

## Cedar County Outdoor Warning System Activation Protocol

For Cedar County, Iowa & Individual Municipalities Therein

The ATTENTION / ALERT WARNING signal may be utilized by local government officials for peacetime emergencies including severe weather. During a severe weather incident, local siren warning systems should be activated in the event of the following:

1. A **confirmed sighting of a tornado** on the ground, **or funnel cloud** aloft reported by a trained weather spotter that is approaching the community.
  2. A **confirmed sighting**, by a trained weather spotter, **of severe winds causing uprooted/ downing whole trees**, golf ball sized hail or winds at or exceeding 70 mph approaching the town or community.
  3. The receipt of a **Tornado Warning, or a Severe Thunderstorm Warning including wind speeds of 70mph or greater** issued by the National Weather Service, indicating that the community is in the direct path of an oncoming tornado or damaging winds.
  4. The outdoor warning system may also be activated upon the recommendation from the County Sheriff, the Emergency Management Coordinator, the Communications Supervisor, the local fire chief or their designated alternates.
- A **CONFIRMED** sighting is defined as a sighting that is observed either by a National Weather Service trained municipal or county employee or a National Weather Service trained Sky Warn weather spotter.
  - An **UNCONFIRMED** sighting is a report that is received from one or more members of the general public. A radio equipped municipal or county vehicle should be dispatched to investigate an unconfirmed report, to determine if the report is valid or not. **In** the absence of a county or municipal vehicle, a radio equipped trained spotter can also provide such verification. Confirmation of the sighting will result in a **CONFIRMED** report issued by the governmental official or spotter.

## **Activation for Peace Time emergencies other than Severe Weather**

The outdoor warning system will be activated upon orders from the County Sheriff, the Emergency Management Coordinator, the local fire chief (or designee) or the Communications Supervisor.

1. The order should be accompanied by a brief description of the emergency and identification of the area in which sirens should be activated.

## **Fire Activation**

Fire Departments that possess the capability to set off their local siren via radio or push button may do so at the discretion of the local Fire Chief or Assistant Chief. The Cedar County Sheriff's PSAP must be notified of such activations as soon as feasible.

## **Siren Failure**

In the event a community siren fails to activate, instruct the fire chief to use their emergency vehicles to warn the residents if they have time and can do so safely.

## **Activation & Re-activation Procedures**

Following the occurrence of a weather event meeting the above criteria, the dispatch center should radio/ page the local fire service(s), whom communities are at risk, and request that their sirens be sounded. The local communities shall report that their siren is being sounded to the Cedar County PSAP.

The warning system should be re-sounded for a new confirmed sighting, or from a second storm cell, that meets the activation criteria described above. Additional activations may be reported to the Cedar County PSAP if time permits.

## **Activation by Zone**

Cedar County has been separated into nine Siren and Evacuation Zones. The Outdoor Warning System can be activated by individual zone via the fire chief of the town possessing the emergency siren.

Communicators should make efforts to communicate the zone or zones appropriate for the activation of the Outdoor Warning System based on the warning polygons superimposed over the radar map and/or the warning area described in the text issued by the National Weather Service. The intent is to issue warnings that are more timely and appropriate. Communicators should always use caution and if in doubt whether part of a zone is threatened, the communicator should relay the information on to the local fire department and request that the siren(s) be sounded.

### **All Clear Procedures**

In keeping with the policy of the National Weather Service, the issuance of an "all clear" statement should not be issued by local government.

Severe weather watches, whether severe thunderstorm or tornado, are traditionally issued for a period of four (4) to six (6) hours. The Weather Service may terminate a "watch" early if weather conditions change and the threat of severe weather no longer exists.

Severe weather warnings, whether severe thunderstorm or tornado, are traditionally issued for periods of thirty (30) minutes to one (1) hour. Warnings are usually allowed to expire on their own, without early termination by the Weather Service.

*Residents requesting "all clear" information should be advised to monitor commercial radio and television stations for further weather information, but local government should not issue an "all clear" statement.*

No activation of outdoor warning signals should be used to signify the termination of a weather watch or any kind of an "all clear" advisory.

## **Testing**

All Outdoor Warning Systems within Cedar County shall be tested on a regular monthly basis. The local fire chief shall notify the following agencies of their monthly testing:

- Cedar County Emergency Management Agency
- Cedar County PSAP
- the local municipality (where the outdoor warning siren is stationed)

The notification shall include the dates and times for all scheduled testing of outdoor warning devices for the entire year.

The test shall be for the duration of one full cycle unless a special request is made by Emergency Management or the local fire chief for maintenance or sound testing purposes.

## **Battery Backup**

Some of the City owned systems have battery backup. This backup should maintain siren capabilities for up to two weeks after AC power has failed. A total of 15 to 20 minutes of siren activation time should be available after AC power failure. Siren activations will reduce the amount of hours or days that the sirens will remain capable of sounding.

## **Siren Maintenance**

Problems with the Outdoor Warning System shall be reported to the following individuals (communicators need to establish contact with one person below who will then contact further assistance if necessary):

## **County Siren System**

Contact the Emergency Management Coordinator

City Fire Chief