Clermont County EOP – Hazardous Weather Annex

Purpose

In recent years, Clermont County has suffered damage to both private property and public infrastructure from a variety of weather related hazards.   The purpose of this plan is to establish guidelines for providing critical information and warnings to the residents and visitors of Clermont County prior to and following a severe weather incident.

Situation & Assumptions

Clermont County is susceptible to a variety of severe weather hazards including: thunderstorms, winter storms, flooding, tornadoes, and droughts. Severe weather can occur at any time of day and any time of the year.

Concept of Operations

Clermont County EMA and Department of Public Safety Services (DPSS – 9-1-1), and others monitor National Weather Service (NWS) – Wilmington, Ohio forecasts and weather radar on a daily basis.   When hazardous weather is identified as potentially threatening Clermont County, information is collected from a variety of sources and shared with the County public safety partners and the public.

Severe Weather Awareness

EMA and DPSS gather severe weather information, alerts and warnings via:

- Spotreport ILN - NOAA E-mail - spotreport.iln@noaa.gov
- inws.alerts@noaa.gov
- NOAA Weather Radio
- LEADS (Law Enforcement Automated Data System)
- WeatherTap – Subscription weather service
- ALERTUS – County employee notification system
- American Red Cross Tornado app
- Local Media Weather websites and apps
- The Weather Channel
- Weather Underground
- Neighboring County EMA Offices

Emergency Activation Levels

Emergencies that occur in the County may require the activation of the EOP and EOC, or may require monitoring by emergency management personnel. The Incident Commander or Unified Command will make a recommendation on the level of activation based on population at risk, resource availability, anticipated length of operations, property threatened, and long-term consequences, etc.

Level 1: Monitoring

The incident is not likely to exceed the capabilities of local jurisdiction, but may require notifications, unique resources, or coordination of specific activities to support the response. A Level 1 emergency will not normally require the activation of the EOP or EOC. EMA will coordinate with response organizations to assess the situation and determine if additional resources are needed.

Level 2: Partial Activation

The incident impacts multiple jurisdictions, requires the response of more than one jurisdiction, or is beyond the scope of available local resources. An emergency declaration may be made by the chief elected official of the affected jurisdiction in order to access state resources and enact emergency authorities.

Level 2 emergencies may require a partial activation of the EOP and EOC. The decision to activate the EOC or transfer operations to an alternate EOC is to be made by the Board of County Commissioners.   Per Resolution #182-01, in their absence the County Administrator can make the decision.

Level 3: Full Activation

The incident impacts a sizable portion of the County's population and requires a coordinated response of all emergency resources. Level 3 emergencies require implementation of EOP, activation of the County EOC and may require a County Emergency Declaration to access State and Federal resources.

Activation of SKYWARN

Skywarn is a National Weather Service program that provides severe weather spotter training for emergency responders, amateur radio, and the general public. This training teaches people what to look for, what to report, and how to report hazardous weather to the national weather service. Clermont County supports the Skywarn program by coordinating an annual Weather Spotter Training. The NWS – Wilmington Office determines when Skywarn (weather spotters) are activated based on the anticipated severity of the weather.   Spotters share information directly with the NWS Wilmington Office.

Methods of Warning

The NWS takes the lead in alerting the public to severe weather. But EMA, DPSS, Clermont County Office of Public Information (OPI), local news media, and emergency services all play a part in getting the warning out.

NOAA Weather Alert Radios

The NOAA All-hazards/weather alert radios are set off by the NWS for severe weather information, watches, and warnings, as well as Amber Alerts and other important emergency information. This is the single most important warning method for severe weather and all homes, businesses and organizations are urged to have at least one in a constantly monitored area.

Outdoor Warning Sirens

Outdoor warning sirens are used to alert residents who may be outdoors when a Tornado Warning is issued. The sirens are not intended to alert people indoors.   Clermont County has 67 outdoor warning sirens. Each is owned/maintained by the local municipality where it resides. The sirens can be activated by the three Dispatch Centers in Clermont County (DPSS (primary), Union Township Communication Center, and the Northeast Communication Center.

The outdoor warning sirens in Clermont County are activated when the following conditions exist:

- A Tornado Warning is issued by the National Weather Service;
- A Tornado or funnel cloud is reported by a public safety official or trained weather spotter; or
- A Chemical emergency has occurred resulting in a shelter-in-place order to be issued.

The outdoor warning sirens are tested the first Wednesday of every month at 12:00 pm. If severe weather is forecast, or is observed in the area, the monthly test will be postponed until the next monthly test to avoid confusion. The monthly tests are conducted to test the operation of the sirens and to familiarize the residents with the sound of the siren, should a *Tornado Warning* be issued.

Broadcast Media

Broadcast media receive their weather warnings from the NWS and will promptly interrupt their normal broadcast to issue the weather warning to their audience. They also normally provide additional information over and above just the warning statement from the NWS, including real-time tracking of the storm based on their own or other radar sites.

Social Media

The Clermont County Office of Public Information (OPI) maintains the County Facebook and Twitter accounts. Real-time weather warnings are better served by Twitter than by Facebook so only general weather statements about possible pending severe weather will be posted to Facebook. Twitter will be used when staff has the time to post real-time information, but this should not be looked to for primary warnings of severe weather.

The NWS and broadcast media also use social media and following them may provide useful warning information. Smart phone users are encouraged to sign up for any of the text alerting services that are available for free. Local broadcast media typically has that service available and you sign-up for their service on their websites.

Public Safety Notifications
EMA maintains an extensive e-mail distribution list and emergency contact information for the local public safety agencies. In situations with advance warning, EMA may send out notification via e-mail.   For urgent situations, DPSS can page the Fire and EMS officials.

Internal County Government Notifications
The County subscribes to the ALERTUS Software. ALERTUS automatically sends out NWS warnings to County employee computer terminals. The system also has a smart phone app that can notify field employees.   DPSS has the capability to send out additional information and directions to County employees via this system.

Reporting Criteria

Initial Reporting
The following information will be reported to the County Administrator, Assistant County Administrator, Ohio EMA Watch Office (emawatch@dps.ohio.gov ; 614.799.6500) and to the Regional Supervisor (Phil Clayton: psclayton@dps.ohio.gov ; 614.296.1859) as soon as possible.

- Incident type
- Date & time of occurrence
- Address of incident
- Casualties (fatalities and injuries)
- Evacuations
- # of shelters opened and location
- EOC Status
- Declarations (Municipal and/or County)
- Impact to local utilities
- Impact to local transportation
- Unmet needs
- Point of contact for additional information (name, title, phone number, and e-mail)

National Weather Service Reporting
The following weather events will be reported to the NWS in Wilmington Ohio via spotreport.iln@noaa.gov or 937.383.0623.

- Hail, any size – report the largest hailstone
- Measured wind gusts over 50 mph
- Wind damage:
    - Estimate speed
    - Size of damaged healthy branches
    - Size of damaged/uprooted trees
    - Number of damaged trees
    - Structures damaged
    - Impacts (power outages, blocked roads, etc.)
- Wall cloud, watch for rotation and persistence (about 5 minutes)
- Funnel cloud, not touching the ground, must see rotation
- Tornado, touching the ground, must see debris being lifted into the air or damage on the ground
- Flooding, rapidly rising water, covering roads/streets, flooding buildings
- Injuries or deaths

Plan Development and Maintenance

This plan serves to supplement, not substitute, the County's Basic EOP. If a significant event occurs, a plan review and update process will be initiated by the County EMA.

Appendix

    A. DPSS SOP – 00-222 Severe Weather and Outdoor Warning Notifications
    B. DPSS SOP – 00-407 Outdoor All-Hazards Siren Testing and Activation
    C. DPSS SOP – 00-425 Emergency Alert System (EAS) Activation
    D. DPSS SOP – 00-425A Activation of the NOAA Weather Radio for Hazardous Materials Emergencies
    E. DPSS SOP – 00-425B NOAA-WR Activation Procedures for Incident Commander

Acronyms

BCC	Clermont County Board of County Commissioners
DPSS	Clermont County Department of Public Safety Services
EMA	Emergency Management Agency
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EOC	Emergency Operation Center
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
ESF	Emergency Support Function
NWS	National Weather Service
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure