



Verona, NJ Emergency Communication Plan

Purpose:

The goal of this emergency communication plan is to outline the roles, responsibilities and procedures for key township employees, officials and departments that will guide the township in disseminating information promptly, accurately and to all audiences that apply.

An emergency is defined as follows:

Declared Emergency or "NJ State of Emergency":

New Jersey State law (N.J.S.A. App.A:9-37) allows the Governor to declare a State of Emergency during significant weather events and natural disasters. The emergency declaration is a tool used by the government officials who are managing the emergency. It allows State agencies to quickly respond to needs of citizens, reassign personnel, and deploy vehicles, trucks, and equipment to respond to the incident. A State of Emergency allows the government to act more quickly than it can during non-emergency times. A State of Emergency permits government officials to recommend specific actions that citizens should take to insure the safety of their families and homes during the emergency. Each emergency is different, and different factors will impact the decisions made by State officials in response to the incident.

Non-declared emergency or crisis:

A crisis or non-declared emergency is defined as a significant event or incident that disrupts, or has the potential to disrupt, the township's normal activities and operations. This could include a fire, earthquake, severe weather, crime or other event that presents a threat and typically involves a response from police, fire, utilities and/or emergency medical personnel.

This plan is intended to be flexible and used in conjunction with other emergency departments.

Process

The Township Administration in conjunction with the Chief of Police and the Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator, or their designees, will make decisions in regards to the level of crisis or emergency, following any Federal, State or County declarations above all. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is responsible for the preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery efforts throughout the township. Alerts (landline phone calls, text and emails) will be sent via Rave Emergency Alert platform, known to residents as AlertVerona as well as township communication channels which include but are not limited to; website, social media, e-newsletters, TV, community bulletin boards, key community organizations and media.

Implementation

The OEM will coordinate with key personnel and provide information based on availability. OEM will meet frequently to review changing facts, messaging and strategy as well as asses that intended audiences are being reached.

Messaging may address:

- What happened?
- To who did it happen?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- How did it happen?
- Is there an immediate call to action to communicate?

Key audiences:

OEM will determine which groups need to be informed first. It is important to keep in mind that people will seek and trust other sources of information (news reports, social media, word of mouth, etc.) in the absence of official communication. Effective communication will help suppress rumors, maintain trust and ensure public safety. Key audiences may include:

- Residents
- Employees
- Visitors
- Students
- Parents
- Mayor and Council
- News media
- State/federal officials

Spokesperson:

The Public Information Officer, or a designated alternate who has knowledge of the incident, will be responsible for communicating messaging, updates, press releases and media relations. All messaging will be shared with township administration and OEM for approval before dissemination.

End of crisis:

OEM will advise once the crisis or emergency has ended. Once complete, OEM will convene for a formal briefing and review of the incident. These discussion will result in a report to be shared with the administration and Mayor and Council.

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