S.O.P. #   : TACTICAL OPERATIONS MANUAL # 38
SUBJECT: Emergency Alert and Warning
DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Objective: To outline the process for the Incident Commander to communicate emergency alert and warning information to the public.

Section 1: Purpose
A. To establish procedures for the Baltimore County Fire Department (BCoFD) to quickly alert the public of potential, imminent, and occurring threats and hazards.
B. To instruct the public on necessary protective actions.
C. To provide information on relevant recovery efforts.

Section 2: Definitions

A. Rave Alert System –
    a. A subscription--based mass notification system. Citizens are required to opt-in to receive alerts. The system also has access to select landlines at homes and businesses.
    b.   Rave is the browser based software currently used by Baltimore County to disseminate alert and warning information. The alert system name is BaltCo Alert.
    c. Rave has the ability send text, email, and audio alerts to cellular phones and audio alerts to landline phones.
    d. Alert senders have the ability to use polygons to target alert dissemination.
    e. Rave can be used within the Baltimore County Government to notify employees of closings and delays, and other time sensitive information.

B. Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) –
    a. The Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) is FEMA's national system for local alerting.
    b. The IPAWS system is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding and is authorized only for ***severe, imminent, or occurring emergencies and disasters***.
    c. IPAWS provides authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public through mobile phones using Wireless Emergency Alerts.
    d. IPAWS provides emergency information to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System.
    e. IPAWS provides emergency information via the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Radio.
    f. Alert originators have the ability to use polygons to target alert dissemination.
    g. IPAWS will send alerts to all cell phones within the cell coverage area of a drawn polygon (users do not need to subscribe to receive alerts).

    C. Protective actions - actions and advice that anyone can take to prepare for, keep safe during, and recover from a disaster or emergency.

    D. Alert Originator - an individual person at the keyboard/screen composing and issuing the alert

Section 3: Response

When deciding whether to issue a public emergency notification the following criteria can be applied:

1. Does the hazardous situation require the public to take immediate action?
2. Does the hazardous situation pose a serious threat to life or property?
3. Is there hazardous situation occurring now, or is there a high degree of probability the hazardous situation will occur?

A. When the Incident Commander (IC) identifies that information must be communicated to the public, the following steps shall be taken:
    a. The IC confirms with other public safety agencies on scene (i.e. HSEM, PD) that Fire will be communicating the message (ensure single source of information).

B. In the event that a Unified Command has been established, all members of the unified command should agree on a single message and designate one agency to send all alerts' The IC determines the information that needs to be communicated
    i. Identified threat.
    ii. Location of incident.
    iii. Actionable instructions.

C. The IC determines the correct platform for message dissemination.
    i. Rave
1. The Administrative Dispatch Officer (ADO) shall be the primary Alert Originator for Rave alerts for the fire department. When ADO is unavailable, the on call HSEM representative or PIO should be contacted to complete the steps below.
2. The IC will communicate to the ADO the specific information noted in b. above.
3. The ADO will repeat the details of the message back to the IC to ensure closed loop communication.
4. In the event that the IC is not a promoted Battalion Chief, Bureau Chief or Deputy Chief, the ADO will contact the on duty Deputy Chief for verification prior to sending an alert.
5. The ADO will access the online Rave platform.
6. The ADO will identify the appropriate scripted message, enter the necessary information, and send the alert.
7. The ADO will notify the IC that the message has been sent.
8. Upon the sending of an emergency notification on any emergency system, the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) on call representative, the on call PIO, Fire Chief, and Assistant Chiefs will be immediately notified.
    ii. IPAWS

1. The IC will notify the on call HSEM representative who will verify that the message meets the threshold for IPAWS dissemination.
2. The IC will communicate to on call HSEM representative of the specific information noted in b. above.
3. The on call HSEM representative will repeat the details of the message.
4. The on call HSEM representative will access the online Rave platform.
5. The on call HSEM representative will enter the necessary information and send the alert.
6. The on call HSEM representative will notify the IC via radio that the message has been sent.
7. Upon the sending of an emergency notification on any emergency system, the HSEM on call representative, the on call PIO, Fire Chief, and Assistant Chiefs will be immediately notified.

D. **If the Incident Commander is unsure of the appropriate platform, notify the on call HSEM representative.