Kanawha Putnam Emergency Management Plan Functional Annex	
Public Warning	**A01**

NRP Coordination:	ESF #2 – Communications
Primary Agency:	Emergency Management
Support Agencies:	▪ 911 Dispatch Centers and alternate dispatch ▪ National Weather Service ▪ Law Enforcement ▪ Fire Service ▪ Emergency Medical Services ▪ Media Including Social Media ▪ HAM Radio Operators

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

1. This plan deals with the protocols and guidelines for warning the public and first responders of a potential, impending emergency situation.

B. Scope of Work

1. The plan will address protocols and strategies for notifying the public and first responders about emergency or potential disaster situations affecting the local area using currently available assets.

II. Situation and Assumptions

A. Emergency management operations often begin with warning of the public when the emergency is large in scope.

B. The function of providing timely Public Warning is an imperative government task.

C. Public Warning efforts can mitigate loss of life and property, allowing the public and response agencies to take protective actions.

D. The objective of Public Warning is to alert the public to monitor the television. commercial radio, internet or to standby for phone messages for information regarding an impending emergency situation, thereby allowing them the opportunity to take protective action.

E. The metropolitan area of Kanawha and Putnam counties is prone to a variety of emergency situations that can rapidly affect the safety of lives and property.

F. Public Warning messages may not reach certain members of the public and others may be unable to take action or be apathetic about taking action.

G. Certain members of the population will be unable to take protective action on their own.

H. Assets for Public Warning, ranging from primitive to the state-of-the-art, are in place throughout the area's political jurisdictions.

I. Assets are in place for the purpose of warning all operational personnel.

J. Warning sirens some with voice capability are located in strategic locations throughout the two counties to serve as an outdoor notification device

K. Public safety assets, specifically, emergency vehicles with electronic sirens equipped with public address functions, can be deployed for early warning solutions.

L. 911 telecommunicators are trained to activate public warning mechanisms.

M. The Charleston Forecast Office of the National Weather Service engages in public warning for weather emergencies via weather radio broadcasts using the NOAA All Hazard Radio network.

N. Many residents get information from the internet, websites such as news outlets and the National Weather Service Web Site and through social media such as email, Facebook or Twitter.

O. Less than .003% of the population of the metro area has been identified as non-English speaking.

III. Concept of Operations

A. General

1. Due to the different technologies in place, operational guidelines will be presented separately for Kanawha County and Putnam County.

2. The National Weather Service is the primary source of forecasts and warnings of weather and flood conditions for the United States. It operates a system for the observation, analysis and forecasting of weather conditions and the dissemination of these forecasts and warnings.

3. The National Weather Service operates continuously broadcasting weather radio stations (NOAA All Hazard Radio) which broadcast weather and river forecasts. In addition, the National Weather Service can activate the West Virginia Emergency Alert System (EAS) by teletype or commercial telephone on a Statewide, regional or county basis in order to warn the general public of impending weather related disasters, as well as other types of emergencies, (i.e., chemical incidents) if requested.

4. PL 93-288, Section 202, as amended, authorizes the use of National Warning System (NAWAS) for the purpose of providing needed warning to governmental authorities and the civilian population in areas endangered by imminent disaster.

5. The objective of the first phase of Public Warning is to draw the attention of the public in order to compel them to begin monitoring broadcast media for emergency information. This phase may also direct the public to take immediate protective action if time is of the essence.

6. The objective of the second phase of Public Warning is to provide information to advise the public of an emergency situation including that information necessary for the public to take protective action against threats to life and property.

7. It is critical that all available Public Warning methods be utilized in order to reach as many people as possible.

B. Primary Agency

1. The Emergency Management Director has the primary responsibility for ordering activation of the Public Warning Plan. However, certain local, state and federal officials are empowered by law to order activation of public warning procedures.

2. The Emergency Management Director may receive warning information from state and federal officials through the following methods.

   a. Telephone

   b. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) All hazard Radio

c. National Warning System (NAWAS)

d. West Virginia Automated Police Network (WEAPON)

e. WV Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) - eTEAM (a web-based emergency management communications resource)

f. Radio communications

3. Initial Public Warning messages should contain general information about the type of threat, location of the affected area, anticipated duration of the threat and instructions to the public for protective action.

4. After initial Public Warning implementation, the Emergency Public Information Plan should be activated to update the public on the situation and status of the emergency.

C. Secondary Agency(s)

1. The mission of secondary agencies is to disseminate Public Warning messages through the procedures stipulated for each jurisdiction below.

2. Public Warning messages will be distributed to four distinct groups.

a. First responders. They will respond to assist with execution of the Public Warning Plan and/or to assist the public, as needed.

b. National Weather Service. Staff will immediately begin dissemination of Public Warning messages, thereby causing activation of the Emergency Alert System.

c. The public. In some cases, information may be relayed by first responders announcing information from mobile public address systems or door-to-door visits.

d. Emergency Management personnel who may need to assume specialized tasks as a response to the situation. Some of those task may include briefing media on the situation, using social media, internet, and making contacts with other agencies to communicate the situation and proper actions.

3. 911 Center

a. The 911 Center may be the first agency to be aware of an impending or occurring incident through a 911 call, notification from NOAA All Hazard Radio or other means.

b. Upon receipt of information regarding an impending emergency incident, the 911 Center will contact the Emergency Management Director who will make a determination regarding the need for Public Warning.

c. Once a decision has been made to implement Public Warning procedures, the 911 Center will conduct those measures at their disposal as soon as possible and without delay.

d. The 911 Center will also conduct notification of local officials, per policy, any time Public Warning procedures are conducted.

4. Other Supporting Agencies

a. Conduct Public Warning using mobile public address systems, as needed.

b. Assist the public with protective actions, as needed.

D. Notification Methods -- Outgoing

1. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) All Hazard Radio

a. Ability to activate personally-held radio receivers with a tone or a digital code containing county-specific header information. Voice announcements can warn of weather or other public emergencies

b. Alerting system tested the fourth Wednesday of the month at noon.

c. May be activated for all hazardous incidents by calling Charleston Forecast Office. Office is staffed 24 hours a day, every day.

d. The NOAA All Hazard Radio system interfaces into the Emergency Alert System, allowing for almost instantaneous extension of the warning message onto broadcast stations (radio and television).

2. Emergency Alert System (EAS)

a. Formerly known as the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS).

b. Cooperative arrangement among broadcast stations statewide to disseminate warning messages to the public.

c. EAS extends to a federalized warning system in order to disseminate nationwide emergency warning to the public.

d. The appointed primary station ("LP-1") is responsible to alert other broadcast stations of an emergency warning message.

e. Broadcast stations use a digital system that triggers decoders in other stations, thereby disseminating warning information quickly across a broad geographical area. This includes crawlers across T.V. screens giving information to the public.

f. In the metro area, EAS may be quickly accessed through NOAA All Hazard Radio.

3. Digital Receivers

a. Used across the metro area to alert first responders, industrial and other locations.

b. Administered by 911 centers.

4. Outdoor Warning Siren System

a. Consists of outdoor voice and/or tone sirens located throughout Kanawha and Putnam Counties, with an emphasis on the valley floor that has the greatest population density and proximity to major transportation routes and chemical facilities.

b. Sirens are radio-controlled, activated by the 911 centers, and can be activated in disaster mode (three minute, steady tone, repeated several times) or in attack mode (three minute, wavering or cycling tone, repeated several times) pursuant to Federal Emergency Management Agency Regulation Publication CPG 1-17.

c. The voice siren provides an excellent voice reproduction and an intense alert warning tone. When the siren is activated, citizens will hear a steady siren tone, followed by a Voice Announcement, concluding with a steady siren tone.

d. Some of these sirens are also used to alert volunteer firefighters. Used as such, they are limited to a wavering tone lasting not more than two minutes.

e. It must be assumed that the sirens won't be heard by many members of the population.

f. The sirens are an especially important asset to warn members of the public who are outdoors.

g. Most of the sirens do contain battery backup or back-up generators. If the commercial power mains are not working, the sirens should function.

h. Sirens are activated for three minutes for test purposes at 1200 hours local time on the Fourth Wednesday of every month.

i. Residents located near one of the dual-use sirens may not properly react due to confusion over why the siren is sounding (i.e., public warning vs. fire call).

5. Reverse 9-1-1

a. Vendor-supplied, web-based system that will call in excess of 300 phones per minute and provide a pre-recorded voice message to the answering party.

b. Message can be quickly customized.

c. A per-call charge applies.

d. Residents who are not home or not available will not receive the message.

e. Residents who use cellular service for their home phone will not be called unless they have previously asked to be added to the database.

f. Residents can contact the county 9-1-1 centers to have cell phones and email addresses added for public notifications.

g. Can be utilized to notify personnel at critical infrastructure locations.

6. Paging Systems

a. 911 centers have the ability to provide rapid notification to response and emergency management personnel through public safety communications systems and commercial paging systems.

7. Public Address Systems

a. The use of mobile public address systems typically associated with electronic sirens in public safety emergency vehicles.

b. Requires significant manpower and vehicle resources to warn a large geographical area.

8. Social media and internet

a. Emergency Management Personnel may use social media and internet to distribute information to a wide audience.