CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

CITY OF Summersville



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the City of Summersville's Crisis Communications Plan, a strategic guide designed to ensure timely, accurate, and coordinated communication during emergencies, unexpected events, and other situations that may impact our community.

This plan establishes a framework for how the City will gather, verify, coordinate, and share information with residents, the media, City officials, employees, and community partners. By preparing in advance, the City can communicate effectively, reduce confusion and misinformation, and help ensure the public receives reliable information when it matters most.

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PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to establish procedures for the City of Summersville to communicate timely, accurate, coordinated, and actionable information before, during, and following an emergency or crisis.

This plan governs the City's public information and communications activities. It does not replace or supersede the operational authority of emergency response agencies, Nicholas County 911/Dispatch, Nicholas County Homeland Security and Emergency Management, law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, or other responding agencies.

During multi-agency incidents, the City will coordinate public information with the agency or Incident Command responsible for managing the incident to help ensure information shared with the public is accurate, consistent, and verified.

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COMMUNICATIONS ROLES

The City's Director of Communications or other authorized City employees will coordinate and distribute public information during an emergency or crisis. Communications may be issued through the City's official website, social media accounts, news media, or other appropriate channels.

Information should be confirmed with the appropriate department, responding agency, Incident Command, or other authoritative source before it is released. When an incident involves multiple agencies, the City will coordinate its messaging with those agencies as appropriate.

When a spokesperson is needed, the City will generally designate the department head or official most directly associated with the incident. For example, the Utilities Director may serve as spokesperson during a water or sewer emergency, while the Police Chief may serve as spokesperson for a law enforcement incident.

The Mayor, Director of Communications, or another appropriate City official may also serve as spokesperson depending on the nature and scope of the situation.

The person coordinating or distributing public information does not necessarily need to be the spokesperson.

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GATHER • VERIFY • COORDINATE • COMMUNICATE

GATHER
Obtain the most current information available. Determine what has happened, what is known, who is responding, and what information the public needs.

VERIFY
Confirm information with the appropriate City department, responding agency, Incident Command, emergency management officials, or other authoritative source before releasing it.

COORDINATE
When multiple agencies are involved, coordinate public information to help ensure messages are accurate and consistent and do not interfere with emergency operations.

COMMUNICATE
Provide timely, clear, and actionable information through the appropriate City communications channels. Continue providing updates as new verified information becomes available.

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CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST

1. Obtain current information about the situation.
2. Identify the agency or department responsible for the incident.
3. Notify appropriate City officials and employees.
4. Identify affected audiences and communications needs.
5. Coordinate with responding agencies and communications partners as needed.
6. Determine the appropriate City communicator and/or spokesperson.
7. Prepare and verify the initial public message.
8. Distribute information through appropriate City channels.
9. Provide consistent information to the news media as appropriate.
10. Monitor public questions, media coverage, and social media.
11. Address significant misinformation with verified information when necessary.
12. Provide additional updates as information becomes available.
13. Communicate resolution, recovery information, or an all-clear when appropriate.

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