

PUEBLO COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

ANNEX B - TORNADO/THUNDERSTORM

I. PURPOSE

To provide the basis for a tornado watch or warning and emergency response system in order to protect the lives and property of citizens and visitors to Pueblo County.

II. SITUATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. Situation

1. Historically tornadoes have been relatively infrequent in Pueblo County and have not struck urbanized areas. The tornadoes that have occurred in Pueblo County have also been relatively small, weak and short-lived. Tornadoes could adversely affect populated and economically valuable areas throughout Pueblo County.
2. Tornadoes are one of nature's most violent and damaging storms, often occurring with little or no warning. Many structures may not survive the effects of tornadic winds. Persons in vehicles or mobile homes are particularly susceptible to serious injury or death when a tornado strikes.

B. Assumptions

1. With adequate warning and timely reaction by the City and County of Pueblo and its residents, injury and loss of life would be held to a minimum. Due to rapid development of tornadoes, public awareness, timely warning, and appropriate public reaction are the keys to adequate response.
2. The National Weather Service (NWS) will provide tornado WATCHES and WARNINGS, an alert and status condition of tornado wind activity.
3. Destruction to public buildings/facilities, and serious disruption of basic utilities may hinder the delivery of lifeline services.

4. Destruction of industrial facilities may have a potential of a hazardous materials release.
5. Response times of fire, law enforcement, and medical agencies could be delayed due to debris on roads and streets. Road/highway crews and equipment may be required to provide for clearance and public safety.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

- A. A tornado **watch** means that conditions are favorable for tornadoes to develop.
- B. A tornado **warning** means that a tornado has actually been sighted or is developing, as indicated on radar.
- C. When tornado conditions are identified, the emergency response organizations are alerted for activation. Increased observation and surveillance procedures will be implemented. Normally, the initial threat notification will originate from the National Weather Service (NWS) in the form of watches and warnings.
- D. When a tornado warning is issued, Department of Emergency Management (DEM) staff will be put on notice for a potential Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activation. If an actual tornado develops in Pueblo County and appears to have affected life or property, the DEM staff will respond to the EOC and begin setting it up. The EOC call-out group will be put on standby status. If it is determined that actual damage to life or property has occurred, all EOC staff will be notified to respond to the EOC as soon as possible. Public warning will be accomplished, as well as shelter provided to those people requiring temporary housing. Search and rescue operations will commence as deemed necessary.
- E. A Forward Command Post may be established in the vicinity of the affected areas(s) to coordinate on-scene actions, and/or to provide a link between on-scene agencies and the EOC.
- F. Information will be gathered from NWS, media, spotters and other qualified persons regarding current weather conditions.
- G. Damage Assessment will proceed and information/data will be collected and reported to the EOC.

- H. Based on the damage assessment, a disaster declaration may be issued and the request for state and federal assistance may be made. Such requests should be processed through the Pueblo County Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
- I. All efforts will be taken to restore public facilities as quickly as possible.

IV. ORGANIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. State, county and city Communications Centers in Pueblo County will:
 - 1. Collect and distribute current data on warning and evacuation;
 - 2. Maintain contact with emergency response agencies including fire, law enforcement, public works, and emergency management, for emergency needs;
 - 3. Coordinate with each other for efficient multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional response; and
 - 4. Request all field personnel closely observe the sky until the watch or warning has expired, reporting location and other pertinent data about weather conditions.
- B. Pueblo County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) will:
 - 1. Coordinate disaster planning and operations with the community's emergency response organizations, area industrial installations, public utilities, welfare agencies, adjacent jurisdiction emergency management coordinators, and the Colorado Division of Emergency Management;
 - 2. Support operations with resources; and
 - 3. Provide assistance with search/rescue/recovery.
- C. Pueblo City/County Health Department will:
 - 1. Contact hospitals to activate emergency medical and mass casualty plans in order to prepare for the admission of injured persons;
 - 2. Evaluate and direct, in coordination with the local office of the state health department, the testing of water systems and wells for contamination in areas directly or indirectly affected;

3. Monitor the need for vector control in disaster areas;
 4. Offer consultation services regarding food, water, housing and commercial sanitation;
 5. Coordinate with appropriate agencies to assess structures or areas for the presence of hazardous materials;
 6. Provide public health information through the Public Information Officer;
 7. Provide information regarding immunizations necessary for situations encountered; and
 8. Provide nursing services at established shelters for routine medical issues.
- D. Geographic Information Systems Center will:
1. Prepare copies of maps reflecting affected areas, evacuation routes and safe areas/shelters; and
 2. Support the EOC operation with automated products developed before, during and after an incident.
- E. Public Information Officers will:
1. Establish a Joint Information Center to gather information and respond to queries and rumors from the media and public;
 2. Prepare and distribute emergency public information material; and
 3. Brief media, public officials and other interested groups on tornado status and response/recovery activities.
- F. Law Enforcement will:
1. Coordinate law enforcement activities;
 2. Assist in warning and alerting the public;
 3. Establish and maintain traffic control;
 4. Coordinate evacuation;

5. Provide security control and limit access into and within the disaster area;
 6. Provide security in evacuated areas;
 7. Observe weather conditions and immediately report any tornado sightings and, if possible, related damages; and
 8. Assist with search and rescue efforts.
- G. Fire Departments will:
1. Assist in warning the public of impending danger, and, as necessary, evacuating potential danger areas and providing fire security in evacuated areas as needed;
 2. Observe weather conditions and immediately report any tornado sightings and, if possible, related damages; and
 3. Assist with search and rescue operations.
- H. National Weather Service (NWS) will issue tornado watch and warning messages to include time, direction, speed, boundaries of the affected area(s), and special precautionary information to the public.
- I. Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) will:
1. Establish communications at the NWS during a NWS call up for severe weather situations;
 2. Respond to the EOC, once it is activated; and
 3. Assist with and provide backup for overall communications, as well as health and well being messages.
- J. American Red Cross (ARC) and/or Salvation Army will:
1. Coordinate and operate mass care operations to include sheltering of persons made homeless due to disaster;
 2. Establish and operate mass feeding for victims and disaster workers;
 3. Provide basic health and mental health services for the victims within the shelters;

4. If necessary, participate in damage assessment of residential areas;
 5. Receive and process in-bound disaster inquires; and
 6. Assist in locating missing persons.
- K. Public Works Departments, Metropolitan Districts, Transportation Departments and utility companies collectively should:
1. Assist in facilities protection and coordinate emergency repairs to public buildings, roads, utilities, and other essential facilities; recommend priorities for repair of damage;
 2. Assist in damage assessment;
 3. Ensure clearance of critical thoroughfares;
 4. Provide available emergency traffic control equipment such as barricades and street flares;
 5. Conduct or oversee emergency shutdown of utilities to prevent damage; monitor condition of sewage, electrical, gas, water and telecommunications distribution systems; determine emergency sources of electricity, gas, potable water and telecommunications;
 6. Conduct or oversee debris removal and disposal; and
 7. Set up a tire exchange to fix flat tires on emergency vehicles and official vehicles responding in the disaster area(s).
- L. Regional Building will participate in damage assessment.

V. ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS

Document all actions so that records can be compiled for financial and historical data.

VI. ANNEX DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

The primary responsibility for development and maintenance of this annex is that of DEM, with support from responding agencies. The annex will be reviewed annually and revised accordingly, unless significant change warrants an earlier revision.