

Jasper County Outdoor Siren Activation



Effective Date:

Purpose:

To establish common guidelines for activation of outdoor warning sirens activated by the Jasper County Communications Center. [JCCC]

Background:

Public response to sirens can be hindered by confusion and improper use. Using common and consistent guidelines enhances siren 'credibility' in emergency situations. The resulting reduction in individual confusion and 'siren fatigue' should lead to increased confidence and trust in the public outdoor warning system.

Scope:

The sole purpose of outdoor warning sirens is for the protection of life. They are not intended to be used when the predominant hazard is for property damage. Outdoor Warning Sirens are not "tornado sirens." Sirens may be used for all types of hazards to warn people in a defined area to "get inside then get information."

This document is not intended to relieve, replace, or supersede any authority or responsibility local jurisdictions might have to protect the citizens of their community.

Policy:

Jasper County Communications Center

Local communities may request and pre-authorize the JCCC to activate outdoor warning sirens on their behalf. The following guidelines will be used in siren activation. Communities that wish to deviate from these guidelines may activate sirens locally.

Ownership/Maintenance:

Purchase, installation, ownership, and maintenance of the siren are the responsibility of the local government jurisdiction in which the siren is physically located. Other ownership and maintenance relationships may exist between public or public/private parties but shall be documented by parties involved in the agreement.

Fire Department Activation:

Fire Departments that possess the capability to set off their local siren may do so according to local policy or need. The JCCC should be notified of such activations as soon as feasible.

Jasper County Activation Procedures:

The JCCC is authorized to activate sirens on behalf of local communities and agrees to do so according to the following guidelines.

Severe Weather

Tornado Warning – Sirens will be activated when:

- A tornado warning is issued by the National Weather Service
- Tornado or funnel cloud reported by a trained spotter or public safety official
- Multiple 911 calls are received suggesting confirmation of tornado.

NOTE: Sirens activation to be within the polygon area as defined by the NWS.

Extreme Winds – Sirens will be activated when:

- A warning is issued by the National Weather Service forecasting or reporting storms that are occurring with:
 - Winds exceeding 72 mph are imminent or occurring
 - Strong winds accompanied by hail capable of producing serious injury

Large Hail – Sirens will be activated when:

- NWS confirmed or imminent golf ball size hail [1-3/4"] or larger. Hail of this size will typically break windows and can cause significant bodily injury.

Note: Sirens should not be activated for typical severe thunderstorm warnings.

- NWS severe thunderstorm thresholds are established for property damage only.
- This type of warning occurs so frequently it may erode public confidence in sirens.

Other Emergencies

The outdoor warning system may be activated by the JCCC for non- weather emergencies upon request from;

- Emergency Management Coordinator,
- Local Public Safety Official or the JCCC Supervisor.
 - The request should be accompanied by a brief description of the emergency and identification of the area in which sirens should be activated.

- Besides severe weather, other situations such as the release of hazardous materials or an immediate security threat may require that sirens be used to tell people to take shelter. Outdoor warning sirens are also an important part of the National Alert and Warning System [NAWAS) that warns of imminent attack and other national security emergencies.

Activation Duration:

Sirens will be activated on a 3 minute on – 3 minutes off cycle. This cycle may be repeated if the threat is still active.

All Clear: There will NOT be an “all clear” signal from the outdoor warning sirens. People in or near the warned area should monitor reliable sources such as NOAA All-Hazards Radio or local media to know when the hazard threat has dissipated.

Testing:

The Outdoor Warning System shall be tested on the **first Wednesday of every month at 10:00 AM**. The test shall be for the duration of **one minute**

- If a severe weather watch or warning is in effect on a scheduled test day, the sirens should not be tested that day. Outdoor warning siren tests will resume on the next scheduled monthly date.
 - Testing may be suspended during the winter months when ice or sub-zero temperatures could damage the siren system. Testing schedule should be maintained whenever possible for continuity purposes as well as system reliability.
 - If testing is required at any time outside of the normal monthly testing schedule, the jurisdiction requesting the test will notify the appropriate media to ensure awareness by the public of the additional testing and hopefully reduce the number of concerned callers to the 911 Communications Center.
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