

BAXTER COUNTY, ARKANSAS

EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

ANNEX C

I. PURPOSE

This annex establishes policies and procedures and assigns responsibilities to ensure the maintenance of a capability to disseminate information on potential and actual large-scale emergencies to the people of Baxter County. It is through a speedy and precise public information program that the populace will be advised of whether or not any hazard exists and gain knowledge of any necessary actions they will need to take to ensure their safety and survival.

II. SITUATION

- A. Baxter County and several of its municipalities have continuing programs, which use various channels of communication, including the mass media, to provide needed and desired information about local government activities and services to the general public.
- B. During periods of emergency, the public needs, and generally desires, detailed information regarding protective action to be taken for minimizing loss of life and property. There are times, however, when disaster strikes without warning and the public information system cannot react rapidly enough to properly inform the public about the hazard. For this reason it is important that prior to the occurrence of an emergency the public be made aware of potential hazards and the protective measures that can be employed.
- C. In major emergency situations, there may be large numbers of media representatives seeking information about the situation and about response actions. It is the policy of Baxter County to cooperate fully with the media, to provide complete and accurate information, and to create an atmosphere conducive to useful and constructive participation by the media developing procedures in cooperation with local news media to disseminate emergency information to the public. However, they recognize that a substantially large emergency will attract regional and national media representatives not parties to, or knowledgeable of, local media arrangements.

III. ASSUMPTIONS

- A. During emergency situations, the general public will demand information about the emergency situation and instructions for proper survival/response actions.
- B. The media will demand information about emergency situations. The local media, particularly broadcasts, will perform an essential role in providing emergency instructions and up-to-date information to the public. Depending on the severity of the emergency, or the media's conception of the severity of the emergency, regional and national media will also cover the story and demand information and comment from local officials.
- C. Depending on the severity of the emergency, telephone communications may be sporadic or impossible. Local and regional radio/television stations without emergency power may also be off the air.
- D. Demand for information will be overwhelming, especially if sufficient staff is not provided and if staff is not trained and operating from a media relations plan.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. Natural Disasters

The Baxter County Emergency Public Information Officer will report to the EOC to coordinate news release information on impact and recovery operations following a disaster/ emergency. The Emergency Public Information Officer will establish a contact point for all news media, which shall be the only official point for dissemination of information. The Public Information Officer will have regularly scheduled briefings if the amount of press coverage warrants.

B. Man-Caused Peacetime Disasters/Emergencies

Following the occurrence of a disaster, the Emergency Public Information Officer will begin disseminating needed emergency information to the citizens of Baxter County. The Emergency Public Information Officer will operate from the field command post and have scheduled press briefings. These briefings should include any new information and rumor control information.

C. War Emergency – Enemy Attack

1. Preparedness Phase

Preparedness activities are accelerated; as there may be a need to respond to many inquiries from the media and the public. Included in this phase are development and maintenance of plans, procedures, checklists, contact lists, and standby public information materials.

2. Response Phase

The Emergency Public Information Officer will be directly involved in the warning process. The EPI organization will be fully mobilized and will disseminate emergency instructions and information to the public in the following order of priority:

- a. Lifesaving/health preservation instructions.
- b. Emergency status information.
- c. Other useful information, originated by the government or in response to media inquiries.

3. Recovery Phase

During this phase, attention will be focused on restoring channels of communication with the public. Appropriate information will continue to be released, particularly on the restoration of essential services, travel restrictions, length of shelter stay, and assistance programs.

V. ORGANIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Organization

The Emergency Public Information Officer operates directly under the direction of the County Judge. For proper coordination in a large-scale emergency, it is essential that emergency public information be released from a single point to assure consistency and authenticity.

B. Responsibilities

Emergency Public Information Officer will:

1. Following the approval of the County Judge, the Emergency Public Information Officer will keep local residents informed of all disasters detrimental to the lives and property of the citizens of Baxter County.
2. Develop and maintain hazard-specific EPI materials, as requested by the County Judge and prepare news releases.
3. Receive all calls from the media and the public concerning an emergency situation and respond with official information or relay calls to the EOC staff members, as appropriate.
4. Coordinate with functional areas on the release of information pertinent to specific areas.
5. Pay special attention to the needs of the visual and hearing impaired.
6. Make arrangements or agreements with the information media for dissemination of emergency information and emergency warnings.
7. Will authenticate information sources before release to the media.
8. Will coordinate with Red Cross and Amateur Radio Club to release information on inquiries about missing relatives, etc.
9. In the event of evacuation, announcements urging residents to share their homes with evacuees will be released.
10. Coordinate with the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management Public Information Officer.

VI. ADMINISTRATION

Administrative requirements of the Emergency Public Information Officer during emergency operations will be coordinated with the Baxter County Clerk and County Resource and Supply Officer.

A major activity of the Emergency Public Information Officer in non-emergency times is the development and refinement of EPI materials, such as camera-ready copy for newspaper supplements and scripts and visual aids for use through electronic media. Copies of some of these materials are included as attachments to this annex.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Evacuation EPI Releases
2. News Media Organizations
3. Public Information Emergency Response Checklist
4. Emergency Public Information Package

ATTACHMENT 1

EVACUATION EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION RELEASES

The following sample news media releases are provided as guidance in the development of locally oriented emergency public information during the evacuation of some or all of Baxter County to selected reception and care areas in or out of the county.

Please fill in the blanks with the appropriate information and/or change/add appropriate words to utilize news releases for other purposes in the evacuation plan.

ATTACHMENT 1a

NEWS RELEASE - ORDER TO EVACUATE AN AREA

SAMPLE RADIO/TV/NEWSPRINT RELEASE: #1

OFFICIAL/OFFICIALS RELEASING: (City/County Executive Group)

INTENDED AUDIENCES: (Area/County to be evacuated)

SUGGESTED TIME OF RELEASING: (When evacuation ordered)

WHEN YOU RECEIVE THE ORDER TO EVACUATE YOUR AREA, FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS:

1. MAKE SURE THE AREA BEING EVACUATED IS THE AREA YOU LIVE IN.
2. DETERMINE WHERE YOU NEED TO GO AND REPORT TO THE RECEPTION AREA AS ANNOUNCED BY COUNTY OFFICERS.
3. REUNITE ALL YOUR FAMILY AND TRAVEL TOGETHER IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, INCLUDING SICK OR NURSING HOME RESIDENTS.
4. MAKE SURE YOU LOAD YOUR CAR WITH ESSENTIAL ITEMS SUCH AS MEDICINES, CLOTHING, BEDDING, FOLDING COTS, ETC.
5. TURN OFF ALL UTILITIES AT HOME.
6. STAY TUNED TO YOUR LOCAL RADIO STATIONS.
7. LEAVE THE AREA AS QUICKLY AS YOU CAN.
8. PERSONS NEEDING TRANSPORTATION SHALL GO TO (Name and address of location) FOR OBTAINING NEEDED TRANSPORTATION.

ATTACHMENT 1b

NEWS RELEASE - ORDER TO EVACUATE AN AREA

SAMPLE RADIO/TV/NEWSPRINT RELEASE: #2

OFFICIAL/OFFICIALS RELEASING: (City/County Executive Group)

INTENDED AUDIENCES: (Areas (i.e., B, C, D, etc.) to be evacuated)

SUGGESTED TIME OF RELEASING: (Upon release of this release)

ATTENTION - IF YOU LIVE IN AREA _____ BETWEEN STATE HIGHWAY
_____ AND STATE HIGHWAY _____ (OR AREAS _____,
_____, _____, ETC., BETWEEN STATE HIGHWAY _____ AND
STATE

HIGHWAY _____), THERE IS A (i.e., fire, flood, gases/fumes, rising
water, etc. – whatever reason for evacuation) COMING YOUR WAY AND IT

IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY EVACUATE THE AREA

IMMEDIATELY. IF YOU HAVE NO PLACE TO GO TO OUT OF THE AREA TO
BE

EVACUATED - YOU MAY PROCEED TO THE _____ BY THE
NEAREST

ROUTE AND GO TO THE _____ FOR RECEPTION AND
PROCESSING

FOR YOUR NEEDS - FOOD, CLOTHING AND SHELTER. PERSONS NEEDING
OR

WITHOUT TRANSPORTATION WILL GO TO (name and address of location),
WHERE

TRANSPORTATION WILL BE AVAILABLE.

ATTACHMENT 1c

NEWS RELEASE - FOR EVACUEES TO RETURN HOME

SAMPLE RADIO/TV/NEWSPRINT RELEASE: #3

OFFICIAL/OFFICIALS RELEASING: (City/County Executive Group)

INTENDED AUDIENCES: (To reception areas utilized)

SUGGESTED TIME OF RELEASING: (When order given to return home)

ATTENTION - PEOPLE OF _____ WHO LEFT THEIR HOMES AFTER BEING

TOLD TO EVACUATE THE AREA IN WHICH THEY LIVE BECAUSE OF (whatever reason

was given in evacuation). IT IS NOW SAFE TO RETURN TO YOUR

HOMES AND TO LEAVE RECEPTION AND CARE CENTERS. USE STATE HIGHWAYS

_____ AND _____ FOR RETURN TO YOUR HOMES.

FOR THOSE WHOSE HOMES/PROPERTY SUFFERED DAMAGE/DESTRUCTION, A

DISASTER ASSISTANCE CENTER (DAC) WILL BE OPENED TO ASSIST YOU IN

OBTAINING DISASTER LOANS, TEMPORARY LODGING, FOOD, CLOTHING, ETC.

THE LOCATION AND OPENING DATE OF THE DAC IS _____

(if known) OR WILL BE ANNOUNCED AT A LATER DATE.

ATTACHMENT 1d

NEWS RELEASE – NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON EARTHQUAKE

SAMPLE RADIO/TV/NEWSPRINT RELEASE: #4

OFFICIAL/OFFICIALS RELEASING: (City/County Executive Group)

INTENDED AUDIENCES: (Area/County to be affected)

THIS IS THE _____ AT THE

_____. AN EARTHQUAKE OF UNDETERMINED MAGNITUDE

HAS JUST BEEN FELT IN THE _____ AREA. AT

THIS TIME WE HAVE NO CONFIRMED REPORTS OF INJURIES OR DAMAGE.

POLICE AND FIRE UNITS ARE RESPONDING TO THE AREA. WE WILL KEEP

YOU UPDATED AS REPORTS COME IN. MEANWHILE, BE PREPARED FOR

AFTERSHOCKS. IF SHAKING BEGINS AGAIN, QUICKLY SEEK SHELTER

UNDER A STURDY PIECE OF FURNITURE OR IN A SUPPORTING DOORWAY.

IF YOUR HOUSE HAS BEEN DAMAGED AND YOU SMELL GAS, SHUT OFF

THE MAIN GAS VALVE. SWITCH OFF ELECTRICAL POWER IF YOU SUSPECT

DAMAGE TO THE WIRING. DO NOT USE OUR TELEPHONE UNLESS YOU

NEED EMERGENCY HELP.

ATTACHMENT 1e

NEWS RELEASE – UPDATE ON EARTHQUAKE

SAMPLE RADIO/TV/NEWSPRINT RELEASE: #5

OFFICIAL/OFFICIALS RELEASING: (City/County Executive Group)

INTENDED AUDIENCES: (Area/County to be affected)

THIS IS THE _____ AT THE _____. THE
MAGNITUDE OF THE EARTHQUAKE WHICH STRUCK THE
_____ AREA AT _____ TODAY HAS
BEEN DETERMINED TO BE _____ ON THE RICHTER SCALE. THE
EPICENTER HAS BEEN FIXED AT _____

BY _____.
(SCIENTIFIC AUTHORITY)

THIS OFFICE HAS RECEIVED REPORTS OF _____ DEATHS, _____
INJURIES, AND _____ HOMES DAMAGED. NO DOLLAR DAMAGE
FIGURE IS YET AVAILABLE. POLICE AND FIRE UNITS ARE ON THE SCENE
TO ASSIST RESIDENTS. (CONTINUE WITH SUMMARY OF SITUATION).

AFTERSHOCKS CONTINUE TO BE FELT IN THE AREA. IF YOU FEEL
SHAKING, QUICKLY SEEK SHELTER UNDER A STURDY PIECE OF
FURNITURE OR IN A SUPPORTING DOORWAY. DO NOT USE YOUR
TELEPHONE UNLESS YOU NEED EMERGENCY HELP.

ATTACHMENT 1f

NEWS RELEASE – UPDATE ON EARTHQUAKE

SAMPLE RADIO/TV/NEWSPRINT RELEASE: #6

OFFICIAL/OFFICIALS RELEASING: (City/County Executive Group)

INTENDED AUDIENCES: (Area/County to be affected)

AT APPROXIMATELY _____ TODAY, AN EARTHQUAKE REGISTERING _____ ON RICHTER SCALE STRUCK THE _____ AREA, WITH ITS EPICENTER AT _____. FIRE AND POLICE UNITS WERE DISPATCHED TO ASSESS INJURIES AND DAMAGE. (INDICATE INJURIES, DEATHS, PROPERTY DAMAGE, FIRE, ETC., REPORTED TO DATE.)

_____ AFTERSHOCKS WERE FELT, THE LARGEST OCCURRING AT _____. NO ADDITIONAL DAMAGE WAS (TIME)

REPORTED (OR SPECIFY DAMAGE).

OVER _____ RESPONSE PERSONNEL FROM POLICE AND FIRE AGENCIES WERE CALLED INTO ACTION, AND THE STAFF OF THE COUNTY/CITY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES WERE PUT ON EMERGENCY STATUS. THE RED CROSS OPENED SHELTERS AT _____ FOR

PERSONS UNABLE TO REMAIN IN THEIR HOMES AND REPORTED LODGING AND FEEDING OVER _____ PERSONS. AT _____ ON _____ (TIME) (DATE)

THE COUNTY JUDGE/CITY MAYOR PROCLAIMED A STATE OF EMERGENCY.
THE JUDGE/MAYOR ALSO ASKED THE GOVERNOR TO REQUEST THE
PRESIDENT TO DECLARE MAJOR/DISASTER EMERGENCY. DAMAGE TO
PRIVATE AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS HAS BEEN ESTIMATED TO EXCEED
\$_____.

ATTACHMENT 2

NEWS MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS

BAXTER COUNTY

RADIO:

KTLO	FM/AM	Mountain Home	870-425-3101 870-425-6397 870-425-4312
KKTZ/KPFM/KOMT	FM	Mountain Home	870-492-6200 870-492-5100
KCMH	FM	Mountain Home	870-425-2525
KBCN	FM	Harrison	870-743-1157
KBCN	FM	Marshall	870-448-3637

TELEVISION:

Receive most statewide television stations and does offer cable television.

NEWSPAPERS:

The Baxter Bulletin - Daily	870-425-3133
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette – Daily	870-743-1421

ATTACHMENT 3

PUBLIC INFORMATION
EMERGENCY RESPONSE CHECKLIST

Position/Organization

PREPAREDNESS PHASE

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

- _____ Alert Public Information support staff
- _____ Review Public Information Annex and Standard Operating Procedures
- _____ Update and confirm Public information resources
- _____ Release information to public pertinent to preparing for threat/hazard expected
- _____ Establish liaison with all key EOC officials
- _____ Keep local officials updated on all Public Information material
- _____ Print Emergency Public Information newspaper supplements on In-place Shelter and Relocation
- _____ Review procedures with radio stations for continuing broadcasting in the event of a nuclear attack
- _____ Review dissemination and distribution systems to ensure maximum coverage to residents
- _____ Release EPI supplements on In-place Shelter on advice of Chief Executives
- _____ Release EPI supplements on Relocation on advice of state or federal government officials
- _____ Contact volunteer groups who may assist with distribution
- _____ Coordinate facility requirements for establishment of an information center and media release point.
- _____ Coordinate with Communications Officer on communications requirements, including anticipated needs for additional phones

RESPONSE PHASE

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

- _____ Notify Public Information Staff
- _____ Release required immediate protective actions to EBS (excluding warnings and alerting, which is done by Communications and Warning Officer)
- _____ Maintain contact with all EOC staff and advise Executive Staff on Public Information matters
- _____ Implement Media Release Point and set schedule for periodic briefings, as required
- _____ Confirm policy on admittance of news media to disaster area with local officials
- _____ Implement and assign personnel to an established inquiry center
- _____ Release telephone numbers for inquiry center to news media
- _____ Coordinate release of all public information advice and instructions with appropriate EOC staff
- _____ Coordinate with EOC Staff on requirements for printed public information material that needs to be distributed
- _____ Coordinate distribution of all public information printed material to insure maximum coverage to residents
- _____ Coordinate with host area PIO for distribution of EPI supplements to relocatees.
- _____ Advise communications officer of communications requirements (including additional telephones)

RECOVERY PHASE

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

- _____ Provide to the public instructions for the recovery phase
- _____ Notify evacuees it is safe to return to their homes
- _____ Release information regarding exit from in-place shelters.
- _____ Release safety measures and precautions applicable to hazard and recovery activities
- _____ Discontinue operation of inquiry center, when appropriate
- _____ Notify residents where to call for seeking assistance or for special problems
- _____ Discontinue operation of media release point and notify media of contact point

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER'S STAFF

- _____ Critique PIO activities with all PIO staff
- _____ Review PIO Annex and SOP and implement changes to correct problems and improve operations