



GENERAL ORDER Loudoun County Sheriff's Office

Chapter: Operations	Section: 410.4	
Subject: Public Information	Topic: Community Notification	
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I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to identify and outline the types of community notification to be used for situations that may be of interest to Loudoun County citizens.

II. POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office to establish and maintain effective procedures when notifying the public of newsworthy or emergency situations within the county.

III. PROCEDURE

A. Alert Loudoun System

1. The Alert Loudoun System is an Internet-based method for providing instant notification to Loudoun County residents and businesses whenever there is a major Sheriff's Office incident requiring that information be received quickly and accurately.
 - a. The system allows county residents to sign up for the free service by logging onto the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office web site or going to www.loudoun.gov and clicking on "Sign up for Alert Loudoun."
 - b. The system is available to anyone with an email account and allows citizens to receive the latest news affecting the county. Citizens receive information through e-mail and text message.
2. Citizens may sign up to receive information regarding various Sheriff's Office activities or current situations within the County, to include:
 - a. Road closures
 - b. Wanted subjects and missing persons
 - c. Safety alerts
 - d. Press releases covering general news and information
 - e. Violent crimes that have just occurred

3. Other County information, to include releases from the Office of the Treasurer, Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, Loudoun County Public Affairs and Communication, etc., is available to subscribers.
 4. The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Director of Media Relations and Communications ("PIO Director"), or in the absence of the PIO Director the Public Information Officer ("PIO"), will compose and initiate messages regarding current news and events applicable to the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office and send such messages through the appropriate news category on the Alert Loudoun System.
- B. Community Emergency Voice Notification Feature of Alert Loudoun
1. The Community Emergency Voice Notification Feature of Alert Loudoun is an electronic communication method which allows the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, Loudoun County Fire Rescue and town police agencies to reach out by telephone to notify citizens of events that could affect their health and/or safety. The system is capable of calling and playing a pre-recorded message to a group of telephone numbers selected by public safety officials and notifying whoever receives the message of an emergency situation.
 2. Use of the notification system and, more specifically, the Verizon database, is governed by a variety of State and Federal statutes. As a result, the system must only be used to alert county officials and citizens about health and/or safety-related issues during emergency and crisis situations, where timing is crucial and the information needs to be accurate.
 - a. In all cases, the scope and urgency to share important information should determine whether or not the Community Emergency Voice Notification Feature of Alert Loudoun is the most appropriate method of communication to notify the public.
 - b. Since the Community Emergency Voice Notification Feature of Alert Loudoun involves costly county resources, its use should be coordinated with all agencies involved in the emergency incident so as to limit the duplication of this resource.
 3. The Sheriff's Office Emergency Communications Center ("ECC") will serve as the main point of contact for this system. Under certain circumstances, the Office of Media Relations and Communications will serve as the secondary point of contact.
 4. Before the Community Emergency Voice Notification Feature of Alert Loudoun may be used, specific criteria must be met and the following actions and considerations taken:

- a. Only the Sheriff's Office senior ranking on-duty supervisor or scene incident commander may request and authorize an alert.
 - b. In most cases, the PIO Director or in his/her absence the PIO will develop the message and activate the system, which will relieve the supervisor or incident commander for other duties.
 - c. The message shall be coordinated with other agencies which may be involved in the emergency incident.
 - d. If the telephone notification contains a return call back number, the on-duty supervisor or incident commander is responsible for ensuring that the designated number is staffed with adequate personnel to answer any inquiries generated.
5. Depending on the scope and nature of the notification, the Sheriff's Office Emergency Management Coordinator may need to be notified to coordinate the opening and staffing of the Loudoun County Emergency Operations Center ("EOC").
- a. In extreme cases, emergency notification of a large geographic area may be necessary. The Community Emergency Voice Notification Feature of Alert Loudoun has the ability to call two thousand telephones at once. Since the use of this large process is expensive, the Sheriff, Colonel, and/or Bureau Commander shall be notified and must give approval prior to using this part of the system.
 - b. In all cases when the Community Emergency Voice Notification Feature of Alert Loudoun is used, the on-duty supervisor or incident commander shall notify the ECC that the Community Emergency Voice Notification Feature of Alert Loudoun has been used, and request that an Operations Bureau and Administrative Bureau staff page be sent indicating the use of the system.
6. To reduce the chance of any accidental mass notifications, only properly trained individuals shall use the system. These individuals include the PIO Director, PIO, and ECC supervisors.
- C. Emergency Notification to Members of the Board of Supervisors

Emergency notification and communication with locally elected officials is integral to having a well-informed citizenry during any disaster or emergency and must be completed in close coordination with the Office of Media and Communications, Divisional, and Bureau Command Staff leadership. Public expectations with regard

to the resolution of incidents, including the county's ability to manage them, can be unrealistic.

Local government officials can play a more positive role in managing these expectations after Sheriff's Office leadership provide concrete facts about critical incidents that occur in the county. To help overcome false perceptions, members of the Board of Supervisors will receive timely and pertinent information after PIO and Sheriff's Office staff have properly reviewed incident information. This information should be released through official LCSO channels only. Elected officials need to understand that messaging to the community should come directly from law enforcement channels to the elected officials and citizens. Accurate and timely information is key, the community should not be provided erroneous or speculative details from non-law enforcement sources. LCSO staff will inform Board of Supervisors that because of the operational complexities pertaining to a particular incident and the timing and nature of its resolution, they should refrain from releasing information to the public and allow law enforcement to handle communication with the public.

With this goal in mind, the Sheriff's Office will coordinate the release of complex incident information with Loudoun County Fire Rescue ("LCFR"), the County's Office of Emergency Management ("OEM"), and the Office of the County Administrator. The Sheriff's Office has established standard protocols for keeping county leadership and elected officials as informed as possible during certain types of incidents. Emergency communication throughout the county is handled through the ECC in close coordination with PIO and Sheriff's Office leadership.

Each Board member has provided the Office of the County Administrator with his/her personal contact information to include daytime and evening contact information such as physical street addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses, etc. The County Administrator's staff provides this contact information to the ECC and OEM, where it will remain on file as part of the emergency management operations.

A. Sheriff's Office Emergency Notification Procedures

1. During normal working hours, the person who determines what messages the Board members receive will be the Sheriff, his/her designee, or the ranking supervisor in charge of the incident.
2. In cases where the EOC has been activated, the ranking deputy assigned to the EOC will have the responsibility for ensuring that proper notifications have been made to Board members. This will be accomplished through working closely with the LCFR Staff Duty Officer ("SDO") or the ranking officer from LCFR.
3. After hours notifications to the Board will be the responsibility of the duty officer or ranking supervisor in his/her absence. These

notifications will be made after consultation with the Office of Media Relations and Communications or command staff.

4. There are a number of incidents that may require notifying the Board members and other elected officials. The specific individuals notified will be at the discretion of the Sheriff or his/her designee in consultation with command staff. Considerations shall be given to the importance of the information and the receiving party's need to know given the time of day and details of the situation. Special considerations should be made concerning the compromising of sensitive investigative information.
5. The appropriate members of the Board of Supervisors, after coordination with PIO or command staff, may be notified during one of these types of incidents and information provided will be consistent with what is releasable to the public:
 - a. Death of a person in the Sheriff's Office custody
 - b. Escape of a prisoner from the ADC, JDC or one from custody that poses an imminent threat to the civilian population
 - c. Use of force incidents involving life threatening injuries or death to a civilian
 - d. Barricade/hostage situations requiring displacement or evacuation of civilians
 - e. Vehicle pursuit that ends in a crash causing life threatening injuries or death to the suspect, other civilians or a deputy
 - f. Accidents involving county vehicles that result in life threatening injuries or death
 - g. Homicide investigation or suspicious death investigation
 - h. Incidents involving large scale mutual aid requests, specifically mutual aid requests beyond the norm of specialty units, e.g. K9, CSI, etc.
 - i. Civil disturbance incidents where the CDU is activated
 - j. Large scale search and rescue events
 - k. Any other large scale investigation or incident that has direct impact on the community

1. Any sensitive incident that may have political ramifications. Notifications of this sort will not be made until the Sheriff, his/her designee, or command staff is consulted on the circumstances and decide the appropriate notification procedures; and death of, or life threatening injuries or death occurring to, an employee of the Sheriff while on duty
6. Law enforcement notifications are sensitive in nature and the information provided to any community member, including County leadership pursuant to this policy, must be provided with accuracy and through official channels. Due to evidentiary, legal and potential liability issues, any official information that is released to the media or the public concerning law enforcement operations must be coordinated within the Sheriff's Office. Special attention must be paid to any cases involving deaths, victims of serious crime and juvenile victims or suspects due to mandatory notification procedures in State law. In cases where the release of information or notification can compromise the integrity of an investigation or the safety of any citizen or deputy, notification must be delayed.
7. If a Board member wishes to respond to a crime or accident scene, he/she should notify the ECC and provide the dispatcher with his/her name, position as a member of the Board of Supervisors, and his/her intent to respond to the crime scene. Upon responding to the crime scene, the Board member should be cognizant of any traffic or other hazards and identify him/herself to a deputy on the scene and ask to see the ranking deputy on the scene. The ranking deputy or his/her designee will make arrangements to brief the Board member(s) of the situation at his/her earliest convenience. Board members must understand that scenes are very busy, especially in the initial hour, and there may be a delay before a ranking deputy can take time away from incident command functions to provide a briefing.
8. Often the Sheriff's Office will work in concert with LCFR on incidents and the notification efforts should be coordinated with LCFR to ensure that notifications are made in a timely manner and not duplicated.
9. Under rare circumstances during a significant event, the SDO, in consultation with LCFR and OEM staff, and the Office of the County Administrator, may recommend that Board members be present for certain events. On these occasions, Board members will be provided transportation, or escorted to the event using county vehicles.