Emergency Support Function #2 (Communications) Annex

Thurston County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)

Adopted April 2025

Prepared By:

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In Partnership With:

Primary Agency
Thurston 911 Communications (TCOMM911)
Thurston County Emergency Management

Supporting Agencies & Organizations:
Thurston County ARES/RACES
Thurston County Information Technology
Thurston County Sheriff's Office

Record of Changes

Change	Date of Change	Point of Contact	Section(s) added, removed, or edited
25-001	04/2025	Sonya Kroese, Thurston County Emergency Management	Complete annex revision

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This document is a supporting annex of the Thurston County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (*base plan*) and serves to establish policies and procedures for the effective countywide coordination of necessary communications capabilities in the event of a human, technological, or natural caused disaster. Primary and supporting agencies, their general responsibilities, and critical disaster response activities related to communications are identified herein and serve as a reference for executive officials, Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) staff and incident commanders to coordinate delivery of communications resources and capabilities during incident response.

1.2 Scope

Emergency Support Function (ESF) #2 (Communications) coordinates maintenance of an effective interoperable communications and alert and warning system for use in a disaster and the restoration of communication systems and infrastructure after a disaster. ESF #2 also monitors the overall status of the county's communications infrastructure and coordinates provisions of redundant, temporary communications as needed.

As part of incident response operations at the Emergency Coordination Center, ESF #2 coordinates information and resources to directly support effective delivery of the following core capabilities: Public Information and Warning, Infrastructure Systems, and Operational Communications. Through intersecting activities with other support functions, ESF #2 provides general support to the following additional core capabilities: Operational Coordination and Situational Awareness. Core capabilities are derived from the National Preparedness Goal and further described in the base plan. Displayed below is a summary of the primary and supported core capabilities identified for ESF #2:

ESF #2 Primary Response Core Capabilities	
Public Information and Warning	Deliver coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable information to the whole community using clear, consistent, accessible, and culturally and linguistically appropriate methods to effectively relay information regarding any threat or hazard, as well as the actions being taken and the assistance being made available, as appropriate.
Infrastructure Systems	Stabilize critical infrastructure functions, minimize health and safety threats, and efficiently restore and revitalize systems and services to support a viable, resilient community.
Operational Communications	Ensure the capacity for timely communications in support of security, situational awareness, and operations available among and between affected communities in the impact area and all response forces.
Supporting Core Capabilities	
Operational Coordination	Establish and maintain a unified and coordinated operational structure and process that appropriately integrates all critical stakeholders and supports the execution of core capabilities.
Situational Awareness	Provide all decision makers with decision-relevant information regarding the nature and extent of the hazard, any cascading effects, and the status of the response.

1.3 Laws & Policies

RCW 38.52.070 (Local organizations and joint local organizations authorized—Establishment, operation—Emergency powers, procedures—Communication plans) requires that local emergency management organizations that produce a CEMP must include a communication plan for notifying significant population segments of life safety information during an emergency.

Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires television and internet companies to provide a nationwide system of telecommunications relay services that allow people with hearing and speech disabilities to communicate over the telephone.

In addition, state/local governments should have warning systems in place to ensure all persons can access information about emergencies, such as visual and audible alerts, multiple message delivery modes and open captioning for announcements on television and websites.

Two-way voice/data radios will be used in accordance with the **State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) Interoperability Plan** to ensure operability between local and state agencies.

1.4 Situation

1.4.1 General Overview

The country relies on a suite of public and private communication systems and services for both day-to-day and emergency operations.

Thurston 911 Communications (TCOMM 911) operates as the county's public safety answering point and manages and maintains the infrastructure for the Thurston County public safety radio

system. The public safety radio system provides radio communications service to Thurston County's law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical response (EMS) users.

The county relies on the hazard warning capabilities of federal and state government, industry, and the media. In addition to state and federal alert answering systems, TCEM maintains local alert and warning capabilities through the FedRAMP-authorized mass notification system Rave Alert, branded as Thurston Community Alert (TC Alert).

Outside of the county's public safety radio and alert and warning systems, agencies and the public rely on locally available, commercial communications infrastructure and services such as wireless carrier services, land lines, radio broadcast, and cable and internet service providers to meet communication needs.

Natural or human-caused emergencies or disasters may occur that require dissemination of warning or notification to local officials and the public. Emergency information may include information about evacuation, sheltering in place, protective actions, or where to go for assistance.

1.4.2 Hazard Impacts to ESF #2

Section 1.6.2.1 of the base plan contains a summary assessment of all significant hazards that threaten Thurston County. Of those hazards identified, the following have been assessed to have the most significant impact requiring coordination of ESF-2 capabilities:

Hazard	Impact Statement / Description
Earthquake	A large-scale incident, such as an earthquake may result in damage to infrastructure as well as a surge of users of the local telecommunications infrastructure resulting in jammed cell and landline phone capability, high-speed internet bandwidth degradation, etc., which may reduce the effectiveness of the Emergency Coordination Center and/or other county departments.
Cyber-attack	A cyber-attack has the potential to damage communications infrastructure systems by disruption of service, taking control of systems, and/or holding them hostage (ransomware).
Mass Violence/ Terrorist Attack	Mass Violence and/or terrorist attacks may result in a surge of users of the local telecommunications infrastructure resulting in jammed cell and landline phone capability, high-speed internet bandwidth degradation, etc., which may reduce the effectiveness of the Emergency Coordination Center and /or other county departments.
Wildfire	A large-scale incident, such as wildfire may result in damage to infrastructures as well as a surge of users of the local telecommunications infrastructure resulting in jammed cell and landline phone capability, high-speed internet bandwidth degradation, etc., which may reduce the effectiveness of the Emergency Coordination Center and /or other county departments.

1.4.3 Whole Community

Communication within the county makes considerations for the whole community by following provisions set forth in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other anti-discrimination laws and policies. As recipients of state and federal financial assistance, all partners in communication must comply with these acts. ESF #2 primary and supporting agency policy is committed to providing equal access in its programs, services, and activities for persons with disabilities. ADA compliance applies to all county platforms for communicating to and with the public, regions, divisions, services, public use facilities, pedestrian facilities, and programs regardless of the funding source.

1.4.3.2 Individuals with Disabilities, Access, and Functional Needs

If public instruction needs to be translated, the provision of interpreters will be coordinated by ESF #15 (See ESF #15 annex for details on Limited English Proficiency (LEP) planning).

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) broadcasts emergency messages over radio and television and can be broadcast in English and Spanish, depending on the language settings on the device being used.

1.5 Planning Assumptions

In addition to the planning assumptions listed in section 1.7.1 of the base plan, the ESF #2 annex is based on the following additional assumptions:

- A large-scale incident may result in a surge of users of the local telecommunications infrastructure resulting in jammed cell and landline phone capability, high-speed internet bandwidth degradation, etc., which may reduce the effectiveness of the Emergency Coordination Center and /or other county departments.
- Reliable communication capabilities are necessary at all levels of government for day-to-day communication, warning of impending disasters, disaster response and recovery operations, search and rescue operations, and coordination between the state, local governments, and response agencies. Local first responders have identified frequencies to be utilized for operation coordination, direction and control communications.
- Routine day-to-day modes of communication will be utilized to the degree that they survive the disaster.
- Amateur radio operators will be available in an emergency or disaster through Thurston County ARES/RACES and are equipped at the Thurston County ECC.
- Weather, damage to roads and bridges, and other factors will restrict entry of emergency communications nodes into the area.
- Communications assistance may also be provided by the state or federal government.
- Initial reports of damage will be fragmented and provide an incomplete picture of the extent of damage to telecommunication facilities.

2. Organization

2.1 ESF #2 Organizational Structure

During disaster operations requiring activation of the Emergency Coordination Center, ESF #2 may be organized under the ECC Logistics Section as the Communications Unit, coordinating with TCOMM, communications personnel of county offices and departments, communications personnel of on-scene incident organizations, and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), to support interoperable communications.

Depending on the nature of incident impact, ESF #2 staff may also be organized under the Infrastructure Branch of the Operations Section to coordinate support of communications infrastructure restoration with infrastructure owners and operators. Figure 1 shows the direction, control, and coordination relationships of ESF #2 with ECC command staff and supporting agencies.
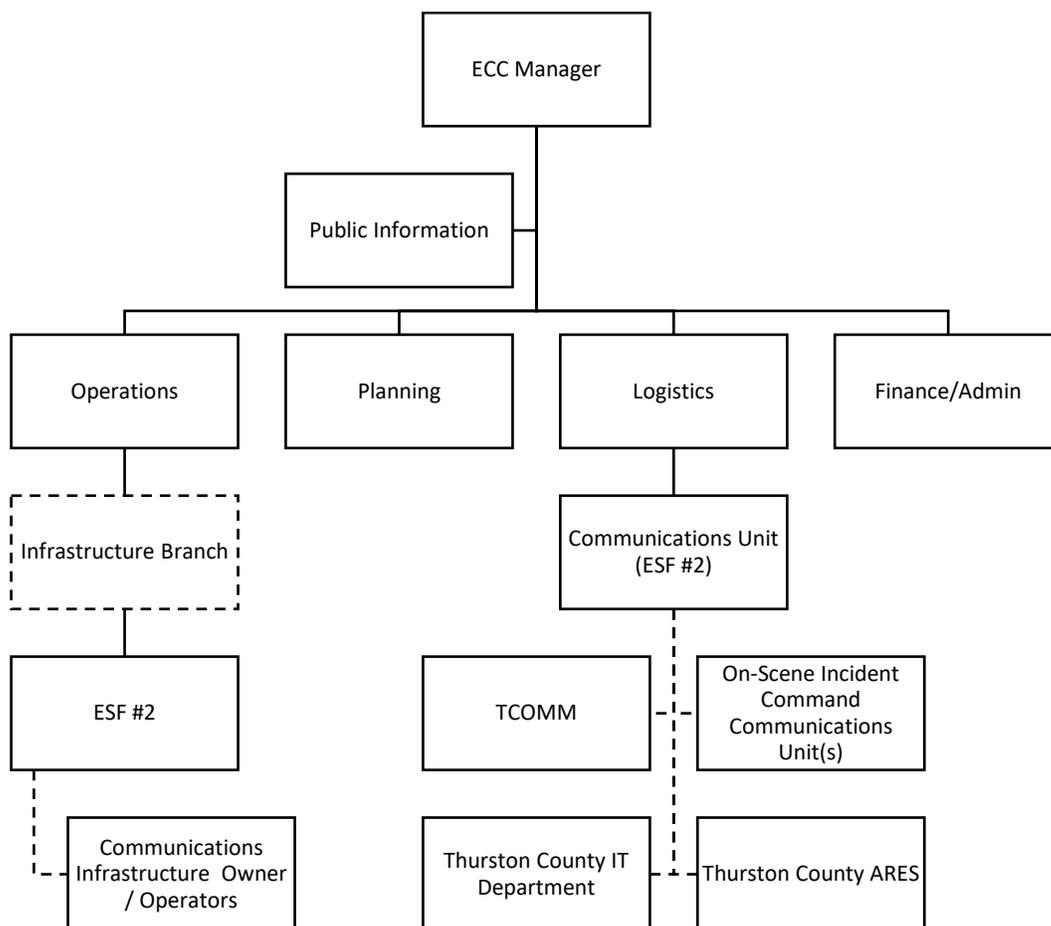
2.2 ESF #2 Agencies & Organizations

Local agencies that coordinate ESF #2 support are identified under one of two categories: primary or supporting. Definitions of each can be found under section 2.3.2 of the base plan.

Primary Agency/Agencies	
Thurston 911 Communications	Thurston County Emergency Management
Supporting Agencies		

Supporting Agencies		
Thurston County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)	Thurston County IT Department	Thurston County Sheriff's Office

3. Concept of Operations

3.1 General

Thurston 911 Communications (TCOMM) serves as Thurston County's 24-hour communication center to receive notifications of emergency or disasters and activate ESF #2. Communications during emergencies and disaster situations are carried out using the established communications systems used in day-to-day operations to the degree that they survive the disaster and continue to afford adequate communications within the county. Primary and backup methods for each key communication requirement are designated. Federal tools such as Government Emergency Telecommunication System (GETS) and Wireless Priority Service (WPS) will be utilized.

Once activated and fully operational, contingencies for emergency communications may be provided as necessary through the Communications Unit at the Thurston County Emergency Coordination Center (ECC), located at 9521 Tilley Road SW, Olympia, WA 98512. Contingencies for interoperable communications may include activation of ARES / RACES for emergency radio communications via amateur radio networks.

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) operates through local radio and cable TV stations and is intended to provide local officials with the means to disseminate prompt, reliable emergency information, instructions, and warnings in the event of an emergency or disaster.

- KAYO Radio, Olympia, 96.9 FM
- KXXO Radio, Olympia, 96.1 FM
- KAOS at The Evergreen State College, Olympia, 89.3 FM
- COMCAST, Olympia

Thurston Community Alert (TC Alert) is Thurston County's primary emergency notification system and houses the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, which includes the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and Non-Weather Emergency Messages (NWEM). The system can be activated by TCOMM911, Thurston County Emergency Management and select fire and law enforcement officials. If Thurston County is unable to

access their system, the Washington State Department of Emergency Management (WA DEM) or Mason County Emergency Management can send IPAWS messages on their behalf.

Release of alerts, warnings, and public information advisories are coordinated by ESF #15 (External Affairs) with communications systems and methods provided by ESF #2. Receipt and dissemination of warning information may use any or all the following methods:

3.1.1 The National Warning System (NAWAS)
NAWAS, established by the federal government, is the primary means of receiving and disseminating warning(s) to state and local officials within Washington State. The Washington State Warning Point is operated 24 hours a day by the Washington State Emergency Management Office, with operational assistance provided by the Washington State Patrol. Thurston County's NAWAS receiving point is TCOMM 911, a 24-hour facility.

3.1.2 The Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS)
IPAWS is FEMA's national system for local alerting that provides authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public through mobile phones using Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System (EAS), and on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Weather Radio.

3.1.3 Thurston Community Alert (TC Alert)
TC Alert is Thurston County's primary mass notification system for issuing alerts and warnings to citizens during times of emergency. Citizens can be notified via landline phone, cell phone, text, or email. TC Alert is also the system used by TCEM to issue WEA and EAS alerts and warnings through IPAWS.

3.1.4 Print, electronic, and Social Media (Meta, X, Instagram, etc.)
Print, electronic and social media platforms may be used to disseminate emergency information to the extent that these media platforms remain accessible during a disaster. ESF #15 (External Affairs) provides coordination for dissemination of emergency information to the media with support provided by ESF #2 as needed.

3.1.5 Door-to-door, megaphone, and siren
On-scene personnel and equipment can be organized to provide emergency notification, alerts, warnings, and instruction to the public where other communications platforms may not be operational and/or accessible to disaster impacted individuals. TCSO and other law enforcement agencies are the primary agencies for coordinating on-scene communications to the public unless another agency has been delegated incident command authority. Fire District and Law Enforcement apparatus can provide warnings along specific routes using public address systems and sirens, while volunteer resources can be mobilized to augment door-to-door notifications when safe to do so.

3.2 Activation of ESF-2

Activation of ESF #2 can be requested by TCOMM or the ECC Manager when a significant impact to the communications infrastructure is expected or has occurred.

When TCOMM has determined the need for communications capabilities beyond what can be provided using established systems, TCOMM may contact the ECC Manager and/or Duty-Officer for activation and staffing of ESF #2 to assist with establishing and maintaining interoperable communications and providing communications capabilities for public alert and warning. Alternatively, the ECC Manager may request TCOMM and ESF #2 supporting agencies activate and staff ESF #2 to support emergency communications between the ECC and other response agencies to meet operational needs.

Procedures for activation and staffing are as follows:

1. Request is made by TCOMM or the ECC Manager to activate ESF #2 based on incident impacts and operational communications needs.
2. ECC Logistics Section consults with TCOMM and ECC Manager to determine scope and scale of emergency communications support requirements.
3. ECC Logistics Section determines staffing needs based on support requirements and consults with ESF #2 supporting agencies to organize and staff ESF #2.
4. If Communications Unit is required as part of ESF #2 support, ECC Logistics Section consults with ECC Manager to appoint Communications Unit Leader (COML).
5. COML and other ESF #2 personnel report to the ECC for reception and integration with ECC staff and facilities.
6. COML reports to the ECC Logistics Section Chief for work assignment.
7. ECC Logistics Section notifies TCOMM once ESF #2 and/or the Communications Unit is operational.

3.3 Critical ESF-2 Response Tasks

To achieve effective disaster response, ESF #2 coordinates information and resources among primary and supporting agencies to support critical response tasks. The critical tasks identified below align with ESF #2's primary core capabilities and serve as a foundation to develop intermittent objectives during disaster response to re-establish or re-stabilize community lifelines.

#	Critical Task Description	Responsible Agencies
Public Information and Warning		
1	Inform all affected segments of society of critical lifesaving and life-sustaining information by all means necessary, including accessible tools, to expedite the delivery of emergency services and aid the public to take protective actions.	ECC PIO (EFS #15) TCEM TCOMM

2	Deliver credible and actionable messages to inform ongoing emergency services and the public about protective measures and other life-sustaining actions and facilitate the transition to recovery.	ECC PIO (EFS #15) TCEM TCOMM
3	Activate, operate, and maintain alert and warning systems (WEA, EAS, TC Alert) in support of ESF #15 public information and warning activities.	TCEM

Infrastructure Systems

4	Re-establish sufficient communications infrastructure, systems, and services within the affected areas to support ongoing emergency response operations, life sustainment activities, basic human needs, and transition to recovery.	TCOMM Communications providers.
5	Re-establish critical information networks, including cybersecurity information sharing networks, to inform situational awareness, enable incident response and support the resilience of key systems.	TCOMM Thurston County IT Communications providers
6	Coordinate clearance, removal and disposal of debris as required to support establishment / reestablishment of communications systems.	Thurston County Public Works (ESF #3)
7	Formalize partnerships with governmental and private sector cyber incident or emergency response teams to accept, triage, and collaboratively respond to cascading impacts in an efficient manner.	TCEM Thurston County IT

Operational Communications

8	Ensure redundant capability to communicate with both the emergency response community and the affected populations and establish interoperable voice and data communications between federal, tribal, state, and local first responders.	TCOMM TCEM TC ARES
9	Provide communications link between the ECC and local first responders.	TCOMM On-Scene Incident Command Agencies
10	Coordinate use of interoperable voice communications to including use of compatible frequencies as required during multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional response.	TCOMM On-Scene Incident Command Agencies
11	Establish interoperable voice and data communications with State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), neighboring jurisdiction EOCs and other agencies utilizing all means available.	TCEM
12	Provide amateur radio services and support to the ECC, responding agencies, and/or disaster impacted communities in the event of telecommunication failure to maintain redundant interoperable communications.	TC ARES

3.4 Supporting Activities

3.4.1 Prevention & Protection
ESF #2 ensures communication with the State Emergency Operations Center by participating in weekly CEMNET tests that ensure radio communications between the local and state ECC/EOC.

3.4.2 Mitigation
ESF #2 encourages and promotes mutual aid and cooperation between local jurisdictions and agencies. Additionally, ARES members, Search and Rescue volunteers and others registered with the county as emergency workers are encouraged to participate in a variety of community activities and training missions to test equipment, identify areas needing improvement and develop and evaluate operational procedures.

3.4.3 Recovery
ESF #2 works with communications providers, county departments and humanitarian agencies via TCOMM and TCEM to assist in recovery efforts.

3.4.4 Preparedness Activities
TCEM promotes sign up of TC Alert, the county's notification system at fairs, in flyers, and on electronic bulletin boards throughout the county.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Thurston 911 Communications (TCOMM) (Primary Agency)
TCOMM acts as the primary communications link between the ECC and local 911 response resources. TCOMM will relay emergency notification to county officials and responders in accordance with their communications protocol. In the event of telecommunications equipment failure, TCOMM has pre-identified resources available for redundancy and repair of equipment. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Developing and maintaining appropriate plans and procedures to ensure, to the extent practicable, the integrity of emergency communications systems.
- Developing and maintaining procedures to share disaster related information with the ECC when activated.
- Assisting with the dissemination of information and warnings as requested by the ECC manager.
- Participating in communications drills/exercises or other appropriate training with the ECC.
- Monitoring and testing the National Warning System (NAWAS) regularly.
- Maintaining Continuity of Operations Plan for Thurston 911 Communications

4.2 Thurston County Emergency Management (Primary Agency)
TCEM has overall responsibility for operation of the ECC to include organizing, equipping, training, and operating the ECC Logistics Section and Communications Unit. TCEM is also the

alert originator for public alerts and warnings through IPAWS for unincorporated Thurston County. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Activating alert and warning systems when necessary to effectively notify residents of emergencies or disasters.
- Conducting regular tests of alert and warning system; ensure proper training on system.
- Establishing and maintaining a secondary location for emergency coordination and radio communications.
- Identifying redundant warning capability.
- Maintaining communications with the state, neighboring jurisdictions and other agencies using CEMNET and amateur radio to maintain voice and digital communication with neighboring jurisdictions and the Washington State EOC.
- Providing notification to the public to include provisions for residents with Limited English Proficiency (Spanish, Vietnamese and Korean).
- Ensuring public information, advisories, and warnings are available in multiple formats and include provisions for residents with Limited English Proficiency as well as underserved populations and those with alternate communications needs as defined in the ESF #15 (External Affairs) Annex.
- Utilizing amateur radios both in the ECC and within the community in the event of telecommunications failure.
- Coordinating volunteers to assist with warning and outreach.
- Coordinating public information and instructions and media relations as defined the ESF #15 (External Affairs) Annex.
- Utilizing WebEOC to document incident response activities and significant events to maintain situational awareness.

4.3 Thurston County ARES/RACES

Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), administered by local emergency management agencies and supported by FEMA, is a part of the amateur radio service that provides radio communications for civil preparedness, during periods of local, regional, or national civil emergencies. Thurston County's RACES program is maintained by the Thurston County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (TCARES), a non-profit organization comprised of trained and licensed amateur radio operators. As a supporting agency to ESF #2 (Communications), TCARES coordinates with TCEM to operationalize amateur radio capabilities to support interoperable communications during emergencies. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Providing mobile radios and radio operators capable of operations and to establish a communications link between the ECC and other agencies.
- Relaying messages via radio communications when other standard communication methods fail.
- Providing redundant amateur radio communications system throughout the county.

- Setting up remote communications systems on short notice.
- Providing damage assessment and situation reports to the ECC from areas throughout the county.
- Serving as liaisons, as needed, to provide information to residents or other agencies.
- Maintaining and testing equipment to ensure it is in good working order.

4.4 Thurston County Central Services, Information Technology Department (Thurston County IT)

Thurston County IT has overall responsibility for Thurston County government's information technology and telecommunications systems across all county offices and departments. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Developing and maintaining appropriate plans and procedures to ensure the integrity of the county telephone system.
- Monitoring the status of the county's infrastructure during or following any disaster.
- Coordinating resources to respond to incidents that impact county communications infrastructure.

4.5 Thurston County Sheriff's Office

Thurston County Sheriff's Office is the primary agency for both ESF #9 (Search and Rescue) and ESF #13 (Public Safety, Security, and Law Enforcement), each with inherent responsibilities outlined in their responsive annexes. Responsibilities within the scope of ESF #2 include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinating with Emergency Management to develop and maintain procedures to provide communications and warning support services when requested from the ECC.
- Mobilizing Search and Rescue to assist with warning and outreach as necessary.
- Providing on-scene radio communications when other methods fail.

4.6 Telecommunications and Internet Service Providers

Telecommunications and internet service providers maintain direction and control of terrestrial, satellite, and wireless transmission systems under their ownership. Service providers maintain responsibility for stabilization, restoration, and continued operation of communications systems under their ownership during and after disasters.

Through coordination with ESF #2, telecommunications and internet service providers should develop and maintain plans to perform disaster assessments on systems and identify damages to infrastructure and other impacts to operation of public utility services, and report those impacts to the ECC through ESF #2, or the ECC Operations Section if ESF #2 is not activated. When disaster impacts have exhausted or exceeded a service providers capability to stabilize and restore their systems, requests for emergency assistance from county or other public agencies may be coordinated with the ECC through ESF #2.

When available resources permit, service providers may enter into agreements and/or contracts with TCEM and other county agencies to support ESF #2 requests for support to assist with countywide efforts to re-establish countywide operational communications.

Any emergency assistance, whether received or provided, shall be in accordance with Thurston County policies and procedures on mutual aid, disaster assistance, and emergency procurement outlined in chapters 7 – Logistics and Resource Management and 8 – Finance and Administration of the base plan.

Classified as critical infrastructure, telecommunications and internet service providers are responsible for incorporating critical infrastructure protection and long-term vulnerability reduction measures into their plans, policies, and procedures. Critical infrastructure owners and operators are encouraged to coordinate with TCEM and the Emergency Management Council (EMC) on countywide mitigation, protection, and preparedness activities.

5. Resource Requirements

5.1 Local Resource Inventory
Below are local resources that have been identified by ESF #2 coordinating, primary and supporting agencies that could potentially fulfill requests to provide ESF #2 capabilities in support of incident response and recovery.

Resource Typing Definition	Quantity	Organization Owner(s)
TC Alert – Alert & Notification	1	TCOMM TCEM
Internal Phone System	1	Thurston County Telecomm
Land Mobile Radio Support Team	1	Thurston County ARES/RACES
Portable Cell Sites	1	FirstNet
Communication Infrastructure	1	TCOMM
911 Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP)	1	TCOMM
National Warning System (NAWAS)	1	TCOMM
FEMA Mobile Emergency Radio Service	1	FEMA

The above list is used as a reference tool for planners and coordinators and does not establish any binding agreement for these agencies to provide the resources identified herein. See ESF #7 Annex (Logistics) and the Resource Management section of the base plan for the county's policies and procedures for mutual aid requests, resource management and disaster procurement.

5.2 Resource/Capability Gaps

Based on estimated hazard impacts and the current ESF #2 capabilities of local agencies, local planners have identified the following additional resources that may be needed during an incident to fully support ESF #2 critical response tasks.

Resource Typing Definition	Critical Task(s) Supported	Justification
Communications Technician (NIMS – Type 3 and 2)	4, 8, 9, 11	Depending on the size of an incident, additional communications technicians may be necessary to restore communications.

5.3 Mutual Aid

Both TCOMM and TCEM maintaining mutual aid agreements with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain backup emergency communications for PSAP and AWS.

5.4 State & Federal Aid

Telecommunications, information systems, and warning support requirements which cannot be met at the lowest level of authority, will be escalated by the Thurston County ECC to the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) for resolution. ESF #2 support from the State may include, but is not limited to:

- Coordinating with telecommunications and information technology industries.
- Coordinating the reestablishment and provision of critical communications infrastructure.
- Protecting, reestablishing, and sustaining of cyber and information technology resources.
- Overseeing communications within the State response structures.
- Facilitating the stabilization of systems and applications from cyber events.

5.4.1 Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) Assistance

Should TCOMM become inoperable, RCW 38.52.510(2) allows for Washington State Patrol to become the primary answering point for 911 for a geographical area.

5.4.2 Public Alert and Warning Assistance

Should TCEM's alert and warning system become inoperable, and mutual aid is unable to provide backup services, TCEM may contact the 24-hour State Alert & Warning Center (800-258-5990) for state assistance with emergency alert and warning.

6. Supporting Plans & Procedures

6.1 State & Regional

6.1.1 Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, Emergency Support Function #2 (Communications) Annex

Provides guidance for rapid alerting and warning to key state and local jurisdictions officials and the public of an impending or occurring natural or technological emergency or disaster. The annex also provides guidance for organizing, establishing, and maintaining the telecommunications and information system capabilities necessary to meet the operational requirements of state and local jurisdictions in responding to, and recovering from, emergencies and disasters.

6.1.2 Washington Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (WA IPAWS)

Provides the framework for statewide use of the federal Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) by state, local, and tribal alert originators in collaborating with local broadcasters, wireless carriers, and the National Weather Service.

6.2 Local

6.2.1 Thurston / Mason IPAWS Plan

A part of the state's WA IPAWS plan, the Thurston / Mason plan provides direction for alert originators in the Thurston / Mason area and identifies resources within the counties.

6.3 References

Washington State Military Department – Emergency Management Division. 2019 Emergency Support Function #2, Communications annex. Camp Murray, WA.

Washington State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC) – 2023 WA IPAWS Plan. Camp Murray, WA.

RCW 38.52.510(2) Statewide 911 communications systems—Funding by counties - State Patrol public safety answering point.

7. Terms and Definitions

Emergency Alert System (EAS) – National public warning system that requires radio and TV broadcasters, cable TV, wireless cable systems, satellite, and wireline operators to provide federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial authorities the capability to address the American people within 10 minutes during an emergency.

Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) – FEMA's national system for local alerting that provides authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public through mobile phones using Wireless Emergency Alerts, to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System, and on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Radio.

Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) – A call center that handles emergency calls and dispatches the appropriate emergency services.

Thurston 911 Communications (TCOMM911) – The answering point and dispatch center for all law enforcement (except the Washington State Patrol), fire service, and Medic One in Thurston County.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) – Short emergency messages from authorized federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial public alerting authorities that can be broadcast from cell towers to any WEA-enabled mobile device in a locally targeted area. Wireless providers primarily use cell broadcast technology for WEA message delivery. WEA is a partnership among FEMA, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and wireless providers to enhance public safety.

8. Attachments
Attachment 1 - Thurston / Mason IPAWS Plan **TLP:GREEN**

Mason County / Thurston County Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Plan

for the

Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC)

August 2024

Mason County Division of Emergency Management	**Thurston County Emergency Management**
100 W. Public Works Dr. Shelton, WA 98584	9521 Tilley Rd. SW Olympia, WA 98512
Phone: 360-427-7535 | Fax: 360-427-7756 Email: MCDEM@co.mason.wa.us www.co.mason.wa.us/dem	Phone: 360-867-2800 | Fax: 360-867-2811 Email: emwebmaster@co.thurston.wa.us www.thurstoncountywa.gov/em

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PREFACE

This Mason / Thurston IPAWS Plan replaces the previous Thurston / Mason EAS Plan. The plan has expanded its scope to include the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS).

IPAWS is FEMA's national system for local alerting that provides authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public through radio and television broadcast via the Emergency Alert System (EAS); by text or cellular contact via Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs); and through Non-Weather Emergency Alerts broadcast through NOAA weather radios.

IPAWS provides the capability to deliver timely, geographically targeted messages during emergencies to notify the public of impending natural and human-made disasters.

The Washington State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC) is responsible for administrating the EAS on the state level. The SECC has divided Washington State into several operational areas. Each operational area is administrated by a Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC), which is responsible for setting policies that govern the local use of IPAWS. The LECCs are also responsible for designing and writing a local plan which will become part of the Washington State WA PAWS Plan.

INTEGRATED PUBLIC ALERT & WARNING SYSTEM (IPAWS)

IPAWS is designed to help create and distributer local emergency notifications to your community through all available alert and warning channels. Communication is able to be disseminated through government emergency notification systems, including EAS, WEA and NOAA radio.

The Emergency Alert System (EAS)

The Emergency Alert System is a national alerting system composed of broadcast networks; cable networks and program suppliers; AM, FM, and TV broadcast stations; low power television (LPTV) stations; cable systems; and other entities and industries operating on an organized basis during emergencies at the national, state, and local levels. It requires that at a minimum all participants use a common EAS protocol to send and receive emergency alerts.

EAS protocol allows the encoding of emergency messages using event codes for various types of emergencies. The encoding occurs in EAS message originating systems. Three basic pieces of information from an alert originator must be programmed for an EAS alert. First is the Event Code, which defines the type of alert message being sent. The FCC has defined numerous event codes for use by the EAS. Second is the Location Code, which defines the geographic area affected by the emergency. Third is the Event Duration Code, which defines how long the alert is expected to be in effect.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires broadcasters and subject cable operators to have EAS encode/decode devices at their facilities to receive and forward national EAS messages and required weekly and monthly tests. These same devices may be used, at the broadcaster's or cable operator's discretion, for local emergencies. All local EAS

activity is subject to the authority of the LECC and the guidelines presented in this local area plan.

The EAS is designed to work without the need for personal contact with anyone at broadcast stations or cable facilities. Activating entities issuing emergency messages should assume that no one is at the broadcast or cable facilities and must formulate and transmit complete emergency messages. Broadcasters and cable operators simply forward the local emergency information they receive (if they choose to participate at the local level).

CAUTION STATEMENT

A word of caution: The Emergency Management/Services community has acquired a valuable tool in gaining direct access to all area broadcasters and subject cable operators via the EAS. However, **if not used prudently, you put yourself** in **danger of losing this tool. Broadcasters and cable operators are expecting the EAS to be used only for very serious emergencies.** Keep in mind two things. First, some broadcasters and cable operators have their EAS decoders set on Automatic Mode. There is no one there to screen your message and decide if it should be aired. They are depending on you to send an EAS Alert **only for a very serious emergency.** The first time you trigger the system for a frivolous event, you will **lose** the confidence of your area broadcasters and cable operators. The second thing to remember is that broadcasters and cable operators participate in the local-level EAS on a **voluntary** basis. No one can force them to carry your EAS Alerts. Maintain a good relationship with your local broadcasters and cable operators, and they will come through for you in a crisis.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs) are short emergency messages from authorized federal, state, local, tribal and territorial public alerting authorities that can be broadcast from cell towers to any WEA-enabled mobile device in a locally targeted area. WEAs are sent to your mobile to warn of impending natural or human-made disaster without the need to download an app or subscribe to a service.

Non-Weather Emergency Alerts (via NOAA Radio)

NOAA Weather Radio is nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting weather information from the National Weather Service office. Through IPAWS, Non-Weather Emergency Messages (NWEMs) can be broadcast over NOAA weather radios.

LECC MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

The functions of an LECC are not a one-person job. It is vital that tasks and responsibilities be spread among the members. This assures ownership of the processes by all participants,

and that no one individual should find that working with and for the committee becomes a burden.

Ideally the LECC should have a Chair and a Vice-Chair. These officers are responsible for conducting meetings and are the primary contact persons for the committee.   The LECC Chair is automatically a member of the SECC.

As the role of an LECC continues to expand to include diverse modes of notification, it is recommended that the LECC evaluate the communication's effectiveness and assure that best practices are followed.

The goal is to have all stakeholders work to develop and maintain a local area Integrated Public Alert and Warning Plan. The plan and appendices should spell out in detail:
- When public alert and warning systems should be used and how to use them. For instance, EAS (Legacy and CAP), IPAWS, WEA, Rave, AlertSense, automatic telephone messaging, emails, mobile apps, etc.
- Include Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations as alert and warning procedures are developed and implemented.

LECC MEETINGS

The LECC meetings will take place at regular intervals with locations mutually agreeable to stakeholders. Where geography is an issue, meetings may be conducted via electronic means. For information on the date, time, and location, contact the LECC chairperson or the Emergency Management offices of Mason or Thurston County.
LECC meetings are open to all interested parties and are not restricted to committee members.

Plan Distribution List

Mason / Thurston Counties Agencies			
Plan Agency	**Staff Title**	**Plan Agency**	**Staff Title**
WA EMD Planning Section	PSC	KXXO (Mixx 96.1)	Director
WA EMD Response Section	OSC	KYYO (96.1 KAYO Country)	Director
WA ARES RACES	Radio Officer	KYYO (95.3 Olympia's KGY)	Director
WSDOT	Office Manager	KRXY Radio (94.5 Roxy)	Director
JBLM	EM Director	KMAS (1030 AM, 103.3 FM)	Director
		KAOS (89.3 Chaos Community Radio)	Director
Grays Harbor EM	Director	City of Shelton	EM Liaison
Lewis County EM	Director	City of Lacey	EM Liaison
Pierce County EM	Director	City of Olympia	EM Liaison
Kitsap County EM	Director	City of Rainier	EM Liaison
		City of Tenino	EM Liaison
Skokomish Tribe	Chief	City of Tumwater	EM Liaison
Squaxin Island Tribe	Chief	City of Yelm	EM Liaison
Chehalis Tribe	EM Director	Town of Bucoda	EM Liaison
Nisqually Tribe	EM Director		

Mason County Specific Agencies		Thurston County Specific Agencies	
Plan Agency	**Staff Title**	**Plan Agency**	**Staff Title**
Mason Co. BoCC	Clerk of the Board	Thurston Co. BoCC	Clerk of the Board
Mason Co. DEM	Manager	Thurston Co. EM	Manager
Mason Co. Public Works	Director	Thurston Co. Public Works	Director
MACECOM 911	Director	TCOMM 911	Director
Mason Co. Fire Chiefs	Chair	**Thurston Co. Fire Chiefs**	Chair
Mason County Law Enforcement		**Thurston County Law Enforcement**	
Mason Co. Sheriff's Office	Sheriff	Thurston Co. Sheriff's Office	
Shelton Police Dept.	Chief	Olympia PD	
WA State Patrol – Shelton	Sergeant	Lacey PD	
		Tumwater PD	
		WA State Patrol - Olympia	
Mason Co. Comm Unit	Radio Officer	Thurston Co. Comm Unit	ARES Unit Leader
Olympic College	Dean	The Evergreen State College	Dean
Sinclair CC	Dean	South Puget Sound CC	Dean
		St. Martin University	Dean
Mason General Hospital	Director		
		Providence St. Peter Hospital	Director
		Capital Medical Center	Director

RECORD OF CHANGES

NOTICE TO PLAN HOLDERS: In order to maintain a current Mason County/Thurston County IPAWS Basic Plan, The LECC will issue changes periodically. **Please make those changes upon receipt.** and record them on this page. If a previous change number shows no entry, you may not have an up-to-date version of the plan. Mason County and Thurston County Emergency Management Annexes will be updated as needed by date.

Change Number	Date Made	Location/Page(s) Changed	Initials
01	6/17/19	Updated plan. County specific and LRN information now in separate annexes. Kept operational information in basic plan. Created a Toolkit as annex to the plan. Minor wordsmithing throughout the document.	RM/TW
02	9/23/20	Created Appendix C and updated Appendix A. Made minor changes to sections related to Required Monthly Tests and Training and Testing.	JP
03	12/14/20	Made minor edits related to plan changes. Re-viewed entire document prior to submission to WEMD	JP
04	5/18/23	Rewrite of entire plan to include aspects of IPAWS. Update format and annex information.	SK/NK/JP
05	10/23/23	LECC Approval of Plan	SK/NK/JP
06			
07			
08			
09			
10			

APPROVAL AND CONCURRENCES

Manager, Mason County Emergency Management

John Taylor	Date

Manager, Thurston County Emergency Management

Kyle Bustad	Date

Chair, Local Emergency Communication Committee (LECC)

Sonya Kroese	Date

INTRODUCTION

This plan contains policy (Basic Plan) and procedures (Appendices) for emergency officials and local broadcasters to activate IPAWS and transmit emergency information to the public during a local emergency. All local IPAWS activity is subject to the authority of the Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC) and the guidelines presented in this plan. The LECC plan is an active document and should be kept current.

The goals of the LECC are to routinely discuss and revise policies and procedures governing the use of public alert and warning systems, and to evaluate the overall use of emergency communications in the community.

Typically, LECCs include representatives from participating counties and, where applicable, city and tribal governments, emergency management, law enforcement, and 911 centers (Public Safety Answering Points or PSAPs). It is also beneficial for LECCs to include technical and management representatives from radio and TV broadcast stations, cable systems, landline telephone companies, wireless carriers, etc. Other entities and organizations such as amateur radio groups, industrial facilities, and disaster relief organizations can also be valuable resources for an LECC.

Purpose

To provide government officials with guidance to issue emergency warning information to the public through local broadcast and cable networks, as well as email, text and telephone.

Scope

This plan covers the dissemination of emergency information and warnings to the public in Mason County and Thurston County. The plan may be activated on a 24-hour-a-day basis in response to local emergencies/disasters using an alerting system. The plan contains procedures for government officials and local broadcasters to transmit emergency information to the public using the IPAWS and the Local Relay Network (LRN). This plan will be reviewed and updated as needed.

POLICIES

Authorization

This plan is written in accordance with Title 47 U.S.C. 151, 154 (i) and (o), 303 (r), 524 (g) and 606; and 47 C.F.R. Part 11, FCC Rules and Regulations, Emergency Alert System (EAS).

Administering the Local Mason / Thurston IPAWS Plan

The LECC (Local Emergency Communications Committee) for the Mason County/Thurston County operational area shall be responsible for approving and administering the local plan and outlining the activation authorities contained herein.

The goal of the Mason/Thurston LECC is to have representative from each of the following entities:

Mason County Division of Emergency Management
Thurston County Emergency Management
Mason County Communications (MACECOM)
Thurston 911 Communications (TCOMM)
Radio Station KXXO (Mixx 96.1)
Radio Station KYYO (96.9 KAYO – Country)
Radio Station KYYO (95.3 Olympia's KGY)
Radio Station KRXY (94.5 Roxy)
Radio Station KMAS (1030 AM, 103.3 FM)
Radio Station KAOS (89.3 Chaos Community Radio)
Mason County Sheriff's Office
Thurston County Sheriff's Office
Local AMBER Review Committee (LARC)
Washington State Patrol (WSP)
Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
Tribal Representatives
Area ARES/RACES Groups

Additional at large representation may be made from the following entities, if deemed necessary and interest in serving on the committee is indicated:

Mason County Fire Chiefs
Thurston County Fire Chiefs
Thurston County Emergency Management Council (EMC)

Primary Authority

Mason County or Thurston County Emergency Management shall be the primary authority for requesting EAS activations to alert and warn residents of life-threatening emergencies. AMBER Alert activations shall be the responsibility of the local law enforcement agencies. All other IPAWS activations shall be the responsibility of the approved local agency issuing the warning.

Secondary Authority

Only those agencies and personnel in designated positions shall be authorized to request EAS and AMBER activations. Agency authorization information shall be submitted to the LECC. (SEE: Annexes for listing of authorized agencies).

Testing of the IPAWS

All IPAWS testing shall be conducted according to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules and in accordance with the Washington State WA PAWS Plan.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

General

There is no single effective method to alert and warn Mason and Thurston County residents to imminent danger. IPAWS is one method or tool to be used, in cooperation with local broadcasters, to accomplish effective public warning.

Examples of incidents that may require warning and the use of the EAS include, but are not limited to:

- Volcano
- Severe weather
- Flood

- Hazardous materials release
- Earthquake
- Tsunami

Other hazards as identified in the local and state Hazard Identification and Vulnerability Analysis (HIVA) and Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) may warrant the use of the EAS.

Planning Assumptions

Implementation of the EAS will be in response to an event that is occurring or will occur within a short period of time, making conventional methods of warning and media notification inadequate.

Lives may be in jeopardy or major property damage unless immediate precautions or actions are taken.

LRN, EAS encoder/decoder, web-based EAS, and radio repeater systems are functional.

Other methods of warning will be used in addition to EAS.

EAS will be more effective if the public is properly equipped with radios, television, and self-alerting battery powered backup National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radios.

Radio, television, and cable providers will broadcast EAS messages in a timely manner.

EAS is a voluntary system and is not 100% reliable. Limitations include the functionality of the radio system infrastructure, the use of radio and television by the intended recipients of the message, and the timely broadcast of messages by the radio, television, and cable providers.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

General

The State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC) has divided Washington State into several Local Areas. Each Local Area is administered by a Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC). The LECCs are responsible for designing and writing a Local Area Plan that is part of the Washington State EAS Plan.

The EAS operates through coordinated participation on the part of the radio and television stations, as well as cable television companies. Authorized federal, state, and local authorities, may activate the EAS to warn the public of potential life-threatening events.

EAS broadcast is designed to work independent of human intervention. Activating entities issuing

emergency messages should assume that no one is at the broadcast or cable facilities. It is critical that the activating entities formulate and transmit complete emergency messages. Broadcast and cable operations will simply forward the local emergency information they receive (if they choose to participate at the local level).

Request for Activation

Requests to activate IPAWS should come from the highest available authority for the affected jurisdiction. The event must be such that a potentially life-threatening situation is occurring or is imminent and large segments of the population are at risk. IPAWS shall only be activated when the time limitations or severity of an incident prohibit information distribution to the media by normal channels
Request will be made to MACECOM or TCOMM who will then contact Emergency Management to request IPAWS activation.

If Emergency Management is not immediately available, the local IPAWS activation authority may directly request the activation through MACECOM or TCOMM.

If the local alerting system is inoperable, the request may be directly sent to the State Division of Emergency Management for dissemination.

It is the responsibility of Mason County or Thurston County Emergency Management, or the requesting entity, to confirm the incident with a reliable source such as the dispatch center or Incident Commander. (Broadcast stations will automatically air all EAS messages and may have no mechanism to confirm or edit information.) It is critical that the entity requesting the alert authenticate the information prior to transmission to broadcasters.

Notification to Affected Agencies

Whenever possible, notification to affected jurisdictions, government officials, and PIOs will occur simultaneously with the sending of the EAS message. There will be times when warning the public is time critical and the EAS message will be sent before other notifications are made.

A request for State EMD to notify other counties to advise of the activation of EAS may be necessary. The method of notification may include but is not limited to telephones, radios, computers, ACCESS, and the National Warning System (NAWAS).

The activation of EAS for any purpose will generate calls from the public, government officials, and the media. Whenever possible, affected jurisdictions should be contacted at the same time the EAS message is being generated.

Local Authorization

This plan shall be in force and operational when signed by the appropriate county government officials, county emergency management director, the chairperson of the LECC, and the chairperson of the SECC.

After Action Review

The Chairman of the LECC will determine the need to meet after local EAS activations. During those meetings the LECC will review this local plan and its effectiveness and to make sure all participants are satisfied with their participation.

Changes to the EAS Plan

All proposed changes to the EAS Basic plan shall be submitted in writing to Mason County Division of Emergency Management (DEM) / Thurston County Emergency Management (TCEM), who shall bring such proposed changes to the LECC for review.

Changes to this basic plan may be suggested at any time and will be considered at the regular meeting of the Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC) unless circumstances require a special meeting at an earlier date. The LECC shall be responsible for evaluating all proposed changes to this basic plan and shall by a majority vote accept or decline proposed changes.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Washington State Emergency Management Division (EMD)

- Coordinate IPAWS activation should an incident affect more than one Operational Area of the WA PAWS plan. In cases where multiple jurisdictions are affected, one EAS message should be sent that provides guidance to all populations affected by the incident.
- Assist Mason/Thurston Counties with EAS and AMBER Alert notifications when the Local Relay System (LRN) is inoperative.
- In the event either Mason or Thurston County is unable to originate a scheduled RMT, the affected agency will contact their partner agency to originate the RMT on their behalf. The agency should specify the necessary language (e.g. English, Spanish, etc.) the exact wording of the message.
- Provide a technical support liaison as necessary for the Mason/Thurston County EAS programs. In the event that neither Mason or Thurston is able to originate a scheduled RMT, the affected agency will contact the Washington State Emergency Operations Center (1-800-258-5990) at least 3 business days in advance and specify the necessary language (e.g. English, Spanish, etc.) the exact wording of the message, and FIPS codes needed to originate the RMT on the agency's behalf.

National Weather Service (NWS)

- Activate the EAS for weather related incidents, including increased landslide potential, affecting multiple jurisdictions.
- Maintain an active 24-hour EAS monitoring network.
- At the request of Mason County/ Thurston County, re-broadcast local EAS alerts over NOAA Weather Radio.

The Emergency Management Agencies of Mason and Thurston Counties

- Maintain primary responsibility for initiating the EAS activation request for incidents occurring within Mason or Thurston Counties.
- Coordinate the maintenance of EAS equipment so that it can be activated 24- hours a day.

- Designate personnel who will send EAS messages.
- Develop and conduct training for communications personnel on EAS operating procedures.
- Ensure regular testing of the EAS system and equipment on a regular basis.
- Maintain a position on the LECC and provide oversight of the committee business records.
- Provide feedback to the LECC on EAS concerns, testing process, and actual activations.
- Actively participate in the local EAS testing process.

Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC)

- Approve the local Mason / Thurston IPAWS Plan for Mason and Thurston Counties.
- Address issues involving EAS within Mason and Thurston Counties.
- Approve and deny requests for changes to the local Mason / Thurston IPAWS Plan.
- Help ensure the Local Relay Networks (LRN) are functioning properly and all authorized participants are informed of EAS protocol.
- Conduct at least one (I) annual meeting for a program review.

E-911 Communications Mason County Communications (MACECOM) or Thurston 911 Communications (TCOMM)

- Maintain EAS equipment so that it can be activated 24-hours a day.
- Ensure proper training of personnel on the policies and procedures governing the EAS.
- Actively participate in the local EAS testing process.
- Ensure proper testing of the equipment on a regular basis.
- Follow established EAS protocol when sending EAS alerts.
- Complete EAS follow-up notification procedures.
- Document and file all EAS tests and alerts
- Provide feedback to the Mason County DEM / Thurston County Emergency Management on EAS concerns.

EAS Authorizing Entities

- Ensure proper training of the civil authorities responsible for requesting EAS alerts on the policies and procedures governing the EAS.
- Actively participate in the local EAS testing process and provide feedback to Mason County DEM / Thurston County Emergency Management on EAS concerns.
- Follow established EAS protocol when requesting EAS alerts
- Complete EAS follow-up notification procedures.

Broadcasters

- Forward the EAS message to the public through the broadcast network.
- Relay the Required Monthly Test (RMT) (primary stations KXXO and KYYO).
- Train staff on EAS.
- Monitor the LRNs for EAS activations

TRAINING & TESTING

Training

The Mason/Thurston LECC will suggest training plans that include detailed instructions for use of local alerting systems at applicable agencies.

Training of all Duty Officers and designees authorized to issue EAS messages is critical to the success of the EAS system. Training should also include familiarity with event codes, their application to various emergencies, and the guidelines for preparing voice messages. This training will be useful in understanding alerts originated by other agencies and relayed via the Local Relay Networks (LRN).

It is the responsibility of the managers of broadcast stations, cable systems, and activating entities to assure that all pertinent personnel in their organizations are properly trained to operate all relevant aspects of the EAS system that applies to their situation.

Testing

Testing is an important aspect of EAS and required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). EAS testing will be conducted according to FCC rules. Testing will ensure that the activation system is operational, and will help to pinpoint and correct any hardware, software, and/or operational problems.

The Emergency Management offices of Mason and Thurston Counties, as well as MACECOMM and TCOMM will conduct all tests in accordance with the WA State EAS Plan.

Required Monthly/Weekly EAS Tests

FCC rules specify that broadcasters and cable systems must run a Required Monthly Test (RMT) once each month, and that during the weeks when an RMT does not run, a Required Weekly Test (RWT) must run. There are some exceptions to this which are detailed in the FCC Rules and Regulations, Part 11.61 (a)(6). The RWT is originated at each broadcast/cable facility and is scheduled randomly by that facility. The RMT is a coordinated test that contains all the elements of an actual EAS alert (header codes, two-tone alert, voice message, end-of-message codes). It originates from different locations each month based on guidelines established by the SECC and runs on dates and at times determined by the EAS Test Coordinator under the guidance of the SECC.

In those months when the RMT is scheduled to originate from the Local Operational Areas via the local alerting systems, it will be originated by one of the activating entities in this local area. The SECC will assign activating entities to originate the RMT during the months when the test will be originated in the local operational area.

Note that the days and times of the RMTs are determined by the SECC. They also determine which entity will originate the RMT during the months it is to be originated locally.

If an activating entity is unable to perform the RMT, State EMD will be notified and run the test as scheduled. When sending an RMT, the following settings should be used:

Event code: Location codes(s): Duration: RMT
[ONLY counties in the local operational area!] 3 hours

The voice message will consist of the following script:

"This is a test of the Emergency Alert System. In the event of an emergency, this system would bring you important information. This test is now concluded."

The RMT script can be read in nine to ten seconds. All other elements of the RMT (the header codes, attention signal and end of message codes) take from 19 to 21 seconds to complete, depending on the number of location codes contained in the header. The goal of writing this short test script was to keep the entire test to 30 seconds. Originators should make every attempt to complete this test within 30 seconds. Pre-recording the script at the length needed to achieve this is highly recommended.

Required Monthly IPAWS Proficiency Test

IPAWS Alerting Authorities are required to perform Monthly Proficiency Demonstrations (MPDs) using the IPAWS Technical Support Services environment to maintain IPAWS access. This requirement can become routine and boring. Therefore, IPAWS introduces Scenario-Based MPDs that are pre-developed short scenarios to make your proficiency demonstration experience more interesting and useful.

EAS DEFINITIONS & ACRONYMS

The following definitions apply to IPAWS terms that have been used in the development of this local area plan. For a more comprehensive list of terms, see the Washington State WA PAWS Plan, FCC Rules and Regulations, Part II, FEMA Publication CPG 1-40, or other EAS-related publications. (Washington State WA PAWS Plan TAB #7)

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Activation	The initiation of the EAS by transmission of an EAS message or codes.
Activating Entity	An Emergency Management ruling entity that activates the local EAS.
AMBER	America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response.
ASCII Code	A standard set of text characters with numerical equivalents as defined by the American Standard Code for Information Interchange.
Attention Signal	Eight to twenty-five seconds of two tones (835 Hz and 960 Hz) used as an audio alert.
CIV	Originator code for civil authorities for EAS activation.
DEM	Division of Emergency Management {Mason County)
Emergency Alert System (EAS)	An EAS activation in an actual emergency.
Emergency Alert System (EAS) Decoder	A device, which monitors sources and decodes incoming EAS messages. A decoder accepts digital bursts and translates them into an audio and/or printed message.
Emergency Alert System (EAS) Encoder	A device used by EAS participants to originate EAS alerts by creating the EAS codes for transmission to other participants and the public. The encoder generates messages that may be preset for quick release to other participants and the public.
EAS Test	EAS activation for testing purposes.
EM	Emergency Management (Thurston County)
Emergency Alert System (EAS)	The national alerting system composed of broadcast networks; cable networks and program suppliers; AM, FM, and TV broadcast stations; low power televisions (LPTV) stations; cable systems; and other entities and industries operating in an organized basis during emergencies at the national, state, or local levels. It requires that at a minimum all participants use a common EAS protocol, as defined in FCC Rules Part 11.31, to send and receive emergency alerts.
End of Message Code	ASCII data string that signifies the end of an EAS message_
Event Code	A three-character ASCIJ code in the EAS header that denotes the type of event for which an EAS test or alert is issued.
Federal Communications Commission (FCC)	One of three federal agencies that participate in EAS.
Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS)	A five-digit code which uniquely identifies county boundaries based on a combination of broadcast signal coverage and coverage offered by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio System.

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Header Codes	A single string of intelligent ASCII data that includes the originator, event, location, time period, and other basic information concerning an EAS test or alert.
IPAWS	Integrated Public Alert and Warning System – The Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) is FEMA's national system for local alerting that provides authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public through mobile phones using Wireless Emergency Alerts, to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System, and on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Radio.
L-Code	The portion of the EAS header code which describes the targeted geographic area for the EAS message.
Local Emergency Communications Committee (LECC)	A committee made up of representatives from broadcast radio and television stations, cable systems, county/city government and emergency management. It is a subcommittee of the Washington State Emergency Communications Committee and is responsible for approving and administering a local plan.
Local Area Plan	The plan developed by a committee in each local operational area that outlines the IPAWS system and procedures for that area. The local area plan for the appropriate operational area is included in the state plan.
Local Operational Area	An operational subdivision of the state.
Location Code	A six-digit ASCII code in the EAS header that specifies the location of an emergency utilizing the five-character FTPS code of a state and county. A sixth character breaks down each county into nine different areas so that a portion of a county can be defined using a single six-digit number. The location code for all of Mason County is 053. The location code for all of Thurston County is 153.
Local Primary (LP)	Local Primary. One or more broadcast stations in each local area has been designated as a local primary station. The LP is the primary source of EAS programming for the local area. A local area may have more than one LP, in which case the stations are designated LP-1, LP-2, etc.
Low Power Television (LPTV)	Low-power television station.
Local Relay Network (LRN)	A radio or other communications system used to distribute sources of local operational area EAS information to broadcast stations and cable systems in the local area.
National Alert	EAS alert of national origin.
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. One of three federal agencies that participate in EAS.

TERM	DESCRIPTION
NOAA Weather Radio (NWR)	A service of the National Weather Service that provides continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information and any weather-related emergency warnings to a local area. NWR uses seven VHF radio frequencies.
National Warning System (NAWAS)	An automated telephone system used to convey warnings to United States-based federal, state and local governments, as well as the military and civilian population.
National Weather Service (NWS)	National Weather Service. NWS is an operation of NOAA that is directly responsible for issuing local weather-related emergency alerts and warnings in addition to day-to-day forecasts and other weather activities.
Originator	The entity that originates an EAS alert.
Originator Code	A three-character ASCII code in the EAS header that identifies the entity that originates an EAS test or alert.
Participating National (PN)	Broadcast stations and cable systems that deliver all levels of EAS to the public, including local information.
Protocol	A standard set of guidelines by which digital information is encoded and decoded, including the common code structure, the character set used, the sequence and timing of codes, and modulation technique used for radio transmission.
Required Monthly Test (RMT)	A coordinated monthly test of EAS operations involving the full receiving and transmission of EAS codes, attention signal, EAS test programming, and EAS end-of-message codes.
Required Weekly Test (RWT)	An independent weekly test of EAS equipment only involving the decodin11 and encodin11 of EAS header codes and end-of-messa11e codes.
State Relay Network (SRN)	A system of facilities used to distribute state EAS activations and programming across the state.
State EAS Plan	A document that outlines the organization and implementation of EAS in Washington State. It includes monitoring assignments, actions to be taken in emergency activations, and other guidelines for broadcasters and cable personnel using the EAS in Washington State.
State Emergency Communications Committee (SECC)	The state committee that administers the EAS plan at the state level.

ANNEXES

Mason County LECC Annex
Thurston County LECC Annex

APPENDICIES

Appendix A – Mason Thurston LECC Committee Contacts
Appendix B – EAS Authorized Users
Appendix C – EAS Monitoring Assignments
Appendix D – EAS Activation Process
Appendix E – EAS Messaging
Appendix F – WA State Procedures
Appendix G – Radio Station Contact List
Appendix H – School District Contact List
Appendix I – Local Relay Network