

Public Information & Alerts



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Table of Contents

- 1. Purpose and Scope**
 - 1.1 Purpose
 - 1.2 Scope

- 2. Situation and Assumptions**
 - 2.1 Situation
 - 2.2 Assumptions
 - 2.3 Policies

- 3. Concept of Operations**
 - 3.1 Overview of Public Information
 - 3.2 Overview of Alert Systems
 - 3.2.1 California Warning System (CALWAS)
 - 3.2.2 CodeRed
 - 3.2.3 Emergency Alert system (EAS)
 - 3.2.4 Emergency Digital Information Service (EDIS)
 - 3.2.5 Operation Area Satellite Information System (OASIS)
 - 3.2.6 California Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Radio System (CLEMARS)
 - 3.2.7 Web-based Applications and Social Networking
 - 3.2.8 Door-to-Door Notifications
 - 3.2.9 Community Information Meetings
 - 3.2.10 Public Address Systems
 - 3.3 Alerts and Accommodations for Special Needs Populations

- 4. Organization: Control and Coordination**
 - 4.1 Roles and Responsibilities
 - 4.1.1 Office of Emergency Services (OES)
 - 4.1.2 Department of Health Services
 - 4.1.3 Department of Social Services
 - 4.1.4 Law Enforcement
 - 4.1.5 All County Departments
 - 4.1.6 City of Alturas
 - 4.1.7 Volunteer Fire Departments
 - 4.2 Mitigation – Pre- Disaster Planning
 - 4.3 Preparedness
 - 4.3.1 Training and Exercises
 - 4.4 Response
 - 4.5 Recovery
 - 4.5.1 Documentation

- 5. Administration**
 - 5.1 Information Collection and Data Analysis
 - 5.2 Logistics
 - 5.3 Finance

(For additional information see, EOP, Sections 7, 8 & 9)

6. Appendices

6.1 SOPs

6.1.1 Department of Social Services Operating Procedures for notifying at-risk clients (TBD)

6.1.2 Department of Public Health's Operating Procedures for notifying at-risk populations

6.2 References

7. Annex Development and Maintenance

Public Information and Alert Annex

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Modoc County Public Information and Alert Annex is to guide participating agencies to efficiently and effectively alert and inform the residents of the county in the event of an emergency. Alerting and warning is the process by which government entities notify and alert the general public to the threat of imminent catastrophe and/or the dissemination of emergency instructions

1.2 Scope

Success in saving lives and property is dependent upon timely dissemination of warning and emergency information to persons in threatened areas. Local governments and agencies are responsible for warning the populace in their jurisdictions. This plan is intended to clarify roles and responsibilities and to ensure a coordinated response when this plan is activated. The goal is to provide a framework that is consistent with local policies, meets the needs of clients and community, and satisfies the requirements of the Incident Command System (ICS), Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

2. Situation and Assumptions

2.1 Situation

If an alert is activated, than one, or all of the following conditions has occurred:

- The Director of Emergency Services, or designee, has been monitoring an incident and declared an alert.
- The City of Alturas has activated its EOC and has submitted a resource request for services.

2.2 Assumptions

- During emergencies, the public needs timely, accurate information about the situation and appropriate instructions regarding protective actions that should be taken to minimize injuries, loss of life and damage to property.
- Emergencies may develop slowly (e.g., severe winter storm) allowing sufficient time to effectively disseminate information to the public. Other emergencies may occur suddenly (e.g. earthquake and hazmat release) hindering staff's abilities to inform the public.

- The need for warnings differs from the need for information based on the immediacy and potential for life-saving actions
- Power outages may disrupt radio, television, Internet, and other outlets that are needed to effectively distribute emergency information.
- Language, disability, cultural, and other factors affecting the ability of citizens to receive and understand emergency messages requires that the information be provided in multiple formats and through a variety of means.
- An emergency response will require a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional response. Incident Command System (ICS) will be utilized as outlined in Modoc County's Operational Area's Emergency Operations Plan.
- All first responders and follow-up emergency response personnel will be trained within the parameters and resource capabilities of the various jurisdictions.
- It is assumed that Modoc County's Emergency Operations Center has been activated and will coordinate and support emergency response.
- A single warning dissemination system is not capable of effectively warning everyone in the county and any alert will be a multi-system approach.

2.3 Policies

- The policies, procedures, and provisions of this plan are applicable to all agencies and individuals having responsibility for emergency response.
- Procedures as outlined in the Modoc County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan will be followed.

3. Concept of Operations

3.1 Overview of Public Information

The collection and dissemination of accurate and timely information to the general public will be a priority in all incident action planning. The Emergency Operations Center under the direction of the Director of Emergency Services or designee will oversee all public information statements. The Public Information Officer (PIO), once activated by the EOC Manager, will be responsible for developing and releasing information about the incident to the news media, to incident personnel, and to other appropriate agencies and organizations upon the final approval of the EOC Manager. The PIO will also establish an area for media relations and press/media briefings. This may be at an alternate location as appropriate. Should a request be made for tours or photo opportunities, the PIO will coordinate those requests through the EOC Manager and the Incident Commander. Upon final approval of the EOC Manager in conjunction with the Incident Commander, the PIO will also insure that information for public dissemination is made

available through media, on the internet via the county websites, and social media.

3.2 Overview of Alert Systems

Alerting and warning is the process of notifying government entities and the general public to the threat of imminent danger. Depending upon the nature of the threat and the population group at risk, a warning can originate at any level of government.

Success in saving lives and property is dependent upon timely dissemination of warning and emergency information to persons in threatened areas. Local governments are responsible for warning the populace in their jurisdictions. County officials accomplish this using a number of different methods, from formal warning systems to door-to-door notification. While each method is unique in its application, each shares a common purpose of maintaining clear and accurate dissemination of information.

3.2.1. California Warning System (CALWAS)

This system is part of the National Warning System (NAWAS). It is responsible for informing, communicating, alerting and notifying local governments, Operational Areas and state officials of natural or human caused emergencies. To meet this responsibility, the Warning Center is equipped with telephone, data and radio systems that include the National Weather Service (NWS), California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETAS) and California Law Enforcement Radio System (CLERS). The system has the capability of utilizing message switching computers, Emergency Digital Information Service (EDIS), CISM and the Dialogic Automated Notifications System. This list is not inclusive of all utilized systems as it is updated as technology changes.

3.2.2 CodeRED

CodeRED is a high-speed community and emergency notification system that is used by state and local governments to effectively alert residents. It utilizes GPS mapping and allows for precise targeted messaging. The alerts can go to cellular or land based phone systems. It is integrated with FEMA authorized IPAWs messages through the Emergency Alert System National Weather Service and other federally recognized alert systems.

3.2.3 Emergency Alert System (EAS)

The EAS system is used to provide warning, emergency information, guidance instructions and news of a manmade or natural threat to public safety, health and welfare and is designed for the broadcast media to disseminate emergency public information. The EAS replaced the Emergency Broadcast System in 1997. EAS enables any radio station to automatically put a warning message over the air without any human intervention. Whether the station is attended or not, the system can be activated. Because EAS has the ability to provide a message digitally, it may be carried by radio, television and cable television companies.

This system uses the facilities and personnel of the broadcast industry on a voluntary basis. EAS is operated by the broadcast industry according to established and approved EAS plans, standard operating procedures, and within the rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The FCC governs the EAS nationwide and appoints a chair for each state to oversee the EAS system at the state level.

Typically activated by state or regional CalOES for region or state-wide emergencies, local EAS activation may be appropriate and may be authorized by the Modoc County Sheriff/Director of Office or Emergency Services/designee or Modoc Public Health Officer.

3.2.4 Emergency Digital Information Service (EDIS)

This system is provided by CalOES as a method to assist the media in providing visual messages to the hearing impaired. Government agencies utilize EDIS for the distribution of warning and emergency information to the media and to the public utilizing commercial broadcasting channels.

3.2.5 Operation Area Satellite Information System (OASIS)

The OASIS project, funded under the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1986, was established to create the most robust communications system possible using leased transponder space from commercial satellite operators. The result is the establishment of a web based system which allows virtually uninterrupted communication between state, regional and operational area level EOCs.

OASIS is a system that consists of a communications satellite, multiple remote sites and a hub. A high frequency (HF) radio system and a satellite communications network were constructed to link all 58 counties with State OES and other state agencies for disaster communications as well as day-to-day traffic. The system, which uses technology similar to cellular telephones, has 60 channels. When a user picks up the line, the system automatically searches for the best available channel.

3.2.6 California Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Radio System (CLEMARS)

CLEMARS was established to provide common law enforcement agencies with radio frequencies for use statewide by state and local law enforcement agencies during periods of man-made or natural disasters or other emergencies where inter-agency coordination is required. It operates under appropriate FCC rules and regulations and is administered by CalOES.

The system establishes four priorities:

- Emergency operations of law enforcement agencies, primarily mutual aid activities

- Emergency or urgent operations of above, involving a single agency
- Special event control activities, generally of a pre-planned nature and generally involving joint participation of two or more agencies; or two or more police divisions such as CHP, etc. Drills, rehearsals, command post exercises, and like activities shall be considered as Priority III activities.
- When no traffic of a higher priority classification is in progress, agencies participating in CLEMARS may utilize the frequency for local communications as a secondary means of communication.

3.2.7 Web-based Applications and Social Networking

Modoc County will utilize social media, county websites, and other web based systems to notify the public. Modoc County, as well as the Office of Emergency Services (OES), have web pages; OES also has a Facebook page as well as a Twitter account.

3.2.8 Door-to-Door Notifications

Depending on the nature of the emergency, especially in rural or tribal areas, this may be the most effective method of alerting the populace. It will be coordinated and facilitated by the EOC at the request of the Incident Commander at the Incident Command Post, but it will be the responsibility of the local fire or tribal jurisdictions.

3.2.9 Community Information Meetings

During an incident, community-based meetings are an effective tool for getting information to people who need it the most and who appreciate the opportunity to clarify their understanding by asking questions in person. Updates on the emergency's impact, descriptions of available resources, financial assistance, and future plans by responders can be effectively explained during community meetings. These meetings are most appropriate for areas that are isolated from other media by the emergency or for incidents where effects are localized.

3.2.10 Public Address Systems

Most law enforcement vehicles and fire trucks are equipped with public address loud speaker systems that can augment other notification systems.

3.3 Alerts and Accommodations for Special Needs Populations

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, it is required that the Emergency Operations Plan makes every reasonable accommodation for those residents and visitors with special needs, both before and during an emergency. It must be understood that a disaster, by its very nature, degrades the availability, quantity, quality, and timeliness of public services. Resources and services will be at a

premium, and under accepted emergency management practice, must be allocated for the greatest benefit of the entire population.

Family members, caregivers and other providers should be supported to the extent possible. This can improve the services delivered and reduce the demand for specialized services provided by response agencies. This is not intended as a complete list, but illustrates the measures in place to promote equitable service to all.

In coordination with the Office of Emergency Services, it is the responsibility of Modoc County’s Departments of Social Services and Public Health to provide plans for the alert, welfare check, evacuation, and care & shelter of these specialized at-risk populations. Each county department has procedures in place to notify those with specific needs which will include all of the same services offered to the general public; however, for at-risk populations it may include individual phone calls and/or home visits.

Modoc Public Health has adopted the SAFE System (Support and Aid for Everyone). It is an outreach program to enroll special needs populations into a data base that gives information to the agency for contact, especially during an emergency, utilizing as many means as possible (land line, cell phone, email, etc.). It is voluntary and focuses on persons who:

- use electricity for medical equipment
- use supplemental oxygen
- depend on others for routine transportation needs
- need mobility assistance
- use specialized transportation equipment
- use “life sustaining” prescription medications, including but not limited to heart medication, breathing medication and diabetes medication
- receive medication by mail
- receive meal or grocery delivery services

The 2010 census estimate for special needs population is approximately 2,400 individuals in Modoc County.

Special Needs	Support Measures
Hearing Impairment	711 California Relay Service 911 CAD System accommodates TTY telephones Appropriate services may be provided at locations for public briefings and shelters.
Visual Impairment	The telephone emergency notification system provides auditory warnings, information, and updates.

Mobility Impairment	Transportation resources should include wheelchair accessible vehicles and assistance.
Cognitive Impairment	Existing support will be provided for family members and caregivers. Limited services may be available to small groups.
Mental Health/Substance Abuse Impairment	Every effort will be made to accommodate their special needs in shelters, but priority will be given to accommodate them within familiar surroundings.
Medically Fragile	Although those with in-dwelling devices, special equipment, or other special needs should do whatever they can to maintain their normal systems, limited support may be available to assist them in an emergency.
Age-related Dependency	Dependent children and seniors will usually be served best by their familiar family members or caretakers. Those efforts should be supported to the extent possible. Unattended individuals or small groups will be accommodated within available resources.
Low English Language Proficiency or Literacy	Foreign language interpretations services for Spanish and other languages is limited within the county. Every effort will be made to accommodate this population.
Medically Equipment Dependent	Individuals in this category are dependent on oxygen, insulin, life support medications, or life support equipment. Local fire departments alert and check on their populaces with special needs. They coordinate with Public Health's SAFE system which is a data base of those with special needs.
Total Special Needs Population	Alternate shelters or spaces within general shelters could be necessary for additional privacy or accommodations made by some evacuees' physical, developmental, or other special needs.

4. Organization: Control and Coordination

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1.1 Office of Emergency Services: (When notified by the Director of Emergency Services or designee that an alert will be in effect.)

- Communicate with the Sheriff's Office on existing protocol in effect for Modoc Communications Center 911-Dispatch. Analyze needs for effective dispatch response during the emergency.
- Set goals and objectives in preparation for an Incident Action Plan.
- Activate emergency alert systems as appropriate
- Contact the Departments of Social Services and Public Health that an alert is in effect and to activate their special needs notification procedures.
- Prepare public information releases utilizing applicable communication systems.
- Depending on the situation, contact volunteer fire departments to do door-to-door notification.
- Utilize community support groups such as the Sheriff's Posse and other organizations to assist in notification and/or response to individual's needs.

4.1.2 Department of Health Services: Public Health and Behavioral Health

Modoc County Department of Health Services is responsible for notification of those clients and agencies that work with persons with special needs. The department utilizes the SAFE data system that is annually updated to track persons with special needs or who may be at-risk.

After initial notification, Public Health Nursing will follow procedures as detailed in the *Modoc County Public Health Department All Hazards Disaster Manual, 2017*:

4.1.3 Department of Social Services:

Modoc County Department of Social Services (DSS) is responsible for notification of their clients and agencies that work with persons with special needs

4.1.4 Law Enforcement:

Law enforcement may consist of multiple agencies: California Highway Patrol, Modoc County Sheriff's Office, Alturas Police Department, and other federal and regional law enforcement agencies. In an emergency event, law enforcement will function under the Incident Command System. Response to the incident will be coordinated through the Incident Command post with coordination support from the Emergency Operations Center as needed. Duties may be varied: door-to-door notification, road closures, etc.

4.1.5 All County Departments:

Depending on the nature of the event, other departments such as public works, roads, environmental health, etc. may be utilized to respond as needed.

During a disaster, all public employees at the county and state level are automatically designated by the California Emergency Services Act as Disaster Service Workers.

4.1.6 City of Alturas:

Within the Modoc County Operational Area, by prior agreement, the City of Alturas will alert and warn the population within the city; however, depending on the incident level, the City may be part of a Unified Command within the Incident Command Post, or may request as a resource that the alert notifications be made by the Modoc County Communications Center – 911 under the direction of the Sheriff/Director of Emergency Services or designee.

4.1.7 Volunteer Fire Departments

Within Modoc Operational Area there are eleven volunteer fire departments in addition to the City of Alturas. These departments know their populace and will be integral in notifications for both alerts and information within their jurisdictions. They work closely with OES to coordinate response.

4.2 Mitigation – Pre-disaster Planning

- Assessment of existing alert system and maintenance of systems
- Continue planning and implementation of multiple systems to improve redundancy; i.e. EAS, local media, radio transmissions, volunteer agencies, social networks, HAM radio operators, the Internet, etc. (List is not inclusive of all resources.)
- Coordination with regional systems through CalOES to assure interoperability
- Coordinate with Public Health and Social Services to activate their Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for notifying at-risk clients. Have SOPs on file with Dispatch.
- Assess and modify existing emergency procedures through training and exercises.

4.3 Preparedness

4.3.1 Training and Exercises

Working with Modoc Operational Area, first responders, volunteer agencies and county employees will continue to train and exercise the emergency operations plan, annexes and departmental standard operating procedures.

4.4 Response: Synopsis of the Incident

- Sheriff/Director of Emergency Services or designee has assessed the situation and the need for public information and/or an alert.
- The Emergency Operations Center has been activated. A Public Information Officer has been designated.
- Public Information Officer will follow the checklists in the Functional Annex under the direction of the EOC Manager
- The EOC will determine the alert message and one or more of the following methods to alert the public
 - Modoc Media Alerts
 - CodeRed
 - Emergency Alert System (EAS)
 - NOAA Weather Radio
 - Internet Resources: County website, OES website, OES Social Media
 - Public Address Systems and Public Notification Boards (Public Health and Surprise Valley Hospital)
 - Public Health and Social Services notification procedures
 - Door-to-door notification
- All warnings issued to the public should include the following information:
 - A brief description of the hazard
 - Geographic extent and locations included in the warning
 - Duration of the warning
 - Protective actions recommended
- Public Information and Alert messages will be updated as needed.

During a disaster, effective communication becomes especially critical. As such, information delivered at press conferences by public officials and broadcasted on television during a disaster needs to be effective, understood, consumable, and actionable by the whole community. When clear, factual and trustworthy information is provided in warnings, the public is more likely to take the

protective actions listed in the warning. Following the initial warning period, less urgent public information is often needed.

4.5 Recovery

4.5.1 Documentation

Procedures and documents will follow those outlined in the Emergency Operations Plan and Functional Checklists as listed in Part II.

5. Administration

The following sections (5.1, 5.2, & 5.3) will follow procedures as outlined in The Emergency Operations Plan: Sections 7, 8, & 9.

5.1 Information Collection and Data Analysis

5.2 Logistics

5.3 Finance

6. Appendices

6.1 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are on file within each department

6.1.1 Department of Social Services Operating Procedures for notifying at-risk clients

6.1.2 Department of Public Health's Operating Procedures for notifying at-risk populations

6.2 References