

ANNEX B

COMMUNICATIONS

Hidalgo County

Jurisdiction

APPROVAL & IMPLEMENTATION

Annex B

Communications

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

NOTE: The signature(s) will be based upon local administrative practices. Typically, the individual having primary responsibility for this emergency function signs the annex in the first block and the second signature block is used by the Emergency Management Coordinator, Mayor, or County Judge. Alternatively, each department head assigned tasks within the annex may sign the annex.

ANNEX B
COMMUNICATIONS

I. AUTHORITY

See Basic Plan, Section I.

II. PURPOSE

This annex provides information about our communications equipment and capabilities available during emergency operations. Our entire communications system is discussed and procedures for its use are outlined.

III. EXPLANATION OF TERMS

A. Acronyms

CATV	Cable TV
COG	Council of Government
DDC	Disaster District Committee
EAS	Emergency Alert System
EMP	Electromagnetic Pulse
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
IC	Incident Commander
JIC	Joint Information Center
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NRP	National Response Plan
SOC	State Operations Center
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
RACES	Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service
TLETS	Texas Law Enforcement Telecommunications System
TRCIP	Texas Radio Communications Interoperability Plan

B. Definitions

Local Computer Network	Local, Metropolitan, or Wide-Area Networks.
State Warning Point	Warning Point for the state operated by the SOC.

IV. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. Situation

1. As noted in the general situation statement in the basic plan, we are at risk from a number of hazards that could threaten public health and safety and personal and government property. A reliable and interoperable communications system is essential

to obtain the most complete information on emergency situations and to direct and control our resources responding to those situations.

2. The Dispatch/Communications Center is located at 711 E. El Cibolo Rd. Edinburg, Tx. It is staffed on a 24-hour basis by the Sheriff dispatcher. Equipment is available to provide communications necessary for emergency operations.

B. Assumptions

1. Adequate communications are available for effective and efficient warning, response and recovery operations.
2. Any number of natural or manmade hazards may neutralize or severely reduce the effectiveness of communications currently in place for emergency operations.
3. Additional communications equipment required for emergency operations will be made available from citizens, business, volunteer organizations, and/or other governmental agencies.

V. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. General

1. A common operating picture within our jurisdiction and across other jurisdictions provides the framework of our communications capabilities. This framework is made possible by interoperable systems. Extensive communications networks and facilities are in existence throughout Hidalgo County to provide coordinated capabilities for the most effective and efficient response and recovery activities. A diagram of the communications network is in Appendix 1.
2. Our existing communications network consisting of telephone, computer, teletype, and radio facilities will serve to perform the initial and basic communications effort for emergency operations. Landline circuits, when available, will serve as the primary means of communication with other communication systems as back up.
3. During emergency operations, all county departments will maintain their existing equipment and procedures for communicating with their field operations units. They will keep the EOC informed of their operations and status at all times.
4. To meet the increased communications needs created by an emergency, various state and regional agencies, amateur radio operators, and business/industry/volunteer group radio systems will be asked to supplement communications capabilities. These resource capabilities will be requested through local and regional mutual-aid agreements and/or the Disaster District, as required.

B. Activities by Phases of Emergency Management

1. Prevention

- a. Maintain a current technology based, reliable, interoperable, and sustainable communications system.
- b. Ensure warning communications systems meet jurisdictional needs.
- c. Ensure intelligence and other vital information networks are operational.
- d. Ensure integrated communications procedures are in place to meet the needs and requirements of Hidalgo County.

2. Preparedness

- a. Review and update this communications annex.
- b. Develop communications procedures that are documented and implemented through communications operating instructions (include connectivity with private-sector and nongovernmental organizations).
- c. Thoroughly and continually review the system for improvement including the implementation and institutionalized use of information management technologies.
- d. Ensure communications requirements for Emergency Operations Center and potential Joint Information Center (JIC) are regularly reviewed.
- e. Review After Action Reports of actual occurrences and exercises and other sources of information for lessons learned.
- f. Ensure the integration of mitigation plans and actions into all phases of emergency management as applicable.
- g. Acquire, test, and maintain communications equipment.
- h. Ensure replacement parts for communications systems are available and make arrangement for rapid resupply in the event of an emergency.
- i. Train personnel on appropriate equipment and communication procedures as necessary.
- j. Conduct periodic communications drills and make communications a major element during all exercises.
- k. Review assignment of all personnel.
- l. Review emergency notification list of key officials and department heads.
- m. Provide the AT&T Telephone Company with a list of circuit restoration priorities for essential governmental systems.

3. Response

- a. Select communications personnel required for emergency operations according to the incident.
- b. Incident communications will follow ICS standards and will be managed by the IC using a common communications plan and an incident-based communications center.
- c. All incident management entities will make use of common language during emergency communications. This will reduce confusion when multiple agencies or entities are involved in an incident.
- d. Ensure emergency equipment repair on a 24-hour basis.
- e. Initiate warning procedures as outlined in Annex A, Warning, if required.

4. Recovery

All activities in the emergency phase will continue until such time as emergency communications are no longer required.

VI. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

A. General

1. Our emergency communications system is operated by the Sheriff's Office and includes a variety of government-owned and operated equipment as well as equipment owned and operated by certain volunteer groups. The departments, agencies, and groups that are part of our communications system are listed in Section VII.C.
2. The Sheriff will ensure that warning information received at our warning point, the Dispatch/Communications Center, is disseminated to county officials and, where appropriate, to the public. The responsibility of ensuring the communications system is operational and incorporates all available resources rests with the Sheriff, who may appoint a Communications Coordinator to carry out this task.

B. Task Assignments

1. Sheriff will:
 - a. Be responsible for all activities enumerated in this annex in Section V.B, Activities by Phases of Emergency Management.
 - b. Supervise the Communications Coordinator.
2. Communications Coordinator will:

- a. Coordinate common communications procedures.
 - b. Develop and maintain a communications resource inventory (See Annex M, Resource Management).
 - c. Ensure a communications capability exists between the Dispatch/Communications Center of the Sheriff's Office and the Emergency Operations Center to include coordination with the telephone company for installation of dedicated telephone lines into the Dispatch/Communications Center and/or EOC.
 - d. Ensure communication restoration procedures are developed.
 - e. Ensure that the local telephone company is forwarded a list of circuit restoration priorities.
 - f. Ensure procedures are in place for dissemination of message traffic.
 - g. Coordinate the inclusion of business/industry and amateur radio operators into the communications network.
 - h. Develop and maintain SOPs to include message-handling procedures and recall rosters for essential personnel.
3. Radio Operators will be:
- Responsible for proper use and maintenance of the equipment and for correct message handling procedures, including routing of all incoming messages and logging all incoming and out-going messages.
4. Public Information Officer will be:
- Responsible for monitoring commercial radio and telephone broadcasts for accuracy of public information.
5. Switchboard Operators will be:
- Responsible for proper screening and routing of all incoming telephone calls.

VII. DIRECTION AND CONTROL

A. General

- 1. The County Judge establishes general policies for emergency communications.
- 3. The Communications Coordinator is under the supervision of the Sheriff and is directly responsible for facilities, equipment, and operation of the Dispatch/Communications Center.

4. Communications personnel from individual departments and support agencies, while under control of their own department or agency and operating their own equipment, are responsible for knowing and following the procedures outlined in this annex.
5. During emergency situations involving multiple agencies and/or jurisdictions, the various code systems used for brevity will be discontinued and normal speech will be used to insure comprehension. In addition, local time will be used during transmissions.
6. During emergency situations, communications will be maintained between the Disaster District and the County EOC.

B. Continuity of Government

Each department or agency with communications responsibilities shall establish a line of succession for communications personnel.

C. Existing Communications Systems

1. Local Networks
 - a. Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office
 - b. Volunteer Fire Department
 - c. EOC
2. Other Networks
 - a. Texas Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (TLETS) is a statewide telecommunications network connecting the State Warning Point (the SOC), with approximately 1,292 city, county, state, federal, and military law enforcement agencies in Texas. Emergency communications between state, district, and local governments will be transmitted through this system. The Hidalgo County principal terminal is located at the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office.
 - b. Joint Information Center (JIC), Joint Operations Center (JOC), and SOC.
 - c. Individual Amateur Radio Operators
 - d. Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) is a state sponsored program composed of amateur radio operators. It is used to supplement state and local government communications systems in emergencies or disaster operations.
 - e. Business/Industry/Volunteer Group Radio Systems

VIII. READINESS LEVELS

A. Readiness Level IV - Normal Conditions

See the prevention and preparedness activities in paragraphs V.B.1 and V.B.2 above.

B. Readiness Level III - Increased Readiness

1. Alert key personnel.
2. Check readiness of all equipment and facilities and correct any deficiencies.

C. Readiness Level II – High Readiness

1. Alert personnel for possible emergency duty.
2. Monitor situation of possible issuance of warning or alerts.

D. Readiness Level 1 – Maximum Readiness

1. Institute 24-hour operations.
2. Conduct periodic communication checks.

IX. ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT

A. Facilities and Equipment

A complete listing of equipment is included in Appendix 1 of Annex M.

B. Maintenance of Records.

All records generated during an emergency will be collected and filed in an orderly manner so a record of events is preserved for use in determining response costs, settling claims, and updating emergency plans and procedures.

C. Preservation of Records

Vital records should be protected from the effects of disaster to the maximum extent feasible. Should records be damaged during an emergency situation, professional assistance in preserving and restoring those records should be obtained as soon as possible.

D. Communications Protection

1. Radio
 - a. Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP)

One of the effects of a nuclear detonation that is particularly damaging to radio equipment is EMP. Plans call for the disconnection of radios from antennas and power source when an Attack Warning is issued. A portable radio unit will then be employed as a backup to maintain limited communications with field units. This procedure will be used until an All Clear is announced. Telephones will also be used while operable.

b. Lightning, Wind, and Blast

- 1) Standard lightning protection is used including arrestors and the use of emergency power during severe weather.
- 2) Damaged antennas can be quickly replaced with items purchased through Hidalgo County contracted vendors.
- 3) Mobile repeaters, kept in the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office, can be quickly positioned at predetermined locations to resume radio communications in the event of damage to radio towers.

2. Telephone (Common Carrier)

a. Overloaded Circuits

To avoid overloaded circuits during emergencies, citizens will be advised to listen to EAS for information and to use telephones only if they have a genuine emergency. If overloaded circuits do become a problem, coordinate with the AT&T Telephone Company to begin immediate restoration of priority circuits.

b. Emergency Service

During major emergencies, a direct line to the AT&T Telephone Office is activated in the EOC for emergency service calls.

3. Computer Equipment and Facilities

The physical protection of computer equipment and facilities will be maintained under normal and emergency operations to help ensure continuity of communications.

E. Security

1. Measures will be taken to ensure that only authorized personnel will have access to the Dispatch/Communications Center.
2. Communications security will be maintained in accordance with national, state, and local requirements.

F. Training

1. Each organization assigning personnel to the EOC for communications purposes is responsible for making certain those persons are familiar with the agency's operating procedures.
2. The Sheriff will provide additional training on emergency communications equipment and procedures as necessary.

G. Support

If requirements exceed the capability of local communications resources, the county judge will request support from nearby jurisdictions or state resources from the Disaster District in McAllen.

X. ANNEX DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

- A. The Hidalgo County Sheriff will be responsible for maintaining this annex. Each agency will develop SOPs that address assigned tasks.
- B. This annex will be updated in accordance with the schedule outlined in Section X of the Basic Plan.

XI. REFERENCES

- A. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), 1996. Guide For All-Hazard Emergency Operations Planning. (SLG-101)
- B. Division Of Emergency Management *Local Emergency Management Planning Guide*. (DEM-10)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Communications Diagram & Table

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- 1. Common Communications SOP
- 2. Communications Restoration Guide
- 3. Amateur Radio Support Agreement

COMMUNICATIONS DIAGRAM

<p>Police Dept. & Mobile Unit ** (154.950 T&R) (155.370 T&R) (155.300 T&R)</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Tlets, Nlets Local Comp. Network Cell Phones</p>	<p>Shelters Salvation Army All Area Schools</p>	<p>Cell Phones Catv or Sat T.V. Tel and/or Fax</p>
<p>Sheriff ** (154.730 T) (154.8150R)</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Tlets, Nlets Local Comp. Network Cell Phones</p>	<p>EOC ** (154.950 T&R) (155.370 T&R) (159.300 T&R) (155.340 T&R) (154.190 T&R) (154.295 T&R)</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Tlets, Nlets Local Comp. Network Cell Phones Satellite Phones (Mcallen) EM</p>
<p>Texas DPS ** (154.950 T&R) (155.370 T&R) (159.300 T&R)</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Tlets, Nlets Local Comp. Network Cell Phones</p>	<p>Ntl. Weather Serv. (162.400 R)</p>	<p>Radio (vhf) Broadcast Only Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Local Comp. Network Cell Phones</p>
<p>Private Utilities ** Power and Light AEP Magic Valley Rural Water Supply La Joya Water Nth Alamo Water Sharyland Water Phone Service ATT Verizon Velly Tele.</p>	<p>Telephone Dispatched Catv or Sat T.V. Tel and/or Fax Local Comp. Network</p>	<p>Fire Dept. & Mobile Units ** (154.190 T&R) (154.295 T&R) (154.950 T&R)</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Local Comp. Network Cell Phones Satellite Phones (Mcallen) EM</p>
<p>Hospital ** (155.340 T&R)</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Local Comp. Network Cell Phones</p>	<p>Public Works ** H.C. Pct 1 24hr Tele. H.C. Pct 2 24hr Tele H.C. Pct 3 24hr Tele H.C. Pct 4 24hr Tele</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Local Comp. Network Cell Phones ###Phone Dispatch Due to Trunked Radio Sys.</p>
<p>Red Cross ** (956-787-7851) Telephone Dispatched</p>	<p>Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Local Comp. Network Cell Phones</p>	<p>Airport ** (159.300 T&R) Weslaco (969-0291) Edinburg (none) McAllen (682-9101)</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) or Higher Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Local Comp. Network Cell Phones Satellite Phones (Mcallen) EM</p>
<p>Hidalgo Co. Fire marshal** (154.770 T) (155.625 R)</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Local Comp. Network Cell Phones</p>	<p>Engineering ** (453.625 T&R)</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Local Comp. Network Cell Phones</p>
<p>** Indicates Internet access and E-mail (T) Indicates Transmit Only Freq. (R) Indicates Receive only Freq. (T&R) Indicates Transmit & Receive Freq.</p>	<p>I.C. Post** (154.950 T&R) (154.370T&R) (154.300 T&R) (154.340 T&R) (154.190 T&R) (154.295 T&R)</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Tlets, Nlets Local Comp. Network Cell Phones Satellite Phones (Mcallen) EM</p>	<p>Radio (vhf, uhf, 800mhz) Catv or Sat t.v. Tel. and/ or Fax Tlets, Nlets Local Comp. Network Cell Phones Satellite Phones (Mcallen) EM</p>

Appendix 1 to Annex B

FACILITY	COMMUNICATIONS									
	Cable TV Or Satellite	Phone/Fax	TLETS	RACES	Radio VHF/UHF	Radio HF	Cell Phones	Satellite Phones	Local Computer Network	Internet E-mail
Airport	X	X			X		X			X
Department of Public Safety	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X
Drainage Department	x	X			X		X		X	X
EOC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
External Customers (Citizens, Private Industry)	X	X			X		X			X
Fire Department & Mobile Units	X	X			X		X	X	X	X
Hospital	X	X			X		X			X
Private Utilities	X	X			X				X	X
National Weather Service	X	X			X		X		X	X
Police Department & Mobile Units	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
Precincts	X	X			X		X		X	X
Red Cross		X			X		X			X
Shelters		X			X					
Sheriff's Office	X	X	X		X		X		X	X