

EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION #2

COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND WARNING

*Formerly ESF-2 Communications and Warning
Administrative Revisions Only – January 2013*

LEAD: TCOMM 9-1-1
Emergency Management

SUPPORT: Fire Agencies
Sheriff's Office
Central Services

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

1. Communications

To identify a communications system for the efficient flow of information during an emergency or disaster.

2. Warning

To provide or supplement alerting and warning to key officials and the public of an impending or occurring emergency or disaster.

B. Scope

This ESF applies to the communication and warning assets of all County Government and Cooperating Agencies, including radio, 9-1-1, voice and data links, telephone and cellular systems, National Warning System, Emergency Alert System (EAS), and amateur radio.

II. RELATED POLICIES

A. The County relies on the hazard warning capabilities of federal and state government, industry, and the media. Citizens are expected to be aware of a hazardous situation for which there is significant media attention, such as severe weather or flooding. When there is a demonstrated need, particularly if timeliness is crucial to protect life and property, the county may supplement existing warning systems. Supplemental measures will depend on the nature of the

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hazard, the quality and quantity of information available, resources available, media attention, and other situational factors. Supplemental measures will focus on enhancing or amplifying the information being provided through existing sources and, to the extent practicable, upon participatory systems activated at the neighborhood or community level.

- B. In accordance with RCW 38.52.110 (1), in responding to a disaster, or the threat of a disaster, the Board of County Commissioners is directed to utilize the services, equipment, supplies, and facilities of existing departments, offices, and agencies of the state, political subdivisions, and all other municipal corporations thereof including but not limited to districts and quasi municipal corporations organized under the laws of the state of Washington to the maximum extent practicable, and the officers and personnel of all such departments, offices, and agencies are directed to cooperate with and extend such services and facilities upon request notwithstanding any other provision of law.
- C. No guarantee of a perfect system is implied by this plan. As assets and personnel may be overwhelmed, Thurston County can only endeavor to make every reasonable effort to respond to a hazardous event based on the situation, and on information and resources available at the time.

III. PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

- A. Reliable communication capabilities are necessary at all levels of government for day-to-day communication, warning of impending disasters, disaster response and recovery operations, search and rescue operations, and coordination between the state, local governments, and response agencies.
- B. Routine day-to-day modes of communication will continue to be utilized to the degree that they survive the disaster.
- C. Local government may request state assistance when necessary by going through emergency management channels.
- D. Thurston County is subject to a variety of emergency or disastrous events requiring rapid dissemination of warning and/or other emergency information to local officials and/or the public. Emergency or disaster warning may originate from any level of government; however, most disaster forecasting resources are located within the federal government.
- E. The National Warning System (NAWAS), established by the federal government, is the primary means of receiving and disseminating warning(s) to state and local officials within Washington State. The Washington State Warning Point is operated 24 hours a day by the Washington State Emergency Management Office, with operational assistance provided by the Washington State Patrol. Thurston

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County's NAWAS receiving point is Thurston 9-1-1 Communications (TCOMM 9-1-1), a 24-hour facility.

- F. Notification of a threatening situation may also come from the National Weather Service, via NOAA Weather Radio or the media, the amateur communications community, or the public.
- G. Initially, Thurston County will focus on coordinating lifesaving activities and reestablishing communications and control in the disaster area.
- H. Initial reports of damage will be fragmented and provide an incomplete picture of the extent of damage to telecommunication facilities.
- I. Weather, damage to roads and bridges, and other factors will restrict entry of emergency communications nodes into the area.
- J. Tests of local warning systems will be conducted periodically to familiarize government and the public with their use.
- K. In the event that public instructions need to be translated, the provision of interpreters will be coordinated through the ECC and the Crisis Clinic.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. Communications

1. Thurston 9-1-1 Communications (TCOMM 9-1-1) is located at 2703 Pacific Avenue SE, Olympia, Washington. TCOMM 9-1-1 functions as the county-wide 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), and provides dispatch services for various law enforcement, fire and emergency medical agencies. TCOMM 9-1-1 also serves as the initial communications, alert, and warning point for Emergency Management. See Attachment 2, Thurston 9-1-1 Communications for a description of the TCOMM 9-1-1 organization and services.
2. Once activated, emergency communications are also provided through the Thurston County Emergency Coordination Center.
3. The Emergency Alert System (EAS), when established, will operate through local radio and cable TV stations and is intended to provide local officials with the means to disseminate prompt, reliable emergency information, instructions, and warnings in the event of an emergency or disaster.
 - a. KGY Radio, Olympia, 1240 AM; 96.9 FM
 - b. KXXO Radio, Olympia, 96.1 FM

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- c. KAOS at The Evergreen State College, Olympia, 89.3 FM
 - d. COMCAST, Olympia
4. The communication capabilities presently available include:
- a. 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP)
 - b. Commercial telephone (regular, cellular, and wireless telephone)
 - c. Two-way radio (see Attachment 1)
 - d. National Warning System (NAWAS): land line-voice located in TCOMM 9-1-1.
 - e. Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES), radio and teletype/packet system via amateur (ham) frequency bands.

B. Warning

1. Whenever Thurston County emergency management officials are alerted to the threat or occurrence of a hazardous event that could lead to or has resulted in a disaster, the Emergency Coordination Center will be activated at the appropriate level and the situation monitored. Depending on the circumstances, monitoring could be a prolonged activity or result in the immediate activation of the local information and warning system.
2. Monitoring will consist of the accumulation, display, and evaluation of relevant information, release of appropriate public information advisories, and alerting response agencies and organizations of the situation. A list of media and agencies who are targeted for receipt of advisories and warnings is included on Attachment 4.
3. As soon as it is apparent that the public must take some action to prepare or protect itself, the local warning system will be activated, as appropriate, and as time and resources allow. Warning could take the form of one or more of the following: activation of the Emergency Alert System to disseminate urgent information; activation of a telephone alert system; activation of community telephone trees; Fire District and Law Enforcement apparatus providing warnings along specific routes using public address systems and sirens; activation of volunteer resources; posting of signs; activating a call response center in the ECC; providing local warning information to regional television and radio stations; or other mechanisms, as appropriate. The Telephone Alert System for flood notification is described in Attachment 5.

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4. Public information, advisories, and warnings will be updated as necessary until the hazard has subsided.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Thurston 9-1-1 Communications

1. Develop and maintain appropriate plans and procedures to ensure, to the extent practicable, the integrity of emergency communications systems.
2. Develop and maintain procedures to share disaster related information with the ECC, when activated.
3. Assist with the dissemination of information and warnings as requested by the ECC Manager.
4. In coordination with Emergency Management, conduct tests and exercises of the communication and warning system.

B. Emergency Management

1. In coordination with TCOMM 9-1-1, conduct tests and exercises of the communication and warning systems.
2. Develop ECC procedures for gathering, displaying, and evaluating relevant information.
3. Develop appropriate notification lists and procedures for activating the information and warning system. Include consideration of special populations such as the handicapped, the elderly and infirm, schools, day care centers, and nursing homes.
4. Coordinate public information and warnings with local jurisdictions and surrounding counties, as appropriate.
5. Maintain the ECC in a configuration to support the warning system and efficient and effective communications.
6. Include communications and warning as part of the county-wide emergency management training program.
7. Coordinate public information and instructions and media relations as defined in ESF-15 External Affairs.

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C. Fire Agencies

1. In coordination with Emergency Management, develop and maintain procedures to provide communications and warning support and services when requested from the ECC.
2. In coordination with Emergency Management, train personnel in proper warning methods.

D. Sheriff's Office

1. In coordination with Emergency Management, develop and maintain procedures to provide communications and warning support and services when requested from the ECC.
2. In coordination with Emergency Management, train personnel in proper warning methods.
3. When requested, as feasible and without jeopardizing their primary mission, make Search and Rescue units and volunteers available to the ECC to assist in the warning effort.

E. Central Services

1. Develop and maintain appropriate plans and procedures to ensure, to the extent practicable, the integrity of the county telephone system.
2. Develop and maintain means to expeditiously post warning information on the County's Internet site.

VI. REFERENCES

- A. Thurston ECC Standard Operating Procedures
- B. Thurston County R.A.C.E.S. Plan
- C. Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
- D. National Response Framework

VII. ATTACHMENTS

1. Thurston County Radio Communications Frequencies
2. Thurston 9-1-1 Communications (TCOMM 9-1-1)

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3. State and Federal Support Organizations and Services
4. Selected Media, Government and Community Addressees for Information, Advisories and Warnings
5. Thurston County Telephone Alert System for Flood Notification

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ATTACHMENT 1

THURSTON COUNTY RADIO COMMUNICATIONS FREQUENCIES

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ATTACHMENT 2

THURSTON 9-1-1 COMMUNICATIONS (TCOMM 9-1-1)

TCOMM 9-1-1 is a countywide enhanced 9-1-1 public safety answering point and dispatch center for public safety police, fire and Medic One departments serving all of the cities, towns and unincorporated areas within Thurston County. It was formed in 1970 and consolidated from separate police and fire dispatch locations prior to that time.

The primary responsibilities of TCOMM 9-1-1 are as follows:

1. Planning, organizing, installation, maintenance, and administration of a central dispatch facility, to provide efficient communications and dispatch services to all law enforcement, fire, medical one, and other agencies. Provide citizen access and 24-hour answering of emergencies through the 9-1-1 reporting system, for the safety of life and protection of property.
2. Support dispatch and paging service to some county and city road districts, street and sewer departments, the Coroner, Emergency Management, and several others.
3. Coordination assistance is provided to the various governmental agencies for the purchase, maintenance, and operation of their systems.
4. Personnel are trained in law enforcement, fire dispatch procedures and emergency medical dispatching. They provide emergency medical pre-arrival instruction by telephone prior to the arrival of the EMT or paramedic units (Medic One). There is direct access via the 9-1-1 emergency number for the speech and hearing impaired using teletype (TTY/TDD).

ORGANIZATION

The Operations Board identifies and addresses the operational day-to-day issues and requirements for the Director to implement. Representatives from the primary departments as well as the small departments, Police Chiefs, Fire Chiefs, Fire Chiefs Association, the Medic One Director and the Undersheriff make up the Operations Board.

The Administration Board assures fiscal responsibility and acts as a final budget approval authority. This Board is made up of elected officials representing the same jurisdictions as mentioned above except that the Sheriff serves on this Board, Medic One is represented by the County Commissioner and the Fire Commissioners Association instead of the Fire Chiefs Association is represented.

The Boards receive input from the Director and staff and there are two standing committees that operate under the authority of the Operations Board, a Law Enforcement Radio Users Committee and a Fire Liaison Committee. As their names imply, they

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represent the needs of the agencies they represent and operate on a more technical basis providing recommendations and issues to the Operations Board for consideration.

The organization was originally known as CAPCOM, or the Thurston County Communications Department. It was located in Building #3 of the County Courthouse from 1978 through 1998. In 1999, it was relocated to the Thurston County Emergency Services Center in Olympia, sharing the facility with Medic One and Thurston County Emergency Management.

TRANSITION FROM COUNTY DEPARTMENT TO INDEPENDENT AGENCY

During the development of the 2010 budget, the organization began exploring the concept of separating from Thurston County and forming an independent agency. An amended and restated intergovernmental agreement was signed by all parties by the end of October 2010, with a transition date set for January 1, 2011. CAPCOM became Thurston 9-1-1 Communications or TCOMM 9-1-1, reorganized as a Non-Profit Intergovernmental Corporation.

SYSTEMS

TCOMM 9-1-1 is funded by citizens through 9-1-1 excise taxes and 1/10 of 1% sales tax. There are numerous major systems operated by TCOMM 9-1-1 for the safety of all agencies served. They include:

- Digital Private Branch Exchange (PBX) Telephone system that supports the entire Emergency Services Center.
- Digital 9-1-1 Telephone System
 - 9-1-1 Operating Positions
 - Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) from any position within the Communications Center on any telephone line.
- Law Enforcement (Very High Frequency) VHF repeater radio system, 4 channels
- Fire/EMS VHF repeater radio system, 4 channels
- Fire/EMS VHF simplex radio system, 3 channels
- 4-site Digital Microwave radio system
- Digital Fire Simulcast radio system
- Twenty one remote radio sites
- 21-person, geographically based, Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system
 - 7 remote CAD terminal locations at law enforcement stations
 - Fire station faxing
 - Interface to digital alphanumeric paging system to 2-tone/voice paging for fire service
- Mobile computer backbone
 - 90 law enforcement mobile laptops
- Emergency Services Center Local Area Network (LAN) for administrative computers

ATTACHMENT 3

STATE AND FEDERAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS AND SERVICES

State

1. Communications

State Emergency Management has overall responsibility for planning and coordinating the emergency communication program within the state as identified in the Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

2. Warning

a. Washington State Emergency Management is responsible for ensuring the receipt and dissemination of warning information throughout the state. Identical equipment installed in both the State Emergency Management EOC and Washington State Patrol Dispatch make it possible for either facility to disseminate warning information depending on the time of day (the State EOC is manned on a 24-hour basis). Both locations use NAWAS and ACCESS to disseminate warning information to local governments.

b. Warnings, watches, and advisories will be transmitted by the National Weather Service to the State Warning Point for:

- 1) Floods
- 2) Tsunamis
- 3) Avalanches
- 4) Severe weather

Other warnings that may be issued by the State Warning Point include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Volcanic eruptions
- 2) Nuclear incidents
- 3) Hazardous material incidents
- 4) Earthquakes
- 5) Warning information to localized areas at the request of the political subdivisions

c. Upon receipt of any warning, the primary or alternate State Warning Point will transmit the information, without delay, to those political subdivisions that may be affected.

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- d. Other responsibilities are identified by the Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

Federal

1. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Under a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration, emergency communication support may be provided in disaster areas where such facilities have been disrupted.

2. Federal Communication Commission (FCC)

In the event of an emergency disrupting normally available communication facilities in a widespread area, the Commission, in its discretion, may declare that a general state of communication emergency exists, designate the area concerned, and specify the amateur frequency bands, or segments of such bands, for use only by amateurs participating in emergency communication within or with such affected areas in accordance with FCC Rules and Regulations, Section 97-107 - Emergency Operations.

3. National Warning System (NAWAS)

The NAWAS Warning Point terminal, lines, and equipment throughout the state are provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the purpose of rapid dissemination of warnings.

Operational direction and control of the NAWAS is exercised by the National Warning Center except when emergency situations exist only within the State of Washington. During such time, direction and control is exercised through the Washington State Emergency Management Division.

4. National Weather Service (NWS)

The National Weather Service is responsible for forecasts and weather warnings which may present a threat to life and/or property.

5. U.S.G.S Cascades Volcano Observatory

This combined effort of the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, FEMA, and the University of Washington is responsible for issuing volcanic activity or eruption advisories and warnings.

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ATTACHMENT 4

**SELECTED MEDIA, GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY ADDRESSEES FOR
INFORMATION, ADVISORIES AND WARNINGS**

Newspapers:

Olympian
Tacoma News Tribune
Centralia Chronicle
Nisqually Valley News
Tenino Independent

Radio:

KGY (Olympia: 1240 AM; 96.9 FM)
KXXO (Olympia: 96 FM)
KAOS (TESC/Olympia: 89.3 FM)
KRXY (Olympia: 94.5 FM)
KMAS (Shelton: 1030 AM)
KELA (Centralia: 1470 AM)
KIRO (Seattle: 97.3 FM)
KOMO (Seattle: 1000 AM; 97.7 FM)
KITI (Centralia: 1420 AM; 95.1 FM)

Television:

KIRO/7 (Seattle)
KOMO/4 (Seattle)
KING/5 (Seattle)
KSTW/11 (Seattle)
KCPQ/13 (Seattle)
TCTV/Cable 3 (Olympia)
NW Cable News/Cable 2 (Seattle)

County Government and Cooperating Agencies:

Board of County Commissioners
Thurston County Sheriff's Office including Search and Rescue Council and Jeep
Patrol
Public Works
Resource Stewardship
Central Services
TCOMM 9-1-1

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Fire District(s), as appropriate
Intercity Transit
Internet at <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/em>

Other Emergency Management Organizations:

State Emergency Management
Emergency Managers of the cities of Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, Yelm, Rainier and Tenino and the town of Bucoda, as appropriate
Emergency Managers of Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason and Pierce Counties, as appropriate

Community Organizations:

American Red Cross
Animal Services
Crisis Clinic
Food Bank
Salvation Army
WIN 2-1-1

Others:

Consolidated Tribes of the Chehalis/Lucky Eagle Casino, as appropriate
Nisqually Indian Tribe, as appropriate
Frank's Landing Indian Village, as appropriate
Wa-He-Lute School, as appropriate
Puget Sound Energy

ATTACHMENT 5

**THURSTON COUNTY TELEPHONE ALERT SYSTEM
FOR FLOOD NOTIFICATION**

Flood Notification System

The National Weather Service is the nation's only flood warning agency. National Weather Service advisories, watches and warnings are broadcast by regional and local media as they are issued. Each flood plain resident is responsible for being aware when a threatening situation is developing or exists and keeping informed through media reports. Residents are also responsible for taking appropriate action. When local officials are aware of information not available to the National Weather Service, such as when specific areas of the county will flood and when evacuation may become necessary, local media advisories will be issued.

Based on lessons learned during previous floods and public input, Thurston County Emergency Management has enhanced its ability to inform the public and to reinforce warnings from the National Weather Service. The following is an overview of the telephone alert system for flood notification.

1. The National Weather Service will issue media advisories, watches and warnings whenever forecasts or models indicate that rivers may approach bankfull levels. If there is a forecast model for a given river, that river will be mentioned specifically in media announcements originated by the National Weather Service. In Thurston County, the following rivers have forecast models and will be mentioned specifically in watches and warnings: Nisqually, Deschutes, Skookumchuck and Chehalis. All other rivers and streams will be included in a general statement such as "... flood watches/warnings remain in effect for all small rivers and streams in southwest Washington." The National Weather Service will also broadcast advisories, watches and warnings on NOAA Weather Radio which can be received locally, with the appropriate equipment*, from Seattle (162.55 MHZ) and from Olympia (162.475 MHZ).
2. When appropriate, the Thurston County Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) will issue local media advisories to supplement or amplify information provided by the National Weather Service. These will be based on a knowledge of local effects, information from dam operators, and information received from field personnel and the public. Local advisories will be distributed to:

Media: Media agencies listed in Attachment 3

Other: Appropriate Fire and Law Enforcement agencies, County Departments, the American Red Cross, other volunteer organizations,

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surrounding jurisdictions, the state EOC, and selected businesses for posting on public bulletin boards.

Internet: We have created an emergency information section on the Thurston County Emergency Management web site where media advisories and local notifications will appear. This service is available at the following Internet address:

<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/thurston/em>

3. The County ECC will provide appropriate Fire and Law Enforcement agencies, County Departments, the American Red Cross, and volunteer organizations with additional information such as recommendations for community level warnings, evacuation, and transportation and shelter needs.
4. When forecasts or events may necessitate extraordinary action to protect life and property, the ECC will activate the telephone alert system for flood notification (description can be found on following pages).
5. As the public becomes aware of a developing threatening situation, either from personal observation of the weather and rising water, media announcements, word of mouth, or any other source, they will take necessary actions to protect life and property, implement locally developed community self-help and self-awareness programs, and call the ECC if in doubt or in need of additional information.** When activated, the ECC will have a staff of call receivers to answer questions from the public. The ECC number for all public inquiries is (360) 867-2800.

* National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio receivers can be purchased from most electronic outlets beginning at about \$20. Most models can be tuned to several stations and many have an automatic alert feature that sounds an alarm whenever a warning is issued.

** Citizens are encouraged to share emergency information with neighbors and other flood plain residents, particularly those with special needs. Call the ECC or 9-1-1 if you know of a special- needs resident requiring assistance.

Description of Telephone Alert System for Flood Notification

Thurston County's Telephone Alert System for flood notification is intended to reinforce National Weather Service watches, warnings and advisories which are broadcast by local commercial radio and television providers. The Telephone Alert System will only be activated when, in the opinion of County Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) staff, a level of warning above and beyond that provided by the National Weather Service and the media is needed to recommend residents take action, or prepare to take action, to protect life or property. The mere fact that the National Weather Service has issued a flood warning for a particular river will not automatically activate the Telephone Alert

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System. It will be activated when flooding is expected that may require evacuation or personal protective measures. Generally, the service will not be activated unless the following threshold level flow rates, in cubic feet per second (cfs), are expected to be exceeded.

Nisqually, upstream of Centralia Diversion Dam	6,000 cfs from La Grande Dam
Nisqually Delta	13,000 cfs at McKenna
Nisqually, at Nisqually Pines	19,000 cfs at McKenna
Deschutes	4,000 cfs at Vail Loop Road Bridge
Skookumchuck	4,000 cfs from Skookumchuck Dam
Chehalis	23,000 cfs at Prather Road Bridge

Some roads and fields may already be flooded at these levels. However, based on previous floods, the level is now nearing the point where extraordinary action may be warranted such as relocating herds, preparing for evacuation, relocating personal effects to higher floors, sandbagging, etc.

When a threshold level is expected to be met, an informational or alerting message will be sent. The procedure will be as follows.

Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) staff will draft a telephone alert message. The message will be abridged to minimize the length of each call. The ECC staff will then telephonically record the message and activate the call out to registered residents in the threatened area. When the phone is picked up, either by a person or by an answering machine, the Telephone Alert System will repeat the alerting message. If there is no answer after a number of rings, the system will hang up and call the next number on the calling group list. For each number for which there is no pick-up, the Telephone Alert System will attempt two redials at 15 minute intervals. If there is no answer on the third attempt, there will be no further attempts for that message. Additional messages will be sent via the Telephone Alert System when deemed appropriate by ECC staff.

Sample message: "This is Thurston County Emergency Management with an important message. The Thurston County Emergency Coordination Center has issued an urgent flood alert for the Nisqually River. The discharge at La Grande Dam has increased to 18,000 cubic feet per second. The crest is expected at Nisqually Pines between 3:30 and 5:00 p.m. and at the Delta between 7:00 and 9:00 p.m. Please take necessary precautions. Residents of Nisqually Pines should be prepared to evacuate if flow rates increase. Residents in the Delta area, on property adjacent to the river, are urged to evacuate prior to crest arrival time. Please listen to local media and emergency officials for further information."

Remember, this is not a stand alone service. It is part of a larger warning system, explained in a separate flyer, that includes federal, state and local components. The service is not for initial warning but provides urgent information directly to residents that may have to take action to protect life or property. There is no guarantee that a resident will be home when the system is activated or that phones will be working. Just because a

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telephone alert is not received, it should not be assumed that all is well. Residents should be proactive and listen to the media or call the Thurston County Emergency Coordination Center at (360) 867-2800.

The Telephone Alert System service will be evaluated after each flood season to determine if it will be continued.