

ESF-2 Communications

ESF Coordinator	Snohomish County Department of Information Services
Primary Agencies	Private Telecommunications Service Providers Snohomish County Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) & Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) Snohomish County Dispatch Centers (SNOPAC, SNOCOM) Snohomish County Emergency Radio System (SERS)
Supporting Agencies	Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management Snohomish County Fire Departments & Districts Snohomish County Sheriff’s Department & Municipal Police Departments Regional Radio & Television Stations

Federal and State primary and supporting agency responsibilities for this ESF are outlined in the National Planning Frameworks (Federal) and Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

I. INTRODUCTION

For purposes of management the following ESFs are the primary coordinators for listed services:

- ESF-2 (Communications) manages communication service coordination.
- ESF-3 (Public Works and Engineering) manages water/waste water coordination.
- ESF-12 (Energy/Utilities) manages electrical and natural gas service coordination.

Purpose

The primary mission of ESF-2 is to establish and maintain the continued operation of all communications systems necessary for the direction and control of any emergency situation, the emergent notification of key public officials and the general public of an impending or occurring emergency or disaster, as well as coordinating with telecommunications service providers for the repair and restoration of telecommunications infrastructure and service.

Scope

The scope of ESF-2 includes:

- Describe communications resources available to conduct countywide direction and control, direct and coordinate emergency resources.
- Establish responsibilities for communication system operations.
- Define operating procedures to support county/local government jurisdictions during disasters.

- Coordination with telecommunications providers to determine the status and restoration of supported communications systems.

Emergent communications contain extremely time sensitive emergency information to the public that may include information about evacuation, sheltering-in-place, and protective actions. These emergent communications are normally released through the Emergency Alert System (EAS) by SNOPAC or SNOCOM, DEM, or State / National authorities.

Non-emergent communications concerns information that is not of an immediate life threatening nature is normally coordinated and released through Public Information Officer (PIO) channels. Procedures, policy, and guidance for issuing non-emergent public warnings and information are covered in ESF-15 Public Affairs.

II. POLICIES

Snohomish County will use normal communications and warning systems as much as possible during a disaster.

Telecommunications and warning support requirements, which cannot be met at the lowest level of authority, will be transmitted to the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Priority in establishing communications systems within Snohomish County is life safety first, followed by the re-establishment of critical government functions and the protection of property, the economy and the environment.

III. SITUATION

Emergency/Disaster Conditions and Hazards

Refer to the Snohomish County Hazard Identification and Vulnerability Analysis (HIVA) (published separately) for the natural and manmade events that may affect Snohomish County.

Planning Assumptions

No single warning system exists in Snohomish County that will alert the public of all threatening disaster or emergency situations. There will be occasions when there is not time or mechanism to provide warning.

Communications systems are vulnerable and may be damaged, destroyed or overwhelmed during and following an emergency or disaster. Due to disrupted transportation routes, weather conditions, a lack of resources, or the level of damage, repairs to communication equipment and the infrastructure could take days, weeks or months.

Alternate communications systems such as amateur radio will be used when normal communications systems are overwhelmed or inadequate.

State and Local governments, in coordination with the communications industry, will accomplish restoration and reconstruction of communications facilities.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

General

Communications capabilities, including; daily communications, warning of impending events, response and recovery, search and rescue, and coordination with local public safety agencies and the state must be readily available for emergency operations.

A natural or human-caused emergency or disaster may occur at anytime that requires dissemination of warning or notification of emergency information to local public officials and the general public. These warnings may originate from any level of government. Most forecasting resources are located within the federal government and may include warnings for natural and human-caused disasters.

Snohomish County utilizes a multitude of communications systems to include facsimile machines and broadcast fax, internet communications, telephones, satellite phones, cellular phones, local television, satellite television, and AM/FM radio. Radio systems in place in the EOC include UHF, VHF, aircraft UHF, 800 MHz, 2 meter, 6 meter, 70 CM amateur, HF, low band, and 2-meter packet. Dedicated phone lines are in place with the National Warning System (NAWAS).

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) may be activated from the Snohomish County EOC through SNOPAC Dispatch Center. State and other county governments may also activate this system. The system is connected to local area radio and television and can interrupt programming to disseminate a message. Public alert and warning may be accomplished through the Emergency Alert System for rebroadcast over commercial radio and/or cable television.

Emergencies or disasters may require direct coordination with federal / military agencies within Snohomish County, the Washington State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), and other regional emergency management centers. Telephone landline and cellular systems cannot be relied upon for such contacts. Radio or other systems will be established and maintained for emergency use.

In addition to public safety communications, Snohomish County EOC will establish direct radio communications with member cities and towns, essential services such as the American Red Cross, hospitals / medical services for response coordination and the sharing of information.

Amateur radio communications systems located in the Snohomish County EOC can provide backup and supplemental communications to all major hospitals, American Red Cross, many fire stations, and several agency EOCs located in small cities and towns throughout Snohomish County, and the SEOC.

The method of communications will primarily be voice using all appropriate amateur radio frequencies, but also may include amateur packet radio (send / receive data files) as needs may dictate. Amateur high frequency communications will allow links to be established and maintained between regional and national partners and response agencies.

Organization

Snohomish County Department of Information Services (DIS) is the primary coordinator and interface with telecommunications service providers that support Snohomish County government with internet

and phone service. Additionally DIS provides technology development and support services for the county's information systems.

Snohomish County Police and Auxiliary Services Center (SNOPAC) is the primary radio communications center providing dispatch for police and fire within Snohomish County with the exception of the cities listed below.

Southwest Snohomish County Communications Center (SNOCOM) is the primary radio communications center providing dispatch for Edmonds, Lynnwood, Brier, Mountlake Terrace, Woodway, Mukilteo, Mill Creek and Snohomish Fire District #1 and will relay appropriate information/requests to SNOPAC.

Auxiliary Communicates Service (ACS) is the volunteer amateur radio group that will provide communication support to the County, Municipal EOC's, 9-1-1 facilities, and PUD.

Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) is a volunteer amateur radio group that will provide communication support to the private and volunteer relief organizations, hospitals, shelters, and Red Cross.

Procedures

On-scene Incident Commanders who determine that an immediate emergent message to the public is required to protect life will coordinate the broadcast of an EAS message with respective 911 / Dispatch Center (SNOPAC or SNOCOM). The responsible 911 Dispatch Center will follow established procedures and notifications for both the EAS message and public official notifications.

Whenever Snohomish County emergency management officials are alerted to the threat or occurrence of a hazardous event that could lead to, or has resulted in, an emergency or a disaster, the EOC and associated communication teams will be activated at the appropriate level.

Monitoring will consist of the accumulation, display, and evaluation of relevant information, release of appropriate public information advisories, and alerting response agencies and organizations of the situation.

Request for communication system/equipment support will be met to the best extent possible that on-hand or procured equipment/technical expertise will allow.

Mitigation Activities

- Analyze potential disasters and expand EOC communications capabilities to meet all situations.
- Identify facilities, agencies, personnel, and other resources necessary to support EOC operations.
- Train staff in communication procedures and equipment.
- Prepare displays and acquire other equipment necessary for EOC operations.
- Develop a method for message handling within the EOC.

Preparedness Activities

- Pre-identify communications facilities, equipment, and personnel in each region of the county that could be made available to support response and recovery efforts.
- Assess selected sites to store pre-staged communications assets for rapid deployment into the affected area.
- Encourage and promote interoperability among local jurisdictions.
- Conduct regularly scheduled communications tests and drills communications centers, and other pre-designated emergency communications support facilities to insure operational readiness and procedural familiarity.
- Conduct monthly checks of all telecommunications and IT equipment and systems in the EOC.
- Utilize EOC telecommunications and IT equipment as an integral part of all communications systems in exercises.

Response Activities

- Identify the actual and planned actions of commercial telecommunications companies to restore services.
- Determine what assets are available and nearest to the affected area(s) by each ESF 2 support agency and the time-frame in deploying those assets.
- Coordinate the acquisition and deployment of communications equipment, personnel, and resources to establish temporary communications capabilities within the affected area.
- Compile damage information obtained from assessment teams, the telecommunications industry, and other city/county agencies and report that information to the Planning Section.
- Assess the need for and obtain telecommunications industry support as required.
- Prioritize the deployment of services and equipment based on available resources and critical needs.
- Coordinate communications support to all governmental, quasi-governmental and volunteer agencies as required.

Recovery Activities

- Return and inventory radio equipment & resources to regular service.
- Finish required incident reports.
- Assemble & index all incident documentation.
- Provide copies of radio traffic recordings.
- Survey equipment & vehicles for damages related to incident.
- Solicit feedback from other responders.
- Attend kickoff meeting for Public Assistance.
- Meet with designated state & federal emergency management officials for the applicants briefing.
- Complete required PA applications; maintain detailed records for audit purposes.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

General

All primary and supporting ESF agencies must have established disaster related policies, systems, and procedures for:

- Personnel accountability, safety, lines of authority and succession
- Providing logistical support to their personnel and equipment
- Facility / infrastructure damage assessment and reporting
- Continuity of operations to maintain essential services
- Facility / infrastructure repair and restoration

Primary

Snohomish County Information Services (County Telephone and Computer Networks):

- Identify and report all damages to County telecommunications systems.
- Coordinates maintenance, repair, and restoration of phone and network connectivity with telecommunications service providers.
- Establishes, maintains, repairs, and upgrades phone and network systems within/for supported Snohomish County departments and agencies.
- Provides subject matter expertise to solve / resolve telecommunications issues.
- Provide computer, telephones, and data support to disaster operations and recovery.
- Assess damages to data system.
- Provide installation, restoration and repairs.
- Secure off-site storage for backup of County computer system.
- Coordinate with private telecommunication service providers for impacts to and restoration of public telecom service.

Private Telecommunications Service Providers:

- Perform all duties necessary to protect telecommunication systems.
- Mobilize personnel and equipment required for emergency evaluation and restoration services on telecommunication systems.
- Perform and report telecom damage assessment information to DEM EOC.
- Provide information on emergency response activities to the media and public.
- Coordinate public information and provide public information officer(s) and support personnel to the JIC when activated.

ACS:

- Provides primary and auxiliary communication support to government.
- Will serve as net control Emergency Management tactical nets.
- Will define and assign frequencies and talkgroups to be utilized for specific purposes.

ARES:

- Provides auxiliary communication support for the American Red Cross, hospitals, and volunteer organizations.

SNOPAC and SNOCOM Dispatch Centers:

- Collect and disseminate emergency and non-emergency information via established and alternate communication channels to the appropriate public safety agency/department and/or EOC.
- Facilitate mutual aid requests for law enforcement and fire agencies/departments.
- Maintain all communication equipment, supplies and back-up systems (SERS).
- Respond to the direction of the appropriate authority in the utilization and dispatch of resources.
- Relay public works and utility information to the appropriate agencies/departments.
- SNOPAC serves as the primary originator for activating the EAS within the county.

Snohomish County Emergency Radio System (SERS):

- Maintains, updates, and operates the 800 MHZ radio systems for supported agencies and jurisdictions.

Supporting

Snohomish County DEM:

- Maintain EOC and mobile communication equipment, supplies and back-up systems.
- Coordinates all radio communications elements in the EOC.
- Has alternate responsibility for activating the Emergency Alert System for incidents occurring within the county.

Snohomish County Fire Departments & Districts:

- Disseminate emergency information to residents and businesses as resources allow.

Snohomish County Sheriff's Department & Municipal Police Departments:

- Disseminate emergency information to residents and businesses as resources allow.

Regional Radio & Television Stations:

- Relay EAS messages and accurate emergency information.

VI. REFERENCES

VII. TABS