

Poweshiek County Emergency Management Agency



Emergency Support Function (ESF) 2 Communications



2024

Poweshiek County Emergency Management Commission

Plan Adoption Document

2024

We hereby certify that the attached/enclosed plans, portions of plans or Emergency Support Functions (ESF) to the Poweshiek County Comprehensive Emergency Response Plan have been approved and adopted by the members of the county Emergency Management Commission on this the 24th day in the month of July in the year 2024. This plan shall become part of the county emergency response and emergency operations plan once adopted.

Plans or ESFs Adopted:

ESF 2: Communications, including all appendices and attachments

Dawn Hamilton
Chairperson, Emergency Management Commission

7/24/24
Date

DAWN HAMILTON
Chairperson, EMC-Printed

Brian Paul
Coordinator, Emergency Management Agency

7/24/24
Date

Brian Paul
Coordinator, EMA-Printed

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ESF Coordinator

Poweshiek County Dispatch Center Supervisor

Primary Agencies

Primary agencies that will take the lead in developing and implementing this plan

Poweshiek County Sheriff's Office Dispatch Center
Poweshiek County Emergency Management Agency

Support Agencies

Major agencies to support the Primary Agencies

Poweshiek County 911 Service Board
Poweshiek County Fire Departments
Poweshiek County Law Enforcement Agencies
Private Sector Vendors/Contractors

Purpose

Why are we writing this ESF?

The purpose of this Emergency Support Function (ESF) Plan is to provide guidance:

1. For developing communications capabilities necessary to meet the operational requirements of local jurisdictions and agencies.
2. For planning of emergency communications operations and responsibilities in response to natural disasters and other large-scale or major incidents in Poweshiek County.
3. To coordinate the effective restoration of communications after a disaster with service providers, utility sector, and communications providers.
4. For agencies that are responsible for initiating and managing communications related objectives during a major incident, emergency, or disaster.

Scope

What does this plan cover?

Generally, this ESF applies to all agencies within Poweshiek County that utilize the Poweshiek County Dispatch Center as their primary point of dispatch and communications.

The principles and practices identified in the plan are applicable and are to be used at incidents of all levels, i.e., single resource incidents to major disasters.

This plan is not intended to duplicate ESF 15-External Affairs/Public Information and does not supersede agency specific internal communications procedures.

Situation

What is creating the need for this plan?

1. The Poweshiek County Dispatch Center is the primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for the county and cities within Poweshiek. Emergency calls for service are received by the 911 center and dispatch to the appropriate public safety agencies.
2. Fire, Rescue, EMS, Law Enforcement, and Emergency Management radio communications are all integrated into the dispatch center which is located in the Poweshiek County Public Safety Building. On-site automatic backup generator can provide power to the building for essential operations.
3. There is not an alternate location designated in the event there is a need to evacuate the Dispatch Center.
4. Both Emergency Operations Centers (EOC's) located in Poweshiek County have limited radio communications capability and may require support from the Dispatch Center.
5. Communication capability with agencies or jurisdiction beyond normal mutual aid may be limited.

Planning Assumptions

What can we realistically assume when planning for incidents with a significant communications component?

1. Routine day-to-day modes of communications may be severely interrupted during the early phases of an emergency or disaster.
2. To the extent communications methods are not damaged, normal communications methods may be overwhelmed and burdened causing delays and the inability to have effective communications.
3. The Dispatch Center will be overwhelmed, staffing may become an issue.

4. There will be identified talkgroups/channels that may be used and assigned for primary direction and control.
5. The loss or damage of some landline and/or cellular telephone services will reduce or eliminate the effectiveness of the Dispatch Center, city and county departments, and EOC lines.
6. The Dispatch Center maintains emergency contact information for maintenance or repair of communications facilities and equipment.
7. In the event of an emergency or disaster, a secondary communications system may be set up to establish communications support between organizations, agencies, and governments.
8. Redundant means of communications are available to local response agencies to ensure timely exchange of information based on the nature of the incident to assist with incident management. These include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Public Safety Radio System
 - b. Conference Calling
 - c. Video Conferencing
 - d. Voice Calling and Texting
 - e. Email
 - f. Third-party alerting programs
 - g. Alert Iowa Notifications
9. Neighboring county dispatch centers may provide limited communications support in a localized emergency or disaster.
10. Local governments may request out of county assistance when necessary by going through Emergency Management.

Policies

What policies are in place that will govern the development and implementation of our ESF 2 Plan?

Policy Statements

Primary and Support Agencies will:

- Ensure that agency contingency plans are in place in the event primary means of communications are down.
- Participate in post incident briefings and development of an After-Action Report as requested.

- Participate in drills and exercises to test existing communications plans and procedures.
- Coordinate efforts through the Incident Command System (ICS) and assist in planning activities to maintain and reestablish communication capabilities.

All County and municipal agencies and departments that are serviced by the Dispatch Center will:

- Maintain up-to-date contact lists on essential personnel and provide that information to the Dispatch Center.
- Use plain language in radio traffic in accordance with National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) principles.
- Follow NIMS and ICS structures and principles.
- Direct all communications issues, questions, or comments through the Chain of Command within their respective organizations. Leadership should then direct those questions, comments, and concerns to the Dispatch Supervisor.

Note: The Poweshiek County Dispatch Center operations is under the jurisdiction of the Sheriff. As such, all policies, procedures, and practices within the Dispatch Center are subject to authorization by the Sheriff and are applicable to all agencies that use the Dispatch Center as their primary point of dispatch and communications.

Concept of Operations

This section will describe how the primary and support agencies in ESF 2 will organize and work to support communications in the overall response effort.

General

- On-scene operations and communications with Poweshiek County will be managed by the Incident Command System. All incidents should have a designated Incident Commander that is the primary contact between on-scene resources and the Dispatch Center.
- Incident Command should be established by the department/organization's issued unit/badge number and the name of the incident. Incident names should be relevant and corresponding to the incident location. Example: "unit 701 will have 400th St Command".

- Communications in the field will normally be established by radio. Radio communications will serve as the primary means of communication between field units and the Dispatch Center. Telephone communications will serve as the secondary means of communication between field units and the Dispatch Center. A third means of communication, where applicable and available will be an Instant Messaging (IM) feature available on mobile computer software to the Dispatch Center.
- To the extent possible, responders will follow their organization's internal policy and procedures in carrying out assigned tasks and communications.
- Radio Communications should follow the federal "call and answer" format.
- ESF 2 will typically be activated to support other incident objectives and will be activated as needed.
- Specific Primary and Support Agency responsibilities and tasks under this ESF are outlined in **Attachment A-Responsibilities/duties Checklist**.
- If the requirements of the situation exceed the capabilities of the local communications system, mutual aid may be requested through appropriate channels.
- Communications with the state and federal government will typically be through telephone communications. Radio communications with supporting agencies may be done with linked, shared, or common mutual aid talkgroups/channels.

Preparation Activities

ESF 2 Primary and Support Agencies are responsible for ensuring that the following preparedness items are fully addressed:

- Review and revise ESF 2 and attachments annually.
- Determine where contingency plans are needed and develop them.
- Develop and maintain agreements with other government entities, private and non-profit organizations to assist in the communications function and operation during an emergency.
- Maintain a list of communications resources that are available to deploy to an affected area.
- Provide training on specific ESF responsibilities for affected personnel.

- Maintain policy and procedures for alerting/notification of key personnel and their reporting requirements.
- Develop policy/procedure to conduct regular checks of communications systems and emergency power equipment in the Dispatch Center, at radio sites, and the EOC's.
- Regularly attend tabletop exercises and all other applicable training events.
- Utilize EOC/EMA communications equipment as an integral part of all exercises.
- Review and analyze lessons learned in emergency/disaster incidents that have occurred elsewhere and make appropriate corrections/additions to this plan.

Response Operations

This section will outline how coordination of communications will typically occur and then escalate with the size and complexity of an incident.

The Dispatch Center has established communications guidelines, policy, procedure, and guidelines in place that are adequate for normal operations including typical mutual aid calls.

The Dispatch Center is staffed with two dispatchers at all times and has the ability to expand to a third position if needed.

In the event of a complex, major, or extended incident, the Dispatch Center Supervisor will be notified by his/her staff of the incident. The Dispatch Center Supervisor may notify the Incident Commander and work in collaboration to establish a local communications network to coordinate and provide for more effective control of communications within the incident area. This local communications system may consist of:

- Assignment of a Communications Officer (Dispatcher) specifically to the incident.
- Assignment and deployment of a Field Communications Officer (Dispatcher) to the Incident Command Post.
- Designation of operational talkgroups available for incident use.
- The Dispatch Supervisor and Incident Commander in Coordination with Emergency Management will confirm and document the Communications Plan (ICS Form 205) as part of the Incident Action Plan (IAP)

- The Dispatch Center Supervisor is authorized to activate any Support Agencies to assist in establishing and implementing the Communications Plan.

EOC

In the event of a major emergency or disaster, the EOC may be activated by authorized individuals as outlined in the Base Plan and in ESF 5-Emergency Management.

If the EOC is activated, Emergency Management will make the proper notifications to ESF Coordinators to respond to the EOC and be briefed on the situation.

There are two Emergency Operation Centers located in Poweshiek County:

**Poweshiek County Sheriff's Office
4802 Barnes City Rd
Montezuma, IA 50171**

**Grinnell Public Safety Building
1020 Spring St
Grinnell, IA 50112**

The determination of which EOC to use will come from the Incident Commander and Emergency Management.

When activated, the ESF 2 Coordinator will become the Communications Branch Director under the Planning Section of the EOC. The Communications Branch's mission area is to provide support and coordination including, but not limited to:

- Develop an incident specific Communications Plan to support the incident's communications needs.
- Monitor communications systems operation and capability within the county.
- Conduct damage assessment on communications systems within the county and impacted area and prioritize the restoration of damaged communications infrastructure.
- Notify private services of damage to communications towers/systems (i.e., cell towers).
- Coordinate with cellular and/or radio equipment vendors/providers to provide and maintain critical communications within the impacted area.
- Coordinate with internet vendors and providers to provide and maintain critical internet communications within the impacted area.

- Execute in collaboration with Emergency Management and the 911 Service Board any emergency purchase or repair contracts for critical communications equipment.
- Coordinate Communications with state or IMAC/EMAC responders.

Communications

Communications will be coordinated within the EOC and with field operations by the Communications Branch Director according to the following general guidelines:

- Communication within the EOC may be informal and face-to-face to the intended party when exchanging information, requesting resources, providing updates, etc. This is typically done to coordinate closely with other ESF groups and branches working within the EOC.
- Communication between the EOC and the Dispatch Center should be done either by EOC telephone directly to the Dispatch Center or EOC. Where practical, face-to-face communication can be utilized as well.
- Communication between the field operations (Incident Command Post) and the EOC should be done by either utilizing the Public Safety Radio System on the EOC Talkgroup, or by phone to the appropriate EOC Branch.
- Essential information based on the nature of the incident will be shared with all EOC staff to maintain situational awareness.
- As a last resort, runners/couriers will be utilized to send messages and replies to and from the EOC and to and from the Incident Command Post. In this instance, ICS Form 213 will be utilized.
- Additional resource support can be found in **Appendix B-Resources**.
- For additional support information on the 911 System see **Attachment 2-911 Disruption**.
- Additional regional or state assistance will be coordinated through the Poweshiek County Emergency Management Agency.

Recovery Operations

ESF 2 may remain active during the transition from response to recovery of the incident. Deactivation will be determined by the EOC Director. While active during the recovery phase, ESF 2 will:

- Continue to support communications needs within the incident.
- Prioritize restoration of communications system components in the following order:
 - 911 and Public Safety Radio
 - Critical service telephone and internet
 - Local government communications
 - Shelter, evacuation, reunification, and Disaster Recovery Centers
 - General service restoration
- Plan and prepare for communication needs with state and federal assets.
- Submit documentation for costs and reimbursement as requested.
- Conduct and participate in an after-action debriefing to evaluate lessons learned and areas for improvement.

Plan Maintenance

How will this plan be maintained?

The ESF Coordinator and Emergency Management Coordinator will be responsible for reviewing this plan on an annual basis. Revisions will be made and updated as needed and required. The updated Plan will be forwarded to out as necessary. Dissemination of the plan will be made by Emergency Management following the guidelines in the Basic Plan. Significant operational changes in the plan resulting from exercises or actual events will be accomplished through Emergency Management and the ESF Coordinator.

The Poweshiek County Emergency Management Coordinator will coordinate and integrate the exercising of this plan as part of the other ESF or incident specific exercises.

Authorities/References

Where did we get the information and authority to develop this plan?

The authority to develop and implement this plan is identified in Iowa Code Section 29C and outlined in the Poweshiek County Basic Plan.

Poweshiek County Sheriff's Office-Dispatch Center Policy and Procedure
Poweshiek County 911 Service Board