



CITY OF SAN MARCOS

Strategy and Implementation Plan

Activating the Emergency Warning Sirens

**CITY OF SAN MARCOS
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

17 December 2018

Purpose

There are 14 emergency warning sirens strategically placed throughout the City of San Marcos. The primary purpose of the sirens is to alert anyone outdoors to immediate threats to life and safety. The network of sirens is a key component of the Emergency Warning System in the City of San Marcos.

This document outlines the San Marcos Office of Emergency Management's strategy for sounding the warning sirens and the plan for implementing that strategy. The document defines who is responsible for activating the sirens, the frequency with which testing will occur, how the public will be informed about the sirens' use and testing, and how the sirens and associated equipment will be maintained.

Procedures

The emergency warning sirens will be activated when the San Marcos Office of Emergency Management is notified of an immediate threat to the life and safety of San Marcos residents. Information prompting the activation of the sirens can come from several sources, including, but not limited to, the National Weather Service, State or Federal Agencies, and local public officials.

There are two (2) desktop computers and (2) portable laptop computer systems with activation transmission equipment that are used to sound the sirens. One (1) of the two (2) fixed desktop computers is located in the server room at Dispatch in the San Marcos Police Department. The other fixed desktop computer is located in the server room at Fire Station #5. The San Marcos Police Department serves as the primary Emergency Operations Center and Fire Station #5 serves as the alternate Emergency Operations Center. The two (2) portable laptop computers allow for the activation of the sirens from remote locations, in the event that one of the aforementioned locations is inaccessible, one of the desktop computers are down, or Office of Emergency Management staff need to activate the sirens remotely. The capability exists to activate all of the sirens at the same time, or to activate specific sirens individually.

The emergency warning sirens are a vital part of the City's Emergency Warning System, which includes the City's official website, official social media accounts, and radio station (KZOS 103.1 FM). When the sirens sound, residents must consult those sources of information, and take the necessary precautions to protect their life and safety while doing so. The emergency warning sirens are designed to alert only those who are outside at the time of the immediate threat that danger is approaching.

Responsibilities

The Office of Emergency Management is responsible for receiving the notification of an impending threat to life and safety, and subsequently responsible for sounding the sirens based upon one of these notifications.

The Office of Emergency Management will contact the City's Communications Department when the sirens need to be sounded. The message that the outdoor public needs to hear will be posted to the City's official website and official social media accounts. Any necessary press releases and press briefings will be handled by Communications. The Office of Emergency Management is responsible for relaying the emergency message over the City's radio station, KZOS 103.1 FM.

The Office of Emergency Management is also responsible for ensuring the sirens, associated hardware, and connected computers are maintained.

Implementation

Maintenance and Repair

The Office of Emergency Management will utilize Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funds to make the necessary repairs to all 14 emergency warning sirens to ensure that they are fully operational. The Office of Emergency Management will also make future budget requests to cover the cost of future maintenance. An application to the Homeland Security Grant Program has also been prepared for submission to for the purpose of funding routine maintenance in future years.

A quote obtained by the Office of Emergency Management from the contractor that originally installed the sirens lists an annual maintenance cost of \$8,500.00. The siren batteries need to be replaced every other year, at an additional cost of \$8,350.00. The cost for parts to repair the sirens that are currently offline will remain unknown until the contractor is hired to conduct site assessments and perform the necessary work.

Public Outreach and Education

There was seldom use of the emergency warning sirens prior to 2019. Moving forward, the Office of Emergency Management will begin an aggressive public outreach campaign to educate the public on the future use of the sirens, and what actions the public must take when the sirens are sounded. This will be accomplished by distributing informational handouts at various citywide events and talking with residents about the purpose of the sirens, the situations in which the sirens will be sounded, and the actions they need to take when they hear the sirens. Children will be given this same information, in an age-appropriate manner, during the annual Preparedness in Schools event in September. There will also be regular siren education information posted on the City's social media accounts, including several posts leading up scheduled testing dates of the sirens. Information will also be included in the distribution of residents' utility bills.

Information will be added to the Office of Emergency Management page on the City's website that describes to the public the purpose of the sirens, the situations in which the sirens will be sounded, and the actions residents need to take when they hear the sirens.

Testing

An audible testing of the sirens will be conducted once a month, on the third Friday of the month, by the Office of Emergency Management.