

**NARRATIVE FOR CRITERION: 5.b.1**

X County demonstrated the capability to provide accurate emergency information and instructions to the public via four Emergency Alert System (EAS) Messages. The Emergency Preparedness Coordinator used pre-scripted EAS messages. The messages reflected the current protective action decisions, and included information concerning evacuation instructions, evacuation routes, reception center locations, what to take when evacuating, and information concerning pets. Evacuation zones were described using familiar landmarks and boundaries. The EAS radio station was instructed to repeat the message at pre-established intervals.

None of the EAS messages included a rumor control telephone number. The messages did refer listeners to the information in the local telephone book, which listed telephone numbers the public could call for more information.

For the most part, EAS messages used language that was clear and understandable to the public. However, the EAS messages did contain some potentially confusing language in reference to the emergency information in the local telephone book. Towards the beginning of the EAS messages, the public was instructed to "refer to the telephone book for instruction (sic)." At the end of the messages there is a statement that telephone book information may not be current so stay tuned to EAS. If a member of the public listened to the entire message, they might be mildly confused, which could generate a telephone call to the rumor control line. If a member of the public listened to a portion of the message, e.g., until their sub-zone was announced, or did not hear the initial portion of the message, they might refer or not refer to the information in the telephone book. Also, News Statement #8 (1138) refers the public to the telephone book information.

The Public Information Officer (PIO) in the County EOC coordinated with the County PIO at the Media Center. She routinely provided the Media Center PIO with information about the County's response activities, mostly from the briefings and status boards. She received faxed copies of all the news statements published at the Media Center, but apparently did not catch the errors in News Statements #5 and #19 regarding the evacuation of patients from hospitals and nursing homes, and the evacuation of X County prisoners. The PIO might have caught these errors if she had coordinated more closely with the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator.

The PIO did respond quickly and accurately to questions and rumors she received from the Media Center PIO. One rumor concerned a faulty bridge that prevented the evacuation of an ambulance. The County Engineer informed her that this was false, and she promptly informed the PIO at the Media Center of the truth. Around 1230, she received a request from the Media Center for information on the Joint Radiological Monitoring Teams. The Radiological Officer obtained this information from the EOF. She relayed this information back to the PIO at the Media Center (who should have contacted the EOF in the first place).

X County plan 1.2.4.7 (11/99) and procedure 15.3.7 (11/98) state that all County, or joint XGS, State and County News Statements are to be approved by the X County Commissioner (s) and/or the X County Emergency Preparedness Coordinator prior to release. These sections should be revised to reflect the current practice.

With 1 exception, X County staff demonstrated the capability to provide accurate emergency information and instructions to the public in accordance with their plans and procedures.