



County of Orange and Orange County Operational Area Countywide Public Mass Notification System Operating Guidelines

Effective: June 30, 2008

Revised: October 15, 2024

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of these Operating Guidelines is to describe the use and administration of AlertOC, the Orange County Public Mass Notification System ("System") by the County of Orange ("County"), County agencies and departments ("Agencies"), and local jurisdictions authorized by the County Board of Supervisors ("Jurisdictions"). This document will provide roles and responsibilities at the regional level. Individual Jurisdictions/Agencies should create and maintain subordinate procedures which incorporate the regional concepts outlined below. The step-by step procedures for activation and use will be maintained in a separate document maintained by each jurisdiction/agency as a part of their emergency response plans for overall planning and response efforts. A copy of these guidelines shall be maintained in PrepareOC.

This document does not supersede any policy and procedures outlined in the Memorandum of Understandings signed by participating agencies, but should be used to support the use of the System.

Authorized users must respect the integrity of the System, understand the regulatory and privacy issues, and fully comply with the guidelines outlined in this document.

II. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

The primary intent of the System is to disseminate early warning and time sensitive information to County businesses and community members during an emergency event. The System is only one component of the County of Orange public warning system. As deemed fit by local authorities, the System should be used in conjunction with the other public warning mechanisms including, but not limited to: route alerting, the Emergency Alert System, outdoor warning systems, and press releases.

The System is available 24/7 and has been pre-loaded with Orange County landline phone numbers (including unlisted) and countywide geographic maps. Additionally, community members have the option to provide additional contact information via self-registration portal AlertOC.gov with link access from county and all participating entity websites. The System will be used to send messages, describing the situation, impacted area, and recommended action the public should take, to affected businesses and community members via telephone, e-mail, and/or text.

The County is the sponsor of the System and will take appropriate measures to ensure that the System is in a state of operational readiness at all times. It is the responsibility of all participating Agencies to maximize community member benefits from the System.

While the County's intent for implementing and maintaining the System is for "emergency" use, upon consent from local authorities, cities may optionally use the System to disseminate "government-related" non-emergency notifications to community members and organization resources within its jurisdiction.



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III. OVERVIEW OF GENERAL SYSTEM FEATURES

At minimum, the Orange County Sheriff's Department Emergency Management Division shall acquire and maintain a System capable of meeting the following requirements:

- A. Licensed for use throughout the County's entire region
- B. Capable of sending Wireless Emergency Alerts and Emergency Alert System notifications
- C. Capacity to send a 45 second message to 10,000 community members and businesses within 10 minutes
- D. Capacity to send messages via phone, e-mail and text
- E. Accessible via the public internet
- F. Provides audit trail logging and reporting
- G. GIS map interface for geographic call list generation
- H. Community member self-registration web portal (available in threshold languages)
- I. Interactive phone survey technology and reporting
- J. Interactive Voice Response based notification setup and execution
- K. Unlimited vendor support, with access to vendor available for Jurisdictions as needed

IV. REGULATIONS AND AUTHORITIES

The System is operated in compliance with laws and regulations which are incorporated by reference into these Operating Guidelines.

- 47 C.F.R. Part 11 – Emergency Alert System
- 47 C.F.R. Part 10 – Wireless Emergency Alerts
- American with Disabilities Act

The System uses the E911 database to complete the notifications. The use of the E911 database is regulated by the California Public Utilities Code (CPUC) sections 2872 and 2891 *et seq.* The information contained in the E911 database is confidential and proprietary and shall not be disclosed or used except by authorized personnel for the purpose of emergency notifications. Any agency in violation of this regulation is subject to criminal charges as described in the CPUC.

V. GOVERNANCE

The County Board of Supervisors has authority over the System governance.

The Orange County Sheriff's Department Emergency Management Division (OCSD-EMD) will manage the System as a countywide asset on a day-to-day basis. The OCSD-EMD will draft, implement and maintain policies, processes, and data related to the System. The OCSD-EMD is responsible for ensuring that the provisions of the Vendor contract are implemented properly.

The Emergency Management Council Subcommittee and the Orange County Emergency Management Organization-Technology Subcommittee are responsible for recommending plans, procedures, and policies related to the System for approval.

The Orange County Emergency Management Council and County of Orange Operational Area Executive Board are responsible for approving plans, procedures, and policies related to the System.



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VI. AUTHORIZED USERS

Use of the System by each Agency and Jurisdiction is contingent upon that Agency or Jurisdiction abiding by the contract with the mass notification vendor, and the protocols established by the Emergency Management Council and Operational Area Executive Board.

The System is designed to be a countywide asset, available to all Jurisdictions that have a dedicated public safety answering point (PSAP) and/or a residential population for whom they are responsible for making protective action recommendations.

An Agency may participate in the countywide System at no charge when used for emergency purposes until December 30, 2029.

Entities authorized to join the system at no cost are limited to the County, Orange County Cities, the Municipal Water District of Orange County and Orange County Retail Water Agencies, and the University of California, Irvine. Each participating Jurisdiction must sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and will maintain, at minimum, a Local Administrator responsible for implementing and administering use of the System at the local level.

A. County Level

1. County Administrator

The OCSD-EMD will assign and maintain a designated County Administrator responsible for overall acquisition, accessibility, maintenance, compliance and management of all components required to provide an effective countywide mass notification system.

The County Administrator is responsible for:

1. System acquisition and contract management.
2. Policy management and as needed modification (in consultation with public safety, emergency management and emergency response personnel.)
3. Audit compliance: routine monitoring of System use to insure policy and contract compliance.
4. Access management: record management of signed MOU from each participating Agency, distribution of local administrator accounts and updated Local Administrator contact list.
5. Data management: E911 data acquisition, update and compliance monitoring. Countywide map file acquisition, update and overall geo-coding.
6. Testing: facilitate routine System-wide test exercise, document overall test results and recommend and execute, as needed, corrective action at the County level.
7. User Testing: verify and document County Alert and Warning Users are performing monthly tests.
8. Public education campaign: initiate and facilitate public education campaign aimed at making the public aware of the countywide public mass notification system initiative and individual registration web portal.



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9. Exclusion List: maintaining exclusion lists, provided by Local Administrators, in the System.
10. System support: provide support to County Users and Local Administrators.



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2. County User

The County will have two levels of users: Alert & Warning Users and Agency Users. Both Alert and Warning Users and Agency Users are responsible for obtaining Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) software and will require MFA software to be functional for access to the System.

Alert & Warning Users

Orange County Sheriff's Department Emergency Communication Bureau (9-1-1 dispatch), Control One and Emergency Management Division personnel will be setup as Alert & Warning Users. Alert & Warning Users will have permission to access and launch emergency notifications to all jurisdictions within Orange County consistent with the County of Orange and Orange County Operational Area Alert and Warning Plan.

Alert and Warning users should perform monthly tests including:

1. Logging into AlertOC
2. Sending a test message to one or more contacts
3. Checking message receipt to ensure message was delivered

A Jurisdiction that contracts with the Orange County Sheriff's Department for police services authorizes the OCSD-Control One, OCSD-Dispatch, or OCSD-EMD personnel to launch on their behalf if requested by contracted field personnel in order to launch messages in a timely manner. These jurisdictions can also launch on their own behalf.

Agency User

Agency Users will have permission to execute inter-department notifications. Unincorporated areas of Orange County will have emergency messaging to the public launched by the Orange County Sheriff's Department. All other County Agencies may have access to use the System for interdepartmental use. Each participating Agency shall develop and maintain written procedures to identify and address the Agency's specific use of the System within the scope of this policy guide and provide this guideline to the Orange County Sheriff's Department Emergency Management Division. Each participating County agency shall maintain a level of training for their users consistent with the County of Orange and Orange County Operational Area Alert and Warning Plan.

B. Jurisdictions

Jurisdictions wishing to participate may do so by having an authoritative representative sign the "Orange County Public Mass Notification System" MOU. Upon signing the MOU, the Jurisdiction will identify a Local Administrator. The Local Administrator completed specified training and certifications before being provided with an account. Throughout the term of the MOU, the Jurisdiction may use the System to send an unlimited number of emergency notifications to the public as well as an unlimited number of emergency and non-emergency inter-department messages. Each participating Jurisdiction shall develop and maintain written procedures to identify and address the Jurisdiction's specific use of the System within the scope of this guideline. Each participating Jurisdiction shall maintain a level of training



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for their users consistent with the County of Orange and Orange County Operational Area Alert and Warning Plan.

1. Local Administrator

Participating Jurisdictions agree to appoint a designated Local Administrator responsible for leading, coordinating, monitoring and optimizing use of the System at the local level. Local Administrator shall act as the Jurisdiction's central point of contact and will work collaboratively with the County Administrator to ensure local use of the system is within MOU and Operating Guidelines.

Local Administrator is responsible for:

1. Contract acquisition if Agency will use the system for non-emergency purposes.
2. Local Agency Mass Notification Operating Procedure development and management.
3. Use compliance: routine monitoring to ensure System is used within the conditions and terms of this document and associated MOU.
4. Access management: Local User account distribution and management, including an annual audit of accounts; annual attestation that all Local Administrators and Local Users are authorized to continue accessing the system. Record management of MOU(s) and signed Local User certifications.
5. Testing: facilitate routine local System test exercise, document local test results and recommend and execute, as needed, corrective action at the local level.
6. User Testing: verify and document Local Users with Alert and Warning responsibilities are performing monthly tests.
7. Public education campaign: initiate and facilitate public education campaign aimed at making the local community aware of the intended use of the System and individual registration web portal.
8. System support: provide support to Local Users.
9. Providing logins and procedural training to key individuals within their Agency responsible for using the System.
10. Exclusion Lists: provide annually a review of the exclusion list for businesses, phone numbers, and organizations in the Participating Jurisdiction.
11. Training: ensuring Local Users complete security awareness training that covers at a minimum the following areas: proper protection, handling, dissemination, and destruction of confidential information (CI); threats, vulnerabilities, and risks associated with handling of CI; social engineering; system responsibilities and expected behavior; account usage and management – including password creation, protection, and frequency of changes; system usage – allowed vs. prohibited; incident response; physical security; email protection – phishing threats and business account compromise
12. Incident Response: Local Administrator is responsible to immediately notify OCSA of any incidents that could lead to the unauthorized or accidental use, modification, disclosure, or destruction of any information contained within the system.

2. Local User:



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Participating Jurisdictions may have an unlimited number of Local Users. Local Users will have access to community member contact records within their Jurisdiction or Service District. Local Users will be authorized and managed by the Local Administrator and may have varied system permissions. For Water Retail Water Agencies, Local Users may use the System to send emergency notifications to the public by using pre-established GIS shape files or the system's interactive map feature to identify their water users.

Local Users are responsible for obtaining Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) software and will require MFA software to be functional for access to the System.

If a local user has access to send Alert and Warning messaging to the public then the local user should perform monthly tests including:

1. Logging into AlertOC
2. Sending a test message to one or more contacts (this can be the Alert and Warning User)
3. Checking message receipt to ensure message was delivered



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VII. AUTHORIZED USE

A. Emergency Public Notifications

Legal restrictions exist related to issuing different types of messages through the System. All Users are required to know and understand these restrictions. The Form in Attachment B delineates the requirements for each type of message.

As a general principle, the System is to be used when the public is being asked to take some action (e.g. evacuate, prepare to evacuate, shelter in place, boil tap water before drinking, local assistance centers and other follow up information, re-entry to an area after evacuation orders have been lifted or termination of the emergency because the danger has passed).

Use of the System for emergency activity contains two components: (1) the need to disseminate critical, safety-related information to individuals regarding emergency events occurring now, follow up information regarding the event and termination of the emergency event, and (2) communicating with safety-responder staff, volunteers and involved parties about the emergency event.

Emergency Public Notifications are limited to:

1. Imminent or perceived threat to life or property
2. Disaster notifications
3. Evacuation notices
4. Public health emergencies
5. Public safety emergencies
6. Any notification to provide emergency information to a defined community

The following criteria should be used to assist with determining the need to issue an alert:

1. Severity. Is there a significant threat to public life and safety?
2. Public Protection. Is there a need for members of the public to take a protective action in order to reduce loss of life or substantial loss of property?
3. Warning. Will providing warning information assist members of the public in making the decision to take proper and prudent action?
4. Timing. Does the situation require immediate public knowledge in order to avoid adverse impact?
5. Geographical area. Is the situation limited to a defined geographical area? Is that area of a size that will allow for an effective use of the system, given the outgoing call capacity?
6. Are other means of disseminating the information inadequate to ensure proper and time delivery of the information?
7. Is the message being sent follow up information to an emergency event in progress?

If the answer to ALL of these questions is "Yes", then an activation of the System for emergency purposes may be warranted.



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Illustrations of incidents which may be Emergency Public Notifications are included in Attachment A.

Participating Agencies are authorized to develop pre-established notification lists and messages related to specific types of emergencies. The circumstances for using these lists should be documented within County emergency plans and annexes approved by the Emergency Management Council, and their establishment coordinated with the County Administrator. Such documentation should include which forms of System notification will be used (e.g., opt-in agency data). During emergencies, messages will be coordinated with the Operational Area Emergency Operations Center or OCSD-EMD. These lists may include special populations (e.g. in-home care, schools, etc.) or those susceptible to certain risks (e.g. homes within dam inundation zone). It is the responsibility of the participating Agency to create, maintain and update these lists.

B. Emergency Responder Notifications

Emergency Responder Notifications are limited to:

1. Contacting first responders to advise of an emergency
2. Contacting first responders to report for duty due to an emergency
3. Contacting key staff regarding an emergency or crisis situation
4. Contacting agency employees/DSWs to report at a different time or location (or provide an update) due to an emergency
5. Exercises

Emergency considerations:

1. Notification shall clearly state situation is an emergency
2. Message length shall not exceed 60 seconds
3. Message shall have a call back number specific to the agency issuing the notification.
4. It is highly recommended all messages are recorded using a real voice and not the computer transcriber.
5. It is highly recommended to provide a phone number or website where the public can obtain additional or updated information
6. An all clear notification should be sent when applicable

C. Non-Emergency Public Notifications

Non-emergency **public** notification use is **prohibited** for any of the following purposes:

1. Any message of commercial nature
2. Any message of a political nature
3. Any non-official business (e.g. articles, retirement announcements, etc.)
4. To send a message to an E911 obtained data source

E911 data is cannot be used for non-emergency use except for testing according to the law California Public Utilities Code (CPUC) sections 2872 and 2891.1 and violators may be subject to criminal enforcement. Any Agency or Jurisdiction in violation of this term may have their use of the System suspended or their individual access revoked.



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No Jurisdiction shall use the System for non-emergency public announcements unless a separate contract with the Vendor is established. Cost associated with non-emergency public notifications is the responsibility of the local Jurisdiction. Jurisdictions will be limited to using the self-registering portal entry data only when launching non-emergency messages.

Jurisdictions who contract to use the System for non-emergency activity agree to give precedence to emergency notification call-outs by delaying or terminating non-emergency notification sessions if needed to increase emergency message success. The primary concern for point of failure in this situation is not the System, but the telephone port capacity of local phone providers responsible for delivering calls to community members and businesses.

D. Inter-Department Communication

Each participating Agency and Jurisdiction is authorized to create employee/volunteer and department call lists and pre-recorded messages. Agencies and Jurisdictions may use the System for non-emergency inter-departmental business communication as needed, without cost. It is recommended that individual Agencies identify where this would add value to their operations and establish separate written protocols and procedures for this use. Inter-departmental users will have permission to inter-departmental contact information only and are authorized to use the System solely for inter-departmental communication including but limited to first responder or volunteer call-outs.

VIII. ACTIVATION OF THE SYSTEM

Each Jurisdiction is responsible for launching messages to affected community members and businesses within their Jurisdiction or Service District.

- For messages launched by Jurisdictions on their own behalf, Jurisdictions are responsible for identifying and documenting who has the authority to launch messages.
- For messages launched by the County on behalf of Jurisdictions, the County requires the message be authorized by either the City Manager, City Police Chief, City Fire Chief, City Emergency Manager, or by public safety personnel on the incident scene with Incident Commander approval. Exigent circumstances will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis if the preceding individuals are not available.

The County of Orange and Orange County Operational Area Alert and Warning Plan is incorporated by reference. This document delineates the processes for coordinating all alert and warning notifications, including those transmitted using this System.

IX. LIMITATIONS OF THE SYSTEM

Every effort will be made by the County to ensure the System operates in the manner described in the SOP. However there are limitations of technology which may cause the system to fail or provide inconsistent message delivery. Some of these limitations include:

- Cell Phone Disruptions
- Cell Phone Reception Coverage
- Public Safety Power Shutoff events



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X. ROUTINE TESTING

Monthly System tests will be conducted to ensure that use of the System in an emergency is optimized and users are familiar with operation. All users should perform monthly message proficiency tests. Users who do not login and perform a message proficiency test at least yearly are subject to removal as a user from the System.

The System will have an annual regional test. This includes testing operational readiness, activation procedures and system effectiveness as well as validating data and system processes. Through the annual test exercise, System administrators and users will be able to observe the mode of operation to augment and refresh System and process knowledge.

Specific test exercise routines, roles, responsibilities and schedule will be detailed in the County of Orange and Operational Area Alert and Warning Plan.

By signing the Mass Notification System MOU, participating Jurisdictions agree to take part in System drills and exercises.

XI. CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY

Through the "Memorandum of Understanding between the County of Orange and Participants for use of Countywide Mass Notification System," each agency is bound in writing to the confidentiality obligations sufficient to permit agencies to fully perform its obligations under this policy or the vendor agreement. Jurisdictions and Agencies shall be responsible for:

1. Ensuring users have completed an appropriate background check and undergone annual security awareness training.
2. Protecting Confidential Information (CI) contained within the system against accidental or unauthorized use, modification, dissemination, or destruction.
3. Ensuring that users maintain the confidentiality of all user login and password information;
4. Ensuring that users follow the 90 day password expiration limit;
5. Ensuring that users use the service in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations, including those relating to use of personal information;
6. Immediately notifying the County Administrator of any security incident that could lead to the unauthorized access, use, modification, dissemination, or destruction of CI contained within the system.
7. Any breach of the terms of this policy or the vendor agreement by any user; and
8. All communications by users using the service.

XII. COSTS

The County of Orange agrees to fund the System for notifications classified as "emergency use." The County of Orange also agrees to continue to obtain updated E911 telephone data and geographic maps.

Costs associated with use of the System for non-emergency activity is the responsibility of the local Jurisdiction through separate contract with the Vendor.

XIII. DEFINITIONS



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System – All components of the Mass Notification System including hardware, software, access portals, contact data and GIS maps.

Community members – Comprises individuals and businesses.

Emergency - “Emergency” shall include, but not be limited to, instances of fire, flood, storm, epidemic, riots, or disease that threaten the safety and welfare of the individuals and property located within the boundaries of the county and participants’ respective jurisdictions.

XIV. REVISION HISTORY

| Revision Date | Author | Description |
|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| April 18, 2008 | PMNS Policy Committee | Document originated |
| May 19, 2008 | PMNS Executive Review Team | Non-emergency session termination in Section V., Item C. |
| June 16, 2008 | Teara LeBlanc | Exception clause in Section VII, Item A., bullet 2. |
| May 2010 | Vicki Osborn | Revision of all sections |
| June 2012 | Raymond Cheung | Revision for OCSD transition |
| May 2013 | Raymond Cheung | Revision for new vendor contract |
| May 2016 | Raymond Cheung | Added confidentiality item to Section V., Item C. and allowed non-emergency use in Section V., Item B. and Section VIII. |
| June 2021 | Harmon “Jay” Ward | Revision for new contract Revision of Sections II, III, IV, V, IX, and XI. |
| October 2024 | Harmon “Jay” Ward | Revision for new contract; added User Testing for County and Local Jurisdictions in Sections VI and X; added City Emergency Manager as Authorized Requestor in Section VIII; added Section IX; added password expiration in Section XI. |



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XV. ATTACHMENT A – INCIDENT ILLUSTRATIONS

This is a non-exhaustive list provided as examples.

| Type of Incident | Description | Meets Public Safety Criteria |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Active Shooter | A shooting with armed individual or individuals is occurring in a known area. | Yes |
| Boil Water Orders | An unsafe water supply issue requiring the public to boil water before use. | Yes |
| Building Fire | A fire occurring in an urban area requiring evacuation or shelter in place for the immediate area. | Yes |
| Violent Crimes | Violent crimes that just occurred such as robbery, assault, murder, etc. | Yes |
| Felony Suspect at Large | Law enforcement is currently searching for a felony suspect that is suspected to be in a certain area. | Yes |
| HazMat | Hazardous Materials incidents that require a fire/hazmat response and may include evacuations or shelter-in-place orders. | Yes |
| Health Orders | Any public health order made pursuant to County Health Officer recommendations. | Yes |
| Missing Adult (920A) with special circs | 12- 17 yrs with decreased mental capacity or medical condition | Yes |
| Missing Child (920C) | 12 yrs or younger | Yes |
| Missing Juvenile (920J)with special circs | 18 yrs and older 12- 17 yrs with decreased mental capacity or medical condition | Yes |
| Severe Weather Related | Weather warnings that forecast an occurring or imminent threat to public safety or coincide with protective action recommendations such as voluntary or mandatory evacuation orders. | Yes |
| Evacuation or Shelter-in-Place | Voluntary or mandatory evacuation or shelter-in-place orders. | Yes |
| Wildland Fire | A fire occurring in a wildland urban interface area requiring immediate evacuation or shelter-in-place. | Yes |
| Road Closures | Unplanned road closures due to an emergency situation. | Yes |
| Planned Events | Road closures due to community events planned in advance. | No |



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XVI. Attachment B – AlertOC/WEA/EAS Activation Form