

## 42. Emergency Notification and Alerting Policy

### POLICY

It is the policy of Scott County to immediately notify County employees, tenant employees, and visitors (all collectively known as the County community), upon the confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of staff or visitors occurring in Scott County buildings or on campus locations, unless issuing a notification will worsen or compromise efforts to contain the emergency. This policy should be read in conjunction with Policy 4 Emergency Plans and merely creates a notification system.

### SCOPE

This policy is applicable to all offices and departments within Scott County or those offices located in Scott County facilities. It may also include partner agencies that utilize Scott County's network or phone systems.

### PURPOSE

To establish guidelines and provide protocols regarding the timely dissemination of information to County employees, tenant employees and visitors regarding actual or potential threats or emergency events occurring at Scott County buildings or campus locations. It is recognized that there are additional potential uses of mass notification systems including approved informational messages delivered to all end users or that may target specific groups or buildings.

### DEFINITIONS

- A. Emergency (Immediate) Notification: Dissemination of critical emergency information regarding a significant emergency or dangerous situation, occurring in a Scott County building or property, involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of employees or visitors.
- B. Mass Notification Communications System: Communications systems utilized by County officials to quickly disseminate information across multiple communication channels including: the Alertus Notification system, Alertus Mobile Application, and mass email notifications.
- C. Timely Warning Notification: Dissemination of critical information regarding a situation that arises that, in the judgement of authorized County officials, constitutes a serious or continuing threat to the safety of staff or visitors.

- D. Authorized County Officials: Selected County employees with the authority to provide leadership and manage unexpected events using established operational protocols.
- E. Crisis Operations Team: Team of decision makers consisting of the following and/or their designee
  - a. County Administration - Assistant County Administrator
  - b. Facility & Support Services - Director
  - c. County Attorney - Risk Manager
  - d. Sheriff's Office - Sheriff, Major, and Bailiff Sergeant
- F. County community: Includes all regular County employees, tenant employees, volunteers, interns, contractors or other visitors in facilities where County employees are regularly staffed.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

1. Confirm the Existence of a Significant Emergency or Dangerous Situation and Initiate the Emergency Notification System:
  - A. The Scott County Sheriff's Office and/or other staff identified by the Crisis Operations Team may become aware of a critical incident or other emergency situation that potentially affects the safety and/or health of the County community.
  - B. Once confirmed that there is, in fact, an emergency or dangerous situation that poses an immediate threat to the health or safety to some or all members of the County community, Authorized County Officials may issue an Emergency Notification.
  - C. The Authorized County Officials will immediately initiate all or some portions of the County's emergency notification system. If, in the professional judgment of first responders, issuing a notification potentially compromises efforts to assist a victim or to contain, respond to, or otherwise mitigate the emergency, the Authorized County Officials may elect to delay issuing an emergency notification. As soon as the condition that may compromise efforts is no longer present, the County will issue the emergency notification to the County community or applicable segment of the community.
2. Generally speaking Emergency Notifications will be sent to all end users on the County's network, County phone system or those subscribed to the mobile notification application. There may be some instances where a specific building or group is targeted as recipients of an emergency notification message. If a specific building or group receives an emergency

notification message, additional messages may be sent to other segments of the County campus as an informational message.

3. Determining the Contents of the Emergency Notification Message

- A. Pre-scripted messages will be created for several identified scenarios.
- B. In the event a pre-scripted message is not available to cover the nature of the emergency, Authorized County Officials may create an appropriate message. In those cases where a pre-scripted message is not available for the type of event, the individual issuing the alert will develop the most succinct message to disseminate appropriate information to the County community. The goal is to ensure that individuals are aware of the situation and know the steps to take to safeguard their personal and community safety.

4. Types of Emergency Messaging

- A. The first message is intended to **ALERT** the County community or appropriate segment(s) of the County community of the dangerous condition and the actions they should take to safeguard their safety. Messages distributed in this stage of a rapidly unfolding critical incident will be short, precise and directive.
- B. The second message is intended to **INFORM** the County community or appropriate segment(s) about additional details of the situation. This message is generally distributed once first responders and the Crisis Operations Team has additional information about the dangerous situation.
- C. The third message is intended to **REASSURE** the County community or appropriate segment(s) that the situation is nearly or completely resolved. It can also be used to share additional information about the event.
- D. The fourth message is intended as an **ALL CLEAR** notifying the County community or appropriate segments (s) that the situation has resolved.

5. Non-Emergency Messaging

- A. Incidents may occur that do not pose an immediate threat to the County community. These events may be evaluated

to determine the need for a mass notification announcement.

- B. Departments may work with the Crisis Operations Team to develop other types of non-emergency messaging for their departments.

## **PLANNING STATEMENTS**

Many emergencies requiring activation of the alert system will be “without warning”.

No one method of communication will reach everyone, everywhere, every time.

Intended audiences may not receive or may receive delayed messages due to situations beyond the control of the County.

Incorrect information may be generated and distributed by individuals outside official channels (i.e. word of mouth, text messaging). This requires emergency notifications to be clear, concise, accurate and readily identifiable as “official” Scott County Alert Messages.

Regular testing of the alert system components is required to ensure functionality and to familiarize recipients with the system’s features. All tests should be evaluated and corrective actions implemented as necessary.

New communication methods may be identified and others may become obsolete, the current communications methods will be evaluated on a periodic basis with regards to their appropriateness for continued use.