will continue to be used after the occurrence of the event.
3. The identification, acquisition, prioritization and deployment of communications and information system assets will be coordinated as appropriate within the EOC to assure continuity and consistency of County and local response actions.

B. Horry County Communications Department

1. The Horry County Communications Department is responsible for the management of communication operations during the emergency phase of an emergency and/or disaster.

2. The Communications Director is responsible for the maintenance and the smooth functioning of the EOC Emergency Communication System.
3. Horry County has 4 primary control channels and numerous talk groups on our 800MHz radio system. Additional frequencies and nodes are on file in the Public Safety Division and are not published due to security concerns.
 - a. 860.2125
 - b. 859.2125
 - c. 858.2125
 - d. 857.2125
4. Since Horry County's system is a private system, all radios must be programmed using the system "Code Key" before they will be active.

C. Department/Agency Communications

1. All departments/agencies maintaining stations on the various networks will ensure their portion of the system is maintained in a high state of readiness.
2. Unless informed otherwise, agencies tasked during disaster operations will maintain communications with their personnel using their existing communication systems.
3. Agencies entering Horry County that are not on the Horry County system will be directed to one of the state-wide mutual aid channels such as SCTAC or ITAC. During a disaster, these channels will be monitored for radio traffic from any mutual aid responder in the area.

D. EOC Operations

1. Contact between the EOC staff and the agencies will be maintained through telephone and radio networks. All EOC representatives are responsible to insure that communication systems are in place between their function and the departments/agencies.
2. If the situation warrants, the Communications Director may establish an "EOC Communication Unit" within the Logistics Section. Responsibilities include:
 - a. Manage the emergency communications section in the EOC to include radio, telephone, repair crews, amateur radio, backup resources, etc.
 - b. Determine condition and status of county communication systems.
 - c. Ensure EOC internal communications are adequate.
 - d. Establish communications with operational units and field incident commanders.
 - e. Obtain and coordinate communication resources as requested by field incident commanders.
 - f. Prioritization of maintenance.
 - g. Prioritize and coordinate restoration of communications.
 - h. Ensure communication links to/from shelters.
3. During a state-of-emergency, the EOC will use portable units or RACES to communicate with shelters if telephones are not available. Primary radio communications with other counties and the State EOC is via the 800 MHz Radio System.

E. EOC Communication Systems

1. Specifics as to radio frequencies, radio call signs, telephone numbers, and addresses of dispatch and command centers are found in the E-911 Communications Center.
2. Besides radio, the EOC is dependent on telephone lines.
3. Much of the EOC communications capability depends upon electrical power. The EOC has backup emergency power.

F. 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone

1. Emergency 911-telephone service can be linked directly into the EOC as a back-up to the primary call center.
2. It can be anticipated that the 911 services will become overloaded for a period of time in the event of a widespread emergency or disaster.

G. The Emergency Alert System (EAS)

1. The Emergency Alert System can be implemented at the EOC.
2. Commercial Radio and Television.
 - a. The commercial stations in Horry County are generally equipped with standby generators and will likely return to service soon after an emergency/disaster. This is the most reliable and widespread coverage for information to the public.
 - b. As soon as possible, the information to be provided to the public on EAS will be compiled and sent by the EOC Public Information Officer (PIO).

H. Horry County Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES)

UHF/VHF/HF volunteer amateur radio system is used to augment existing emergency communications to and from the EOC. RACES volunteers staff the EOC communications center, providing communication linkages between the EOC and emergency incident sites (shelters, hospitals, and other critical locations) as requested.

I. Computer Communications Capabilities

The Horry County Information Technology Department is responsible for certain computer networks that may be used to disseminate information and communicate between county departments. The department provides computer support during and after an emergency/disaster and will assure priority restoration of communication functions and systems. (See EOC Computer System SOP)

J. Catastrophic Communications Failure

In the event of a catastrophic communications failure, Horry County has a limited number of Satellite communication capabilities for use.

V. ANNEX MAINTENANCE

Horry County Emergency Management has the responsibility of coordinating, developing and maintaining the Communication Annex and is the designated Lead Agency. The Communication Annex will be updated in conjunction with the CEMP as stated in Section VII, Plan Development and Maintenance.