EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION 2:
COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION AND WARNING SYSTEMS

Responsibility Summary

Primary Agencies: Columbia County Emergency Management
                       Columbia County Public Safety Communications

Support Agencies: Columbia County Information Services
                       Columbia County Sheriff
                       Columbia County Fire District 3
                       Columbia County Fire District 2
                       Columbia County Fire District 1
                       National Oceanographic and Atmosphere Agency (NOAA)
                       Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES)
                       Amateur Radio Services (ARES)
                       Communications Network Service Providers
                       Spokane County Sheriff's Dispatch Office

I.   INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Electronic communications and information technology are a vital component to preventing, preparing for, mitigating, responding to, and recovering from disasters; both natural disasters and the results of terrorist acts. This ESF provides guidance for rapid alerting and warning of key elected/appointed officials and the general public regarding an impending or occurring natural or technological emergency or disaster. In addition, the goal is to provide guidance for organizing, establishing, and maintaining the communication and information technology capabilities necessary to meet the operational requirements of the County in responding to and recovering from emergencies and disasters.

Scope

This ESF describes the coordination of the departments, organizations or agencies and the actions to be taken to establish or maintain communications, information systems, and warning support in preparation for, response to and recovery from an emergency or disaster which affects local residents and the operations of local government. This ESF also addresses coordination with state government and agencies when additional communications are requested through the State EOC.

II. SITUATION

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Hazard and Threat Analysis

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A. Columbia County is vulnerable to a variety of emergency or disaster events requiring dissemination of warning and/or other emergency information to local jurisdiction officials and the general public.

B. Emergency or disaster warnings may originate from any level of government or other sources. Most forecasting resources are located with the federal government. This may include but is not limited to watches and warnings for floods, severe weather, volcanic eruptions and hazardous materials incidents.

C. The sudden and unexpected nature of a catastrophic event will result in numerous requests from many agencies and all levels of government for services required to save lives, protect property, and preserve the environment.

D. Local jurisdiction officials and all emergency and support agencies functioning within the ECC, will have a critical need for accurate and timely information on which to base decisions and focus response actions. Also, widespread damage to communications facilities and/or equipment is possible at a time when the need for real-time electronically processed information is greatest. The capability to produce needed information may be restricted or non-existent. All available communication assets of the various agencies and local government will be needed immediately to assure proper response to the needs of the victims.

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Planning Assumptions

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A. Jurisdictions and agencies within the County will focus on coordinating lifesaving activities concurrent with reestablishing control of the affected area. Jurisdictions and agencies, in conjunction with the communications industry, will accomplish as much restoration and reconstruction of communications capabilities as resources and the situation permits.

B. Initial reports of damage will be fragmented, providing an incomplete picture of the extent of damage to communications systems and facilities.

C. Weather and other factors may impair the ability to deploy mobile or transportable communication equipment into the affected area.

D. During any major disaster the normal communications networks may become overloaded; these include the public switched telephone network and cellular telephone networks. Generally, the County's internal telephone, radio and data networks are segregated from the public networks and will operate normally. Public telephone and cellular networks will continue to operate but only a small percentage of calls will be connected. County employees should use e-mail functions of their smart phone or similar devices and text messaging features of their cellular phones which should continue to operate, although somewhat slowed during the initial stages of a disaster.

E. Conditions following the event will require careful consideration of areas or sites that may require communications support, such as staging areas, shelters, alternate ECC locations, short and long term health care facilities, schools and daycare facilities,

communication points for communities without telephone service, and other critical areas.

F. For individuals with communication disabilities who do not use a telephone or TTY, the process of connecting a 911 call to the local 9-1-1 emergency service center can be challenging even under normal conditions, an emergency or disaster will increase communication difficulties for these residents.

III.   CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

General

Reliable communication and information system capabilities are necessary for day to-day communications, warning of impending events, response and recovery operations, search and rescue operations, and coordination with other county, state, and public safety agencies. These capabilities must be available at the primary and alternate ECC facilities or other locations selected because of existing conditions.

A. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) operates through designated radio and television stations. Columbia County is in the Inland Northwest EAS area. Our designated station is LP1: KXLY AM 920 Radio or FM 99.9 Radio and LP2: KAYU TV, in Spokane WA. It is intended to provide federal, state and local jurisdictions with the means to disseminate prompt, reliable emergency information, instructions, and warning in the event of local, state, or national emergencies. Local radio broadcaster's participation for most warnings is voluntary. The EAS may also be used by law enforcement to provide Abducted Minor Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) alerts. See the Columbia County AMBER Plan for more information.

B. Emergency communication between the local ECC and state and federal agencies is provided through the state ECC communication facility.

C. Columbia County Public Safety Communications is equipped with back-up power from a large generator.   In addition, an Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) unit protects the dispatch equipment.

Communication capabilities currently available to Columbia County Public Safety Communications include but are not limited to:

A. Public telephone system, including voice lines, facsimile, and e-mail. Government and privately owned cell phones.

B. WebEOC software bringing real-time crisis information management (e.g., weather trends, satellite images, mapping information, and local, regional or national resource status).

C. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) weather advisories, watches and warnings are received via Washington State Patrol's network "A Central Computerized Enforcement Service System" (ACCESS) at the Columbia County Emergency Communication Center.

D. Public Alerting: Dispatchers or EMD personnel may provide warning when lives are threatened or when lives may be saved as a result of the warning through activation of the Emergency Alert System (EAS), or utilize the Emergency Telephone Notification (ETN) system via the CodeRed web activation portal. The login page address is https://next.coderedweb.com. A login and password is necessary to access the web portal which is readily accessible by dispatch personnel and ECC staff authorized to access the system. This system can be accessed via the internet, cell phone or tablet with internet capabilities.

E. TTY capabilities are present at each dispatcher workstation and all dispatchers have access to relay services which provide personnel the ability to provide public alerting to special needs individuals.

F. Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) two-way radio provides back-up communications for responders. These resources are limited in Columbia County.

G. Messengers may be used when other communications systems are not available or are unreliable.

Communication capabilities available to departments, agencies and jurisdictions (fire/EMS, law enforcement, public works, etc.) within the County include their normal two-way radios, standard telephone systems, facsimiles, modems, and cellular phones. In addition, several federal, state, regional and local mutual aid response communications radio frequencies are available for use:

A. OSCCR: Primarily used by public-safety agencies, "on-scene" at an event/incident, for command and coordination of activities between agencies. OSCCR can only be employed in the simplex mode via mobile and/or handheld equipment.

B. SAR: Primarily used by Search and Rescue organizations for coordinating operation between SAR units. Can only be employed in the simplex mode via mobile and/or handheld equipment.

C. REDNET: Primarily used by fire departments and districts for coordinating operations between firefighting units. Can be accessed via mobile radio only.

D. NLEC: Primarily used by law enforcement agencies for mutual operations. Also used by EMD for activation of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) relay network. Can only be employed in the simplex mode via mobile and/or handheld equipment. NLEC 155.475.

E. HEAR: Primarily used by ambulance services for administrative communications with hospitals.

F. Satellite Telephone: One satellite telephone is available to the EMD staff, Sheriff's Office and Columbia County Fire Districts to supplement emergency communications. This phone may be employed during emergencies to locations having the greatest need.

G. GETS: Government Emergency Telecom Service. Provides authorized emergency personnel priority access and prioritized processing in the local and long distance segments of the landline networks, greatly increasing the probability of call completion during incidents when these modes of communication can become overloaded.

H. Columbia County Emergency Management and local governmental departments have adopted a common standardized BK Radio Frequency List to be programmed to all emergency services radios. These radio frequencies as well as other neighboring

jurisdiction radio frequencies are pre-programmed into Columbia County's radio cache to improve communication capabilities during locally isolated incidents and incidents that cross jurisdictional lines in which mutual-aid resources are activated. A list is maintained by Columbia County Emergency Management in a central folder identified as ESF 2 Incident Command Documents that is available to be hand carried to Incident Command if needed.

Organization

Emergency communications, information systems and warning for Columbia County are coordinated through the EMD and when activated the ECC. The ECC is organized using the Incident Command System which emphasizes concepts including but not limited to uniform command, unity of command, modular organization, and management by objectives.

The Communications Team consists of Columbia County EMD, Columbia County Public Safety Communications, local Fire Departments, the Columbia County Sheriff's Office and the Information Technology Department. The communications team works closely with outside communication agencies and outside private service providers for various communication services.

Additional guidelines include ESF 5 Emergency Management which provides guidelines for collecting, analyzing, and sharing information about a potential or actual emergency or disasters in Columbia County to enhance response and recovery and ESF 15 Public Affairs which provides guidelines for an efficient and coordinated continuous flow of timely information and instruction to the public using all available communications media prior to, during and immediately following an emergency or disaster.

Procedures

Columbia County Emergency Management department provides emergency coordination services within the County jurisdiction and to surrounding jurisdictions in accordance with agreed upon procedures as outlined within local City/Town Ordinances, Interlocal Agreements, Memorandums of Understanding, the Master Mutual Aid Agreement and other agreements (such as emergency declaration resolutions) as determined necessary to protect residents and their property.

Providing the residents and first/second responders with timely and accurate lifesaving information during major incidents is of highest priority. To the maximum extent possible under emergency conditions, communication and warning functions will be performed in compliance with existing telecommunications regulations and requirements. Radio systems operated by Columbia County will conform to the conditions of the applicable FCC license(s).

Columbia County and its municipalities will maintain capability to rapidly warn the public when disaster threatens so that residents may take necessary actions to protect themselves and their

property. Columbia County has SOPs to be followed for the activation of CodeRed in emergency or disaster situations when emergency evacuation procedures are required.

Each department of the communications team (emergency management, fire, police, information technology, etc.) has its own set of standard operating procedures established to achieve the mission, goals and objectives to efficiently and effectively implement the capabilities of that department. These SOP's will be coordinated under a unified command structure to achieve common goals related to the impending or existing emergency.

Various support communication agencies, groups, and communications/alert systems have their own standard operating procedures (SOPs) which will be activated, as determined necessary, under a unified command structure to ensure a coordinated response and recovery from an emergency and/or disaster. For example, the EMD works closely with local cellular agencies during response and recovery phases when critical communication towers are impacted during a major incident.

Mitigation

EMD encourages and promotes mutual aid and cooperation between local jurisdictions and agencies. These organizations are encouraged to participate in a variety of community activities and training exercises to test equipment, identify areas needing improvement or specialized support, and develop and evaluate operational procedures.

Columbia County EMD promotes using affiliated and unaffiliated volunteers as resources to fill gaps identified while developing implementation strategies. This includes determining knowledge, skills, and abilities of individual volunteers and developing job descriptions where volunteers can be assigned.

Columbia County EMD encourages and promotes resource typing, both individual and equipment capabilities, including entering this information into electronic database such as WebEOC to provide real-time crisis management information.

Columbia County encourages participation of local residents at public education events offered throughout the year, which are focused in the area of community involvement in the areas of prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery.

Preparedness

The ESF 2 lead role is to develop a command and control structure that when activated will ensure continuity of operations for communications and information technology in support of government operations within Columbia County. The response activities section fully describes that structure that has been established.

EMD coordinates with appropriate departments and agencies within the county, to ensure those with communications capability have appropriate plans and procedures to support their assigned emergency mission.

Support agencies should develop and maintain an inventory of communication capabilities and resources, noting availability and response criteria, and noting any deficiencies or limitations in respect to supporting this ESF. Also, develop and maintain appropriate Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in support of their mission, support of this ESF, and train personnel to that standard. This information is requested to be shared with the EMD.

Response

The Emergency Management Director once notified there is a potential for, or an occurrence of an emergency or disaster will proceed to an area where the situation can be safely and effectively assessed. The EMD will advise members of the Board of Commissioners when and if the ECC should be activated. The EMD will activate the necessary resources to staff a unified command center (Sheriff, Fire Department, Information Technology, etc.). These designated respondents will coordinate among themselves to determine their roles and responsibilities within the incident command center.

A. After initial activation, additional resources will be provided with instructions as to where to report to determine the overall operational status of communications resources. As each resource arrives at the designated location they will be provided with directions to determine the status of communication systems. Priority of systems for status/repair determination are:
   a. E-911 communications equipment
   b. Public Safety Radio Network
   c. Wireless data network for first and second responders
   d. Telephone Network
   e. Public Safety (Sheriff and Fire)
   f. Data communications network including fiber
   g. E-mail and messaging
   h. County's internet
   i. County's website (co.columbia.gov)
   j. Sheriff and Fire IT
   k. Local Power and Public Utilities IT
   l. Desktop Computing

B. After ascertaining the status of the County's communication assets and networks, the EMD/Communications Coordinator will designate the priority for restoring systems.
C. The EMD/Communications Coordinator will establish communications with local agencies and departments, and ensure all agencies with communications capabilities and responsibilities are advised of conditions and are taking appropriate actions such as verifying current status of resources and personnel.
D. EMD/Communications Coordinator will coordinate specific locations where backup or support communications need to be established, such as hospitals and clinics, nursing

homes, group homes, schools, daycare facilities, communities without phone service, response agencies, etc.

E. EMD/Communications Coordinator will determine overall operational status of communications resources, provide coordination, and maintain priorities for handling of messages and communications traffic within the ECC, and between ECC and field operations. Establish communications with adjacent counties, if necessary.

F. In major incidents where local and multi-jurisdictional resources have been exceeded, the EMD/Communications Coordinator will notify the state ECC and establish primary and backup communications with them.

G. Once complete operation of communication systems has been restored, resources can be released for work in other areas such as recovery.

Recovery

A. Continue to utilize primary and alternate communication and warning systems to coordinate recovery activities. The PIO, if activated, will work with the incident commander and will continue to be responsible for the coordination and dissemination of recovery information, such as when it is safe for people to return to their homes and businesses.

B. All agencies and departments will return to normal operations when no longer needed, or when normal systems and facilities are restored. Demobilization of communication and warning resources will be coordinated through the EMD/ECC.

C. Involved agencies and departments will assist the EMD in preparing after-action reports regarding communications and warning.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

Primary Agencies

A. Columbia County Emergency Management

The Emergency Management Director has overall responsibility for the planning and coordinating of the emergency communications program within the jurisdictional area.

B. Columbia County Public Safety Communication Center

Provide early alert and critical information exchange paths before, during, and after a disaster. Rapid and reliable communications systems are essential for warning the public and local governments of an impending emergency or disaster and for allowing emergency response personnel to communicate during an emergency or disaster to share information and coordinate response actions.

A. Support Agencies/Groups

Support agencies/groups are responsible for maintaining their plans and training in coordination with this ESF. When requested by the EMD/ECC, they will provide communications equipment, and personnel as needed, and as available, in accordance with their primary mission or responsibilities.

V.   RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Resources

Local jurisdictions, agencies, and service organizations should identify and develop their resources, including trained personnel, primary and backup equipment, and backup power options. When necessary, the requisite personnel and equipment can be made available to fulfill the roles and responsibilities identified in this ESF. As a minimum, all agencies, jurisdictions and organizations should expect to sustain operations for 72 hours, and have other resources programmed for use up to 14 days.

Disasters are very expensive and a major responsibility of the primary agency or Finance/Admin unit if designated by the incident commander is to begin the process of tracking and recovering costs at the beginning of any activation. There is never a guarantee that the county will be reimbursed. Even when reimbursement occurs, rarely is the amount received equal to the expense incurred and it is a long and complex process.

To position the County for the best possible outcome, whenever the ECC is activated for an incident or event that creates substantial damage or costs, and specifically one that is likely to require public and/or individual assistance available under the Stafford Act, Incident Command should immediately:

- Establish a system for tracking all costs.
- Emphasize the importance of tracking cost to all departments/agencies.
- Differentiate between the costs directly related to a disaster and those incurred under regular operating costs (i.e. sheriff vehicle usage for evacuating individuals following a disaster and vehicle use for responding to 911 calls outside the disaster).

Not only is this accounting necessary for reimbursement purposes, but it also provides the public with information that demonstrates the county's commitment to fiscal responsibility with public funds. Because of the Federal and State regulations that must be met, this position is critical in the overall Emergency Management function at any level of activation.

VI.   REFERENCES

A. Chapter 38.52 Revised Code of Washington (RCW), Emergency Management

B. Civil Preparedness Guide (CPG) 1-14 and CPG 1-16, National Warning System (NAWAS)

C. FCC Rules and Regulations Part 97 Amateur Radio Service, Subpart E regarding emergency communications.

D. Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 480.120.520; communication providers – major outages and service interruptions.