



PUBLIC MESSAGING, PUBLIC ALERTING, AND COMMUNICATIONS RESILIENCE CHECKLIST

Major events can create confusion as fast as they create emergencies. If the public does not know what is happening, where to go, what to avoid, or whether information is credible, rumor and panic will fill the gap. This checklist is intended to help leaders and partner agencies plan how emergency information will be approved, delivered, backed up, and sustained when normal communications systems are strained or degraded.

Planning Prior to the Event

- Identify all public messaging and alerting methods available for the event, including IPAWS, local alerting systems, venue PA systems, video boards, social media, media partners, websites, apps, and text platforms
- Define who has authority to approve and release emergency messages
- Establish pre-scripted messages for evacuation, shelter in place, severe weather, transportation disruption, route closure, missing child, suspicious package, drone disruption, medical surge, and event delay or cancellation
- Define trigger points for when each message should be sent and by whom
- Plan for multilingual messaging and accessible formats
- Coordinate with venue staff on use of screens, scoreboards, PA systems, and in-app messaging
- Identify what communications systems depend on commercial cellular service and what backup methods exist if those systems fail
- Determine whether the event footprint is likely to exceed normal carrier capacity
- Coordinate early with cellular providers on expected attendance, duration, and peak usage periods
- Ask whether temporary cellular augmentation such as COWs is needed for the venue or surrounding area



- Identify where a COW would need to be placed to support the main venue, support areas, and command functions
- Confirm power, access, security, and setup requirements for any temporary cellular asset
- Determine which event functions rely heavily on commercial cellular service and which need backup methods
- Plan for degraded cellular performance even if augmentation is provided
- Ensure command posts, aid stations, and key support functions have backup communications paths that do not depend only on public cellular networks
- Identify where dedicated wired internet or redundant connectivity is needed for command posts, EOCs, alerting functions, and public information operations
- Confirm how responder-to-responder and responder-to-public communication will continue if cell service degrades
- Establish a rumor control process and assign who will monitor misinformation during the event
- Identify one lead public information function and define how it connects to unified command

Weeks Prior

- Review and update all pre-scripted messages for the specific venue, routes, hazards, and event schedule
- Confirm approval chains for urgent messaging during normal hours, after hours, and during rapid escalation
- Test public alerting platforms, PA systems, video boards, internet connections, and backup communications methods
- Confirm contact information for PIOs, venue communications staff, media partners, alerting authorities, and carrier representatives if applicable



- Review message timing and sequencing so alerts do not conflict or create confusion
- Confirm how protective action messages will be coordinated across fire, EMS, law enforcement, emergency management, and venue staff
- Ensure plain language is used and avoid discipline-specific terminology in public messaging
- Confirm how messages will be pushed if the primary public information lead becomes unavailable

Operational Period

- Confirm who has public messaging authority for that operational period
- Review current pre-scripted messages, trigger points, and any event-specific modifications
- Verify that PA systems, boards, social media access, alerting platforms, and backup communications methods are operational
- Confirm current contacts for venue communications staff, PIOs, dispatch, and command
- Review any current issues with cellular service, internet reliability, or alerting systems
- Ensure all agencies are using the same public-facing language for key hazards and instructions

During an Incident

- Push clear information early before rumor fills the gap
- Tell the public what happened, what they need to do, and where they should or should not go
- Use plain language and keep messages short enough to be understood under stress
- Coordinate all public messages through the established approval process, but do not allow approval delays to create silence



- Use multiple delivery methods rather than relying on one platform
- Adjust messaging if commercial networks become overloaded or unavailable
- Update the public as conditions change and formally close the loop when the immediate hazard has passed
- Monitor for misinformation and correct it quickly
- Ensure family reunification, shelter, transportation, and route messages are coordinated with operations

Recovery

- Confirm how and when the public will be told that the incident or restriction has ended
- Capture problems with message approval, delivery speed, platform reliability, and public understanding
- Update pre-scripted messages, trigger points, and backup communications plans based on what was learned
- Document any cellular, internet, or alerting failures that need correction before the next operational period