



COWETA COUNTY
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Outdoor Warning Siren System Activation and Testing Policy

A. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to describe and establish procedures for the activation, testing and maintenance of the Coweta County Outdoor Warning Siren System.

B. Scope:

This policy covers all operational aspects of the Coweta County Outdoor Warning Siren System.

C. Objectives:

1. Describe the overall outdoor warning siren system.
2. Establish the purpose for the outdoor warning siren system.
3. Identify activation criteria and procedures.
4. Define testing and maintenance procedures.

D. Authority:

The Coweta County Joint City-County Resolution Related to Emergency Management.

E. Situation & Assumptions

1. System Overview

The Coweta County Outdoor Warning Siren System is made up of Whelen Omni-Directional Sirens, strategically located across the County. Sirens are placed where large groups of citizens may be gathered outdoors and may not have access to a television, radio, or other means of communication related to weather warnings. Locations include but are not limited to recreation parks, schools, and community centers.

2. Siren System Monitor and Activation Points

- a. The primary activation point and system monitoring is the Coweta County E-911 Center (24 hour warning point).
- b. The secondary activation point and system monitoring is located at the Coweta County Justice Center.

3. Readiness

The Coweta County E-911 Center and the Justice Center maintain a constant state of readiness for activation of the Coweta County Outdoor Warning Siren System.

4. Situational Awareness

- a. Coweta County Emergency Management Agency (EMA), through the Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan, has identified the threat posed by tornadoes to Coweta County.
- b. EMA shall identify and use all available tools within the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) to keep Emergency Support Function (ESF) partners, government agencies, critical facilities, and the public aware of developing situations that could require the activation of the outdoor warning siren system.

F. Functional Roles

- 1. EMA is responsible for monitoring the daily status of the outdoor warning system, including ensuring that maintenance is requested and completed should a problem be detected.
- 2. EMA shall monitor weather conditions, and, should the criteria be met, ensure that system activation occurs and, if necessary, procedures are followed for backup system activation or manual activation.
- 3. Coweta County E-911 (E-911) staff will be trained on operation and activation procedures for the system in the event EMA staff is not available.

G. Concept of Operations

- 1. Activation Criteria – Activation of the outdoor warning siren system is based on
 - a. the National Weather Service issuing a Tornado Warning for a specific area of the County (automatic activation).
 - b. Tornado sighted by a SkyWarn/trained storm spotter (manual activation).
- 2. System Logistics – The system is designed for maximum flexibility and can activate automatically or manually.

- a. Automatic activation – Combined with information provided by the National Weather Service, the outdoor warning siren system uses the latest software technology in determining which siren(s) to activate.
- b. Manual activation - EMA or E-911 staff shall activate the outdoor warning siren system manually by determining which siren(s) should be activated based on information as it applies to Coweta County:
 1. The specifics of the warning (type and location)
 2. radar data
 3. and/or a trained spotter/SKYWARN storm spotter has spotted a tornado
3. Social Media – Upon receiving information from the National Weather Service regarding Tornado Warnings or Severe Thunderstorm Warnings for Coweta County, system software will forward the information via email to predetermined email accounts, Coweta County’s Facebook page, and Coweta County EMA’s twitter account.

H. Severe Weather Definitions

- * **Tornado** – A violently rotating column of air, usually pendant to a Thunderstorm, with circulation reaching the ground.
- * **Tornado Watch** - The National Weather Service has identified that the notification area has conditions that exist in which Tornadoes may form. It does not mean that Tornadoes are imminent, just that you need to be alert to your surroundings.
- * **Tornado Warning** – The National Weather Service has received notification that a Tornado has been spotted or that Doppler Radar indicates Thunderstorm Circulation which can spawn a Tornado.
- * **Severe Thunderstorm** - A severe thunderstorm is a thunderstorm with winds of at least 50 knots (58 mph) and/or hail at least 1 inch in diameter (the size of pennies). Severe Thunderstorms are capable of producing Tornadoes.
- * **Severe Thunderstorm Warning** - A warning issued to notify the public of an existing, imminent or suspected severe thunderstorm.

- * **SkyWarn/Storm Spotter** - SKYWARN® is a National Weather Service (NWS) program that consists of trained weather spotters who provide reports of severe and hazardous weather to help meteorologists make life-saving warning decisions. Spotters are concerned citizens, amateur radio operators, truck drivers, mariners, airplane pilots, emergency management personnel, and public safety officials who volunteer their time and energy to report on hazardous weather impacting their community.

I. Training

1. EMA and E-911 staff will receive annual training on
 - a. the outdoor warning siren system
 - b. the outdoor warning siren system policy

J. System Testing

1. **Monthly Testing (audible)** – The outdoor warning siren system will be audibly tested on the first Wednesday of each month at 11 am – weather permitting. This testing coincides with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio test and the State of Georgia recommended guidance on audible testing.
2. **Weekly Testing (internally)** – The system will conduct an internal “silent “ test every Monday at 9am to ensure the system software has communication with the sirens. This test will activate the sirens with a sound inaudible to human ears. An email will be sent to EMA with the results.
3. **Daily Testing (internally)** – The system will conduct an internal test every 30 minutes. This test will evaluate the main system and the backup system for readiness. In the event one system isn’t communicating properly, the other system will act as primary and send email notification to EMA.
4. **Special Siren Testing** – On occasion, a special siren test of an individual siren may be required to access its readiness.

K. System Maintenance

1. The outdoor warning siren system is monitored around the clock. If any maintenance issues or failures are presented, EMA will consult with the siren maintenance provider about the failures and work with the maintenance provider to resolve the issue(s).

L. Public Education and Outreach

1. EMA provides ongoing public education and outreach about disaster preparedness. To maximize the effectiveness of the Coweta County Outdoor Warning Siren System, EMA shall work to educate the public as to why the sirens activate and how to appropriately react to the activation.

M. Plan Maintenance

1. The Outdoor Warning Siren System Policy shall be reviewed, at a minimum, annually, and updated as necessary.

Any questions about Coweta County's Outdoor Warning Siren System Policy should be directed to the Coweta County Emergency Management Agency.