

Warning and Notification Plan

Custer County Colorado



Custer County, Colorado

Emergency Warning/Notification System

Executive Summary

This document is intended to provide the public with insight into the multiple methods of public notification that may be used in Custer County, and describes the systems which will be used for communications and for alerting the general public to impending emergencies or disaster situations that require prompt action to save lives, prevent injuries and safeguard property. Emergency Warnings and Notifications are based on all-hazard events.

It also establishes that the public has an inherent responsibility to maintain situational awareness through all available means, during actual and potential emergency situations and to plan ahead for emergencies that may be likely to occur in Custer County, regardless of their residency. Visitors to the county, may include day trip and back country users, those attending campgrounds, conference centers and retreats; rentals, bed and breakfasts or other commercial facilities, including vacation rentals by owner, (VRBO) or those visiting family or friends.

Public notification responsibilities remain under the control and responsibility of local agencies, through the Custer County Sheriff's Office, Public Safety Answering Point, (PSAP), commonly known as "dispatch". Other agencies, may be charged with issuing warnings outside the jurisdiction of the local agency; such as the National Weather Service, a federal agency charged with weather related warnings and projections.

Public Notification and Warning

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information directly from the nearest National Weather Service office. NWR broadcasts official Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts and other hazard information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Working with the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) Emergency Alert System , **NWR** is an "All Hazards" radio network, making it your single source for comprehensive weather and emergency information. In conjunction with Federal, State, and Local Emergency Managers and other public officials, NWR also broadcasts warning and post-event information for all

types of hazards – including natural (such as earthquakes or avalanches), environmental (such as chemical releases or oil spills), and public safety (such as AMBER alerts or 911 Telephone outages).

See <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/> for more information on the NOAA Weather Radio system.

Public safety experts agree: ***the receivers should be standard equipment in every home.*** During an emergency, NWS forecasters interrupt routine broadcasts and send a special tone activating local weather radios. Weather radios equipped with a special alarm tone feature sound an alert to give you immediate information about a life-threatening situation.

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/info/allhazard.html>

The Custer County Sheriff's Office has several methods to notify and warn the public:

- Automated telephone notification ([Code Red](#))
- Media announcements, including television, radio and social media
- Website updates
- Fixed/Mobile Variable Message Signs (VMS)
- Door-to-Door warnings, if possible and safe to do so, as resources allow

Code Red

Custer County currently utilizes the Code Red Emergency Alert System. Notification calls and text messages are not automatically routed to cellular phones, requiring residents with cellular phones to register their cell phones online. The same applies to residents that use Voice-over-internet-protocol (VOIP) telephone service. These phone numbers are not automatically included in emergency notifications unless the subscriber has registered the phone number ahead of time. Online registration instructions and links for Code Red or any future notification systems, can be located on the Custer County website at <http://www./custercountyco.com>.

Automated calls may be intercepted by calling features, such as automated attendants, call waiting, busy signals and other features which may intercept or reject the call. Adding notification numbers to your telephone's phone book feature will quickly identify general and emergency notification calls, so you can readily distinguish the incoming call as an emergency alert.

Custer County does **NOT** currently utilize IPAWS, as such there are no geo-located warnings to cell phones or other mobile devices. Code Red enrollment is required to receive mobile notifications at this time.



Uses The CodeRED® system will be used to send critical communications, from evacuation notices to missing child alerts.

Caller ID When you see the following displayed, you will know the call is from us. If you would like to hear the last message delivered to your phone, simply dial the number back.

- Emergency Notifications
1-866-419-5000 or **Emergency Comm**
- General Notifications
1-855-969-4636 or **ECN Community**

Privacy Your contact information remains private and will only be used for community notifications.

Join Our Database To make sure you receive notifications, please register at <http://www.custercountygov.com/> Emergency Notifications – click here to sign up

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The Custer County Consolidated School District, (CCCS) currently has a notification system called **EZ School Reach**, used to communicate with parents, which may be utilized as a stand alone system, or in conjunction with **Code Red** Notifications.

Media Announcements

- Local Area Broadcasts (Colorado Springs Stations) on Channel 5, 11, 13 & 21
- Local Radio (Westcliffe) KLRZ -91.7 fm
- Facebook:
 - Custer County Sheriff’s Office
 - https://www.facebook.com/Custer-County-Sheriffs-Office-170019329680149/?ref=br_rs
 - Custer County Emergency Management
 - <https://www.facebook.com/CusterCountyEmergencyManagement/>
- Twitter:
 - Custer County OEM **@CusterOem**

Website

- <http://www.custercountygov.com/index.php>

Variable Message Signs (VMS)

- Mobile VMS boards may be used during an emergency, typically these are placed by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) along highways.
- A Fixed VMS board exists at the Custer County School, 709 Main Street, Westcliffe Colorado. During an emergency, this VMS board may display relevant updates.
- Other signage, including signs, cones and barricades may be utilized on any state, county or township roadway during an emergency

Door - to- Door Warnings

Door-to-door evacuations and warnings are often common in the early stages of an emergency; however, they cannot be relied upon. Rapidly expanding emergencies, such as wildfires, may put first responders at risk and door-to-door warnings should only be used when sufficient recourse exists and when it is safe to do so.

Emergency Evacuation

In case of a wildfire or other emergency, the primary notification to evacuate will be issued by the Custer County Sheriff by means of a reverse emergency notification system. Residents should follow the directions provided at the time.

Additional advance considerations include:

- Residents and visitors to the area should have **pre-planned** evacuation routes.
- Residents should heed evacuation instructions **without delay**.
- Evacuations orders **may be delayed or undeliverable due to communications failures**, when critical infrastructure is damaged by fire, or otherwise unavailable.
- **Never** rely on an automated notification to evacuate.
- If a wildfire is threatening the area, it is **NOT** necessary to wait for an evacuation order to leave.
- Facilities with large guest populations should plan on **multiple means of transportation** for evacuations, as CCCSD may not have buses available at all times.

Make a Plan:

It is vitally important that residents and guest populations are prepared to evacuate long before a wildfire or other disaster occurs. Just as fire mitigation should be complete long before a wildfire threatens, a personal plan for evacuation should be prepared before it is needed. A personal evacuation plan should consist of:

- Preplanned Evacuation Routes in the absence of direction from law enforcement
- Prescriptions
- Papers, photos computer drives, prescriptions and other important items should be stored and ready to take a moment's notice.
- Be sure to have a bag packed with a change of clothes and personal items packed and ready.
- Keep a complete inventory, including photos of home contents, of items in the home stored in a safe location if need to document insurance claims. Be sure your insurance coverage is adequate.
- Have a plan to shelter pets and livestock.
- Have a communication plan for all members of the family to stay in contact. Have an agreed upon meeting place, such as a friend's home, for family members in case family members are separated
- "Check-in" with the evacuation center, so that you are accounted for with local officials.

Shelter in Place

Emergency notifications could indicate that you should shelter in place. These may be common during law enforcement activities or during severe weather, where evacuation is not recommended.