



Queensland
Government

Standing Order

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Community Information During Emergency Incidents

Purpose

The purpose of this Standing Order (SO) is to outline the procedures delivering information to the community during an emergency incident, particularly focussing on media releases and Emergency Alert messages.

Application

This SO applies to all Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) personnel and the Department of Community Safety (DCS) Media and Corporate Communications (MACC) Unit who may be involved in the identification, development, approval and delivery of community information.

Introduction

General

There is an increased focus to ensure communities are continually informed of emergency incidents by providing relevant and timely advice and/or warnings.

The delivery of community information during an incident is normal incident management practice within the QFRS. Incident ground strategies may include door knocking, assistance from the Queensland Police Service (QPS) or State Emergency Services (SES), other suitable local arrangements and also engaging the media. Another strategy may be the use of an Emergency Alert message which targets an identified community by delivering a phone (land line) voice message and/or a mobile SMS message.

It is important to highlight that the delivery of community information through media and also the Emergency Alert system complements incident ground strategies

MACC Role

MACC provides media assistance and support by coordinating the development and delivery of community information through established media networks. This assistance is primarily aimed at smaller or low-scale incidents where there is no or limited Incident Management Team (IMT) capacity. For larger scale incidents where an Information Unit is established, then the relevant Information Officer (or if delegated the Media Officer) will liaise directly with MACC to assist in the formation and delivery of community information (media releases).

A summary of the community information process in Attachment A – Community Information during Emergency Incidents Flowchart.

Policy

A QFRS incident management priority is to ensure that the community is informed of relevant incident information in their local area, and advised of any actions that may be required.

Procedures

1. IDENTIFY NEED FOR COMMUNITY INFORMATION

1.1 The Incident Controller is to identify the need for community information as part of their continual incident assessment and incident action plan development, taking into account:

- Impact of the situation:
 - for example, the severity of the current event, forecasted weather conditions, predicted situation, exposures and community affected;
- Timeframe for the impact to occur; and
- Community information required:
 - for example, advice only, preparations and actions required, relocation to a safer place and/or advising that there is no longer a threat to the community.

1.2 The Incident Controller is to then determine the type of community information required, for example:

- *Advice* messages are to keep people informed and up to date with developments.
- *Watch and Act* messages are identified as supporting the need for people to be aware of their situation, the circumstances around them and take action to be prepared and protect themselves, their family and neighbours.
- *Emergency Warning* messages are associated with the highest level of risk to life and aligned with the principle message that the safest option is to not be near the fire or other emergency. Timing of the delivery of the message is also critical.

1.3 *Note:* The trigger or identification for community information may also occur within the Region, for example, through the on-call Senior Officer, Regional Operations Coordination Centre (ROCC), Assistant Commissioner or above.

2. SELECT AND IMPLEMENT SUITABLE STRATEGIES

2.1 The Incident Controller is to select and implement suitable incident ground strategies to effectively deliver the information to the community. These strategies may include any combination of:

- Direct contact such as door knocking;
- Assistance from the QPS and/or SES;
- Other suitable local arrangements;
- Media such as television, radio and printed media (refer **Section 3**); and/or
- Delivery of an Emergency Alert message (refer **Section 4**).

2.2 As a further guide, the following table is presented:

Type of community information	Method of delivery	Responsibility for delivery
Advice	Direct contact such as door knocking.	Locally arranged by the Incident Controller.
	Assistance from local QPS Officers and/or SES volunteers.	Locally arranged by the Incident Controller.
	Media such as television, radio and printed media.	MACC (through the Incident Controller).
Watch and act	Direct contact and assistance from local QPS Officers and/or SES volunteers where appropriate to the risk.	Locally arranged by the Incident Controller.
	Media such as television, radio and printed media.	MACC (through the Incident Controller).
	Emergency Alert messages may be appropriate.	QFRS Authorising and Operating Officers (through the Incident Controller).
Emergency warning	Direct contact and assistance from local QPS Officers and/or SES volunteers where appropriate to the risk.	Locally arranged by the Incident Controller.
	Media such as television, radio and printed media.	MACC (through the Incident Controller).
	Emergency Alert messages.	QFRS Authorising and Operating Officers (through the Incident Controller).

3. REQUEST FOR MEDIA ASSISTANCE

3.1 Media Notification

3.1.1 If media is identified as a method to deliver community information, the Incident Controller will contact FireCom to request media assistance and also provide the following information (if available) in wordback:

- **Community message** required (e.g. Advice, Watch and Act or Emergency Warning);
- **Location** of the incident (e.g. specific location, suburb, street);
- **Severity** of the incident (e.g. large, fast-moving);
- **Direction of travel** (e.g. coming from, going to with compass point);
- **Threat impact** of the incident (e.g. potential areas of threat, being specific as possible including suburb, street, houses or building);
- **Time** when the threat impact is likely to occur;
- **Frequency** of message (e.g. 15 minutes, 30 minutes or hourly);
- **Community actions** required (e.g. advice only, action to take, move to a safer area); and
- **Contact details** of the Incident Controller.

3.1.2 FireCom will then contact MACC on 0457 514 849 or MACC.Emergencies@dcs.qld.gov.au with the media request, and notify the Regional Assistant Commissioner (and others as determined by the Region) of the request.

3.1.3 If established, the IMT (Information Officer or if delegated the Media Officer) will contact MACC directly to initiate the media processes.

3.2 Development of media release

- 3.2.2 MACC will obtain specific media information required from wordback (Visinet Browser) to develop a media release.
- 3.2.3 If further clarification is required, MACC will contact the relevant FireCom and, if necessary, the Incident Controller (or the relevant IMT role if appointed).
- 3.2.4 In the circumstances where MACC may identify that an Emergency Alert message could be beneficial, MACC is to advise the Regional Assistant Commissioner of this option.

3.3 Issue of media release

- 3.3.2 MACC will:
- Contact the Regional Assistant Commissioner (or other person as designated by the Regional Assistant Commissioner) to confirm the content of the media release for issue;
 - Issue the media release through the relevant media networks and also update the DCS website; and
 - Provide a copy of the media release to relevant Regional personnel.

4. REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY ALERT MESSAGE

4.1 General

- 4.1.1 Emergency Alert is a national telephone-based emergency warning system that delivers warnings to landline and mobile telephones (based on billing address) in the identified threat area.
- 4.1.2 The system:
- Defines an emergency incident area on a map;
 - Identifies the phone services located within the area;
 - Sends a message (voice to landline and text to mobile phone) to all identified phone services within the area; and
 - Provides status and reports on the delivery of these messages.

4.2 QFRS emergency alert roles

- 4.2.1 *Authorising Officer* – a nominated QFRS Officer who has received Emergency Alert training and has the authority to initiate and approve the release of an Emergency Alert campaign for the QFRS. The responsibility also includes the appropriateness, urgency and consequences of issuing an Emergency Alert campaign. The QFRS Authorising Officer is generally any Assistant Commissioner, Chief Superintendent or the Regional Manager, Rural Operations (for wildfire incidents).
- 4.2.2 *Operating Officer* – a nominated QFRS Officer who has received Emergency Alert training to create an Emergency Alert message. This Officer also is responsible for submitting and approving the campaign to Telstra following consent from the Authorising Officer.
- 4.2.3 *QFRS Manager, Operational Coordination* maintains the Commissioner approved list of QFRS nominated Emergency Alert Authorising and Operating Officers, and manages the documentation associated with all Emergency Alert campaigns.

4.3 Request for an emergency alert message

4.3.1 The Incident Controller (or other delegated person) will contact the relevant Authorising Officer within the Region of the potential for an Emergency Alert message.

4.3.2 Where possible, INCFORM 39 – Community Information is also to be completed and forwarded to the Authorising Officer.

4.4 Approving the development of an emergency alert message

4.4.1 The Authorising Officer is to make a determination whether to initiate the campaign by considering:

- Type of emergency – is QFRS the lead agency?
- Certainty – is the threat likely to occur?
- Urgency – is the threat going to occur in a timeframe that makes of warning methods ineffective?
- Severity – is there a potential for loss of lives and/or livelihood?
- Post impact issues and consequences of information and warning(s) issued?
- Will the Emergency Alert message occur in conjunction with other warning activities or media releases?

4.4.2 If the Authorising Officer approves the development of a campaign, the Authorising Officer must immediately notify the following:

- MACC on 0457 514 849 or MACC.Emergencies@dcs.qld.gov.au;
- Regional Management Team (RMT), the Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner; and
- Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the relevant Local Government.

4.4.3 The Authorising Officer must also liaise with the Incident Controller to ensure that consequence arrangements are in place to accommodate outcomes of the campaign, including the consideration of additional resources to manage a possible increase in call volumes to fire communication centres.

4.5 Development of an emergency alert message

4.5.1 On approving the development of an Emergency Alert message, the Authorising Officer is to contact the on-call Operating Officer (State Operations Coordination Centre (SOCC) – 3109 0101) and provide the details of the request (INCFORM 39 – Community Information) and the relevant Incident Controller’s contact details.

4.5.2 The Operating Officer is to liaise with the Authorising Officer (and the Incident Controller as necessary) to confirm any details.

4.5.3 The Operating Officer is to:

- Log into the Emergency Alert program by entering their Emergency Alert username and password;
- Define message boundary/campaign area;
- Check the statistics provided on the number of recognised landline and register mobiles within the campaign area;
- Enter message campaign details;
- Allocate a *Campaign Identifier* using the following formula:
 - QFRS-[region number]-[incident name]-[00x]
 - QFRS7-xxxxxxx-001;
- Review and edit details as necessary; and
- Seek content approval from the Authorising Officer.

4.5.4 *Important Note:* In circumstances where an Operating Officer is not able to access the Emergency Alert program and no other Operating Officer is available, the QFRS has an arrangement with Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) to contact the 24/7 Watch Desk Officer on 3247 8943 to create the message in consultation with the QFRS Authorising Officer.

4.6 Submit emergency alert message to Telstra

4.6.1 When the message content is approved by the Authorising Officer, the Operating Officer is to:

- Submit the message to Telstra;
- Call the Emergency Alert Service Desk;
- Verify identity by providing the activation password;
- Listen to the text to speech message and make any alterations with the service desk operator; and
- Approve the content for release.

4.6.2 The Emergency Alert Service Desk will deliver the campaign to the given location.

4.7 Monitoring the emergency alert campaign

4.7.1 The Operating Officer is to monitor the campaign by:

- Accessing the campaign report;
- Providing an initial status report (verbal or email) to the Authorising Officer and Incident Controller; and
- Providing outcomes of the campaign status report to the relevant Regional Assistant Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Commissioner and MACC as soon as practicable.

4.8 Recording and Reporting

4.8.1 The SOCC will maintain a central file of Emergency Alert activations (INCFORM 39 – Community Information and Campaign status reports).

4.8.2 The Operating Officer is responsible for collating records associated with each use of Emergency Alert and forwarding copies to the SOCC, including:

- INCFORM 39 – Community Information; and
- Emergency Alert Status Report.

4.8.3 There is a requirement to report frequently on the use of Emergency Alert within Queensland. This reporting is coordinated through EMQ.

5. CONTINUAL ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY INFORMATION NEEDS

5.1 The Incident Controller will ensure that community information needs are continually assessed throughout the incident as per the above procedures.

5.2 The Incident Controller will ensure that a final message is delivered to the community advising that there is no longer a threat to the community or the threat has passed (or similar message), as necessary.

Superseded Documents

This SO supersedes the email titled “URGENT – Interim Arrangements for Community Advice and Warnings for Bushfire Incidents” which was sent from the SOCC on Wednesday, 23 September 2009.

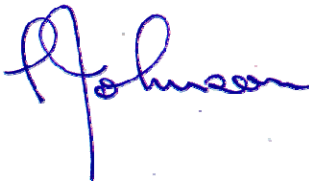
Relevant Legislation, Standards and Guidelines

- *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990*
- *Disaster Management Act 2003*
- National Framework for Scaled Advice and Warnings to the Community
- (draft) Emergency Alert, Queensland’s Operational Protocols, Queensland Government, November 2009.

Associated Documents

- QFRS Quick Reference Guide for Authorising and Operating Officers
- QFRS Operations Doctrine (OpsDoc)
- QFRS INCFORM 39 – Community Information
- Attachment A – Community Information during Emergency Incidents Flowchart

This Standing Order will be incorporated into the QFRS OpsDoc and other relevant areas in the next review and improvement cycle.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lee A Johnson'.

Lee A Johnson AFSM MIFireE
Commissioner

ATTACHMENT A – Community Information during Emergency Incidents Flowchart

