



**City of Albany**  
**Administrative Policy**  
 Emergency Management  
 Policy #: Emergency Management  
 Title: Emergency Management

**City Manager's  
 Office/Fire  
 Department**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this Policy is to facilitate the coordination of timely emergency information across Public Safety Departments (Police/Fire/Public Works), partners, and to the public. It describes the methods by which emergency alerts and warnings are communicated to the public and incidents that trigger the activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC.)

**Policy**

This policy applies the coordination of timely emergency information.

**Scope and Application**

This policy supports the City of Albany and includes the following message types:

1. Emergency notifications
2. Emergency information updates and alerts
3. EOC notifications
4. Social media
5. Website notifications
6. Media releases
7. Door-to-door notifications
8. Emergency and informational notifications to City of Albany staff

Please note that this policy covers both the external Alerting System for the public (Albany Alerts) and the internal system that is utilized for internal notification to City of Albany staff.

**Primary and Supporting Agencies**

Primary Agencies – City of Albany Emergency Management, Fire, Police, and Public Works  
 Supporting Agencies – Linn/Benton Alerts Partners (Linn and Benton Counties and Corvallis)

**Policy and Procedures**

See Exhibit A

**Review and Authorization**

Supersedes: NA	Created/Amended by/date: 11/20/2023	Effective Date: 11/20/23
City Manager signature		



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1. Form or worksheet revision related to this document? No  Yes

If yes, attach a copy of the revised form or worksheet or provide a link to the electronic/web

Training required? No  Yes

City of Albany Alert and Warning Policy

# Emergency Alert & Warning Notifications

## I. Purpose

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## II. Scope

This policy supports The City of Albany and includes the following messaging types:

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## III. Primary and Supporting Agencies

- Primary Agencies - City of Albany Emergency Management, Fire, Police, and Public Works
- Supporting Agencies –Linn/Benton Alerts Partners (Linn and Benton Counties and Corvallis)

## IV. Authorities

- City of Albany codes and policies
- ORS 401.165 (1)-Declaration of an Emergency
- ORS 401.032-Responsibility of Emergency Services Systems
- ORS 401.309-Declaration of Emergency by City/County Mandatory vs. Non-Mandatory Evacuations

## V. Assumptions

This Policy is intended to address initial emergency messaging to the public across The City of Albany; address ongoing communication during a prolonged incident; and provide support and guidance to trained personnel.

- If an incident occurs suddenly and the situation evolves rapidly, information may be incomplete or unconfirmed.
- The loss of power/telecommunications can and will dramatically impact the efficacy of this alert system.
- While every effort has been made to ensure the reliability of the notification system, successful delivery of messages is heavily dependent on external networks and providers outside their control. Additionally, the public's acceptance of this technology and "opting-in" to the system is beyond the City of Albany's control. Every effort will be made to market the ALBANY ALERTS system but forcing the public to use the system is beyond the city's control.
- The emergency notification system addressed in this policy is in addition to systems used by neighboring jurisdictions, schools, and/or other public/private organizations.
- The appropriate alerting and notification tool must be used for the right circumstances and application to be successful.
- This policy does not provide a step-by-step user guide or best practice guide for the ALBANY ALERTS system.
- Limitations of all technology exist including call throttling, tower availability, tower functionality, etc.
- Care must be taken to balance alerting and notifying the public and over-alerting.
- When possible, emergency notifications and alerts should be translated into Spanish for rapid dissemination. However, there are times in which this is not feasible due to the urgency of needing get a message out. Translation services can take several hours to days to receive. Alert senders should not delay urgent life safety messaging for translation and should prioritize rapid notification in significant issues of public safety.
- Limitations exist on the community side including ensuring emergency notifications are turned "on" and/or individuals are registered for mass notification systems. Note: Many spam blocking apps will also block mass notifications.
- Other protocol and procedures will dictate notifications internally to the City of Albany's staff, Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Staff and leadership.
- Authorized staff with access to the ALBANY ALERTS system will be required to complete mandated training to ensure they are able to accurately send messages and understand the limitations and strengths of the system.
- Various factors can influence the public's response to an emergency message:
  - Interpretation of message – when different people listen to the same message, there may be a variation in how the public hears or how they understand

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emergency messaging, leading to different interpretation and response.

- Previous experiences – often people will rely on their previous experiences with the hazard to determine what actions they initially take (or don't take).
- Observations – individual responses to warnings vary, but most people will seek some form of confirmation. For example, some people will look for more information through environmental cues, while others will seek to contact other trusted sources, such as websites or dispatch centers (911).
- Perception of risk/proximity – people tend to make a rapid assessment of the relative safety of their location. If their perception of personal risk is high, people will act quickly. If their perception is low, they may delay acting.
- Length of residency – tourists and newcomers to the area lack knowledge of local hazards and the history of local disasters, so they may react differently.

## VI. Situation

Some incidents occur with enough warning that notification can be issued to ensure the appropriate level of preparation (i.e. winter weather, flood). Other incidents occur with little or no advanced warning and do not provide enough time to adequately notify the public (e.g., earthquake, fast-moving wildfire, active threat, etc.).

To alert the greatest possible audience at risk in an emergency requires the use of multiple systems and methods to:

- Capture the public's immediate attention, regardless of their location or the time of day.
- Ensure vital safety actions are communicated to all in the affected community regardless of language, disability or other factors inhibiting a clear understanding of the message.

As a hazard becomes known, and based on the circumstances and conditions that evolve, choices will be made to:

1. Identify the best communications tools to use, given the situation.
2. Identify the appropriate message content.
3. Identify the optimum format for each message.
4. Identify the most effective times for releasing each message.

Effective emergency messaging requires communication of the nature, extent and expected impact of a hazardous incident as well as clear, concise, and decisive information concerning appropriate protective measures and required immediate life safety action. In short, the right information must be provided to the right person at the right time. The timely and coordinated use of public warnings can reduce the impact of hazardous incidents.

Each communication mode has different limitations. For example, messages sent via social media (Twitter) are limited to 280 characters. Additionally, most wireless carriers do not guarantee the timely delivery of text messages, nor do they guarantee text messages will be received at all. The public's ability to receive emergency alerts may be disrupted if the networks are compromised by outages, damage, or high traffic volumes.

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In general, Albany Alerts relies on private infrastructure systems (i.e., cellular, landlines, television, radio services) to execute the delivery of notifications regarding emergency incidents or events.

Public Information Officers (PIO's) from partner organizations will post information regarding a significant incident on their respective websites or social media accounts.

Local media sources also act as partners during an incident by sharing timely information about necessary protective measures. Local media are often a resource for residents looking to confirm the information received via emergency notifications.

## **VII. Concept of Operations**

The primary and support agencies to this POLICY will act as a team to address emergency notification considerations to ensure the flow of information to first responders, agencies, and the public. The City of Albany will lead in initiating emergency notifications and warning procedures within city limits. The City of Albany may assist with Countywide messaging.

The following principles of effective risk communication govern all alerts and warnings issued by the City of Albany:

### Message clarity – describe the hazard or threat in accessible and direct terms

1. Indicate intended audience – specify the area or population impacted.
2. Specify actions – tell people what they should do to protect themselves and others. Some examples include evacuating, staying indoors, avoiding a certain area, or monitoring news or other information.
3. Acknowledge impacts – specify what damage has occurred or is expected.
4. Describe the response – let people know what the city and its partners are doing to manage the incident and its impacts.
5. Manage expectations – provide timely updates and “all clear” messages when appropriate to inform the public when it is safe to resume normal activities.
6. Message Format - When a hazard threatens public safety or creates a significant service disruption and an alert needs to be issued to the public, the Incident Commander (IC) or the EOC Manager or designee will determine the message content, geographic area to be covered, timing of message delivery and event duration, and appropriate public warning tools.

As possible, alert notifications should be categorized using the following format:

1. Category – type of emergency/incident
2. Brief description of hazard, intended audience, and recommended protective actions.
3. Message expiration / hazard duration
4. All-Clear- When needed, an “all-clear” message should be sent to the public.

City of Albany First Responders (APD, AFD, Public Works should notify Emergency Management when a significant incident or event occurs that meets any one or more of the following criteria:

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1. Duration – Any non-routine, unplanned incident expected to continue beyond a single operational period.
2. Resources – Any situation that requires resources not provided by routine operational procedures or mutual aid.
3. Media Interest – An incident that attracts significant media attention due to social, cultural, economic, political, technical, or legal impacts.
4. Impact- Significant impact to large populations of the community.
5. Continuity of Operations (COOP) – Any situation that significantly affects the continuity of operations, i.e., the ability of the city to meet routine expectations or deliver essential service.

If the incident requires a coordinated response, the Incident Commander – in discussion with the Fire and Police Chiefs, Public Works Director, and Emergency Manager– will determine whether to activate the Emergency Operations Center. Additional notification of the EOC activation level and staffing requirements will be sent to EOC personnel. If the EOC is activated, Emergency Management will notify stakeholders/partners.

## **VIII. Communication Tools**

Immediate requests to send emergency notifications by an Incident Commander (or their designee) from AFD, APD or Public Works. PIOs along with the Emergency Manager will be the responsible parties to send emergency alerts.

**ALBANY ALERTS (Everbridge)** -Provides emergency alerts via text message, email, pager, or voice call based on subscriber preferences. Requires individuals to opt in and maintain up-to-date contact information. In the event of a life-threatening emergency, alerts are delivered via phone calls and/or priority text messages. Non-emergency notifications are delivered via text and email. There is a 120-character limit within the Everbridge system.

### **ALBANY ALERTS administration:**

- Emergency Manager (account administrator)
- Communications and Engagement Officer (account administrator)
- PIOs of the Albany Fire and Police Departments
- City of Albany IT Director (support of system)

### Account administrator and user request process and training:

- Submit request to Emergency Manager
- For IPAWS messaging approval, any user must be added to IPAWS MOU as well as complete required Federal IPAWS web-based training.

### Use of Albany Alerts System

- All users and administrators must show proficiency in the use of alerting system.
- Those drafting messages should have experience with Public Information and communications. Additionally, these individuals should be crafting messages that are succinct, clear, and concise. The level of writing and language should be geared towards the

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best practice of an "8<sup>th</sup> Grade" level. When possible, a message in Spanish should also be sent to accommodate our primary ESL population in City of Albany.

- When possible, templates can be used to have more successful and reliable messaging during emergencies. Emergency Management and Everbridge users will work on creating templates for ease of use in a crisis.

### Message Approval

- Alert messages must be approved by the Incident Commander, EOC Director, Police and Fire senior leadership or Public Works Director, Emergency Manager, or Designee prior to being sent to avoid communication related issues.

### Mutual Messaging Aid

- Linn and Benton Counties, along with Albany and Corvallis operate in a collaborative agreement to provide messaging support and system support to each other. In the event the City of Albany is unable to send a message, other jurisdictions have authorization to do so and vice versa. Contact should be made with the Emergency Manager of those organizations to utilize this mutual aid.

**Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)- All CAP Channels** - The federal emergency alert system, IPAWS, provides public safety officials with an effective way to alert and warn the public about serious emergencies using the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, and other public alerting systems from a single interface.

Per FCC guidelines, IPAWS notifications are to be used in life-safety incidents, or a Level 3 evacuation. When sending an IPAWS alert, it is best practice to send a separate notification due to the potential for vertices issues:

1. First message with IPAWS/all CAP Channels selected:
  - i. Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)
  - ii. Emergency Alert System (EAS)
  - iii. COG-to-COG (CAPEXCH)
2. Second message sent through usual Everbridge channels.

If the Incident Commander, EOC Director, Police, Fire or Albany Public Works leadership deem the risk to the public significant enough to warrant use of this system, these public safety staff may decide to send an IPAWS message.

It is important to note that the IPAWS system has its own set of challenges and capabilities. One such challenge is an issue with "spill-over" into neighboring jurisdictions or otherwise outside of the designated area.

*\*\*\*For immediate support with IPAWS, contact the IPAWS Technical Support Services Facilities by emailing [fema-ipaws-lab@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:fema-ipaws-lab@fema.dhs.gov) or calling 1-844-729-7522 (1-84-IPAWSLAB). \*\*\**

**Emergency Alert System (EAS) for TV/Radio- EAS CAP Channel Only-** The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is a national public warning system that includes radio and TV broadcasters, cable TV,



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wireless cable systems, satellite, and wireline operators. Messages can interrupt radio and television to broadcast emergency alert information. These messages cover a large area. Emergency message audio/text may be repeated twice, but EAS activation interrupts programming only once, then regular programming continues.

It is important for authorities who send EAS messages to have a relationship with their broadcasters to understand what will be aired via radio, TV and cable based on their policies. Policies vary from station to station.

**Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)- WEA CAP Channel Only** - WEA allows geographically targeted text-like alerts to be delivered directly to WEA-enabled mobile devices. The public does not need to sign up for this service; however, successful notification requires a WEA-enabled mobile device and participation by the wireless provider in WEA. These alerts are like the “Amber Alert” messaging that are sent to mobile devices.

WEA uses a unique ring tone and vibration to signal that an alert has arrived – this is particularly helpful to people with hearing or vision-related disabilities.

WEA alerts are limited to 120 characters per message typically alerting the recipient of the type of event and recommended protective action (e.g. stay indoors, evacuate). Smartphones may receive a message up 360 characters in length. To get more specific information the public will be directed to a website, local news or other source of information via WEA.

WEA is intended to complement the EAS, which sends warnings broadcasted via satellite television and radio in the affected area.

**Website-** When an incident presents an unusual threat or requires additional attention, The Fire and Police Chief, or Public Works Director, along with the Emergency Manager, Public Information Officer, or the Incident Commander may request information be displayed on the city website.

During a prolonged incident with regional impact, the City of Albany website will be the focal point for providing coordinated information to the public on behalf of the Joint Information Center. PIOs from the city and regional partners will work to ensure messaging is accurate and consistent.

### **Social Media (Facebook, Flash Alert, Nextdoor, and Twitter (X))**

The City of Albany, Emergency Management, First Responders, and PIOs use social media accounts to make information quickly accessible to a mobile and interconnected public. None of these accounts are monitored 24 hours a day nor are considered a primary means of informing the public. However, social media has proven to be an effective adjunct to other alerting systems. Additionally, social media is a form of two-way communication, not just an outbound channel.

In general, the social media accounts for the City of Albany will be the primary accounts for disseminating information about the incident via Twitter (X), Instagram, YouTube, Flash Alert, Nextdoor, and Facebook.

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### **Media Releases**

The lead PIO for the incident will issue media releases (in coordination with other county departments and the JIC) to advise the public of planned events, service disruptions, the appropriate response to ongoing situations, and update the status of response and coordination activities following a significant incident. Information contained in a media release is typically posted to the City of Albany website and disseminated via social media, Flash Alert, informational alerts and/or other means. Media releases are not used as the primary means of communicating urgent warnings about life threatening situations.

### **Door-to-Door Notifications**

In the event of a significant or catastrophic telecommunications disruption, or the inability to communicate emergency information via means described in this POLICY, law enforcement, fire, EMS, Search and Rescue, and public works personnel may disseminate emergency information via loudspeakers in emergency response vehicles or via door-to-door notifications. This process is very labor and resource intensive.

## **IX. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Incident Commander (IC) Requestor**

1. Maintain a clear understanding of incidents affecting public safety; and understanding of alerting tool capabilities and limitations. Consider notifying the public early of Level 1 and Level 2 Evacuations.
2. Request contacting of the Emergency Manager to assist incident with EOC activation.
3. Determine the message content to be covered, timing of message delivery and duration of event, and identify appropriate warning tool to be used.
4. Confirm message content with alerting staff, prior to message distribution.

### **Public Information Officers**

1. Work in coordination with the Emergency Manager to provide public information and updates regarding significant events in jurisdiction.
2. Provide general support of the emergency notification systems, including the development of crisis communications plans, Joint Information Center Plans, Emergency Communications Strategy, and notification templates as needed.
3. Provide support to the JIC and EOC as appropriate during and after significant events.

### **Emergency Manager**

1. Provides situational awareness regarding events and incidents in The City of Albany, provides incident management support, and notifies county and state response partners.
2. Coordinate with Incident Commander, Police and Fire Chiefs and Public Works Director, EOC

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Staff and PIOs to ensure an emergency notification is sent.

3. Advise city leadership concerning emergency management needs before, during, and after an emergency.
4. Maintain and activate the EOC and/or JIC if appropriate, which helps facilitate coordination among municipal and county partners and outside agencies.
5. Provide general oversight of the city's emergency management programs, including maintenance of the Emergency Management Plan.

\*\*\*When increased fire weather risk or red flag conditions exist, Emergency Manager will consult with the Incident Commander on coordinating timely messaging. If the Emergency Manager deems the incident a life-safety issue, they reserve the right to send an emergency alert to the public within the anticipated impact area. \*\*\*

### **Senior/Elected Officials Mayor, City Council, Fire and Police Chiefs, Public Works Director, City Executive Leadership Team**

1. Ensure availability to make critical decisions following a large-scale emergency or disaster.
2. In consultation with the City Manager, Fire and Police Chiefs, Public Works Director and Emergency Manager, declare a state of emergency or disaster as appropriate.
3. Leverage emergency powers and resources to support emergency response efforts and messaging.

## **X. Resource Requirements**

Resources needed to support the effective operations under this Annex are addressed in policies developed and maintained by each Primary and Supporting PSAP Agency.

## **XI. Plan Maintenance**

The City of Albany is responsible for developing and maintaining this annex. This annex will be reviewed annually and updated as needed to remain current and will include all parties subscribed to use the Albany Alerts Tool. This document will be added to the Emergency Operations Plan.

- City of Albany Emergency Operations Plan, 2023
- Wireless Emergency Alerts, Federal Communications Commission, <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/wireless-emergency-alerts-wea>
- Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, FEMA, <https://www.fema.gov/integrated-public-alert-warning-system>
- National Warning System Operations Manual, FEMA, [http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/1550\\_2.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/1550_2.pdf)

