

ANNEX C WARNING

I. PURPOSE.

This Annex describes the alert and warning system for Oklahoma County. This system is capable of disseminating adequate and timely warning to county officials and the general public in the event of threatened disaster.

II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS.

A. Situation.

Several means exist to disseminate to appropriate government officials and the general public timely forecast of all hazards requiring emergency preparedness or response actions including local media, cable network alerts, electronic siren warning systems and EAS (Emergency Alert System).

B. Assumptions.

Sufficient time will be available prior to most emergency situations to allow warning to be given to the public.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATION.

A. General.

1. Natural Hazards.

Warning of severe weather such as tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, flash flooding etc., will be provided by the National Weather Service. These warnings are disseminated by radio, TV, OLETS, and the NOAA Weather Radio.

2. Technological Incidents/Hazards.

Warnings will be made for hazardous material incidents/accidents such as oil, chemical, or radiological material spills when the incident presents a hazard to the public. Warnings will be announced in the affected area by fire, law enforcement and other uniformed emergency services.

3. National Security.

a. Warning for Natural Disasters such as floods and tornados will be issued through the National Weather Service and the local electronic media. Additionally, Oklahoma County EM operates a spotter network controlled by a meteorologist which will provide current information to the EOC Staff. Upon threat notification, emergency personnel in affected jurisdictions will be immediately notified by telephone or radio and warnings in those jurisdictions will be issued by the local jurisdiction. Oklahoma County will activate the warning siren in Luther when warranted.

A threat from international terrorists is becoming a serious concern nationally and in Oklahoma County. An attack could come at anytime and could be in any form: chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive. Warning of this type event will generally come through Homeland Security and Law Enforcement sources such as OLETS, and the Sheriffs Office. Warning to the public would primarily be through electronic media and the Emergency Alert System. The Sheriffs Dispatch Center will notify individual city law enforcement agencies of any threat. There may be no warning prior to a terrorist incident.

b. Although not a major concern, nuclear attack is still a possibility. It is most likely that a nuclear attack would be preceded by a period of international tension which would provide ample time to inform the public. However, should a surprise attack be launched, warning time may be as little as fifteen minutes. The possibility of an accidental missile launch also exists, in which case warning time would approximate that of a surprise attack.

B. Warning Systems and Procedures.

1.

a. The federal government is responsible for providing attack/accidental launch warning to state government. State government is responsible for providing warning to all counties on a 24 hour basis. This responsibility has been assigned to the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety, with the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management EOC and the National Guard EOC utilized as backup.

b. Warning within the county is the responsibility of both county and city officials. Troop A, Oklahoma Highway Patrol in Oklahoma City is responsible for notifying the primary warning point in Oklahoma County, which is the County Sheriff's Dispatch Center, or the secondary warning points, (the various city Police and Fire

Departments), by radio or telephone, of attack or accidental launch warning.

c. The County Sheriff's office will immediately notify the Emergency Management Director and the County Commissioners on receipt of warning concerning any kind of an attack which may affect the population of Oklahoma County.

2. Severe Weather Warning.

a. National Weather Service (NWS).

The National Weather Service is the only source for official Severe Weather Watches and Warnings.

b. Storm Spotters.

Oklahoma County Emergency Management has a large contingent of civilian volunteer storm spotters who deploy around the central Oklahoma area when severe weather threatens. These private citizens are trained to spot, identify, and track severe thunderstorms and tornadoes and relay their observations to the EOC. Their information is reviewed by a meteorologist and significant information is relayed by radio to the National Weather Service to assist in the issuance and confirmation of severe weather warnings.

c. Electronic Media.

In addition to receiving watch and warning information from the National Weather Service, local TV stations have their own highly sophisticated weather radar systems and storm spotter teams. The general public benefits from this highly competitive media market with constant reports of severe storms. A number of local commercial radio stations receive warnings from the NWS and broadcast them to the public.

d. Alpha-Numeric Pager System.

Oklahoma County Emergency Management has developed an alert system to warn special locations such as schools, and hearing impaired. Specially programmed alpha-numeric pagers can be purchased or leased which can then receive warning information sent from the Oklahoma County EOC over the pager network.

3. Emergency Alert System (EAS).

EAS provides emergency information to the public during time of high world tension and/or actual attack upon this country. These are protected stations that provide emergency radio and TV broadcasts on a volunteer basis. The system may be activated at the federal, state or local level. FEMA provides pre-recorded tapes containing emergency information to be broadcast by EBS stations during an emergency. County officials authorized to activate the EAS are the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, the Sheriff and the Director of Emergency Management. The contact point for issuing an EAS message is the National Weather Service in Norman or the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management.

4. Warning Sirens.

Fixed warning sirens are located throughout Oklahoma County. Only one of these sirens is under the operational control of Oklahoma County EM. That siren is located at the High School in Luther. Other sirens in the County are activated by the local communities in which they are located. Specific warning signals are described below.

a. Severe Weather or Other Peacetime Emergency.

The severe weather/other peace time emergency warning is a 3 to 5 minute steady signal from sirens, horns or other devices. In addition to other meanings or requirements for action, this can also be an ATTENTION or ALERT signal to turn on radios or TVS to listen for essential emergency information.

b. Attack Warning.

The attack warning signal is a 3 to 5 minute wavering tone on sirens or a series of short blasts on horns or other devices. The attack warning signal shall mean that an actual attack or accidental missile launch against this country has been detected and that protective action should be taken immediately.

IV. TASK ORGANIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

A. Task Assignments.

1. Policy Group.

a. Make decisions on actions to be taken based on the seriousness of the warning received. Delegate this authority to the Emergency Management Director when such warnings require immediate decisions to protect life.

2. Emergency Management Director.

a. Coordinate warning information with the Policy Group, when time permits, and implement their decision on further dissemination of the warning.

b. Activate the EOC and call those persons designated to staff it.

c. Utilize the EAS and pager system to broadcast warnings to the public.

d. Educate the public on the meaning of warning signals.

3. Oklahoma County Sheriff's Office.

After receiving an alert/warning (attack, weather, etc.), notify all incorporated communities in Oklahoma County by the fastest means available.

4. Oklahoma County Media Organizations.

a. The media is responsible for disseminating warning information from authorized sources concerning potential emergency situations or actual disasters, to the public as rapidly as possible.

b. Activation of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) is the responsibility of the broadcast station having EAS capability.

c. The media will be requested to present warnings and information, designed to provide necessary life saving guidance to the public during emergencies or disasters.

V. ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS.

The Emergency Management Director or his designated representative is responsible for maintaining, testing, and repairing all equipment in the EOC.

VI. PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE.

The Emergency Management Director is responsible for updating this annex and its appendices on an as needed basis.

VII. AUTHORITY AND REFERENCES.

A. Authority.

See Section VII, Basic Plan.

B. References.

FEMA, Principles of Warning and Criteria Governing Eligibility for National Warning System Service, CPG 1-14, Washington D.C..

FEMA, National Warning System (NAWAS) Operations Manual, CPG 1-16, Washington D.C.