GUIDELINES FOR THE OPERATION OF OUTDOOR WARNING SYSTEMS FOR THE CITY OF COUNTRYSIDE

Notice:
The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to the Officials of the City of Countryside, residents and businesses regarding the operation of Countryside’s outdoor warning systems.

This guidance is not a policy statement.

This document supersedes any previous versions.
Outdoor Warning Siren Locations:

The City of Countryside currently maintains two outdoor warning sirens that are activated via the Pleasantview Fire Protection District at the following locations:

5900 Block of LaGrange Road – Behind Ideal School and adjacent to Continental Honda
6700 Block of Willow Springs Road – Across from the cities ESDA facility.

Adjacent to the City of Countryside, the Village of Hodgkins, the UPS facility and Village of Western Springs also operate outdoor warning sirens that can also be heard within the boundaries of Countryside. Should any of these sirens be activated, appropriate protective actions should be taken.

**PLEASE DO NOT CALL** local fire or police agencies to ask why the sirens are sounding. If it is an emergency, they are busy getting equipment and manpower to the emergency scene.

A word of additional caution, the cities outdoor warning sirens are just that, outdoor warning alerting systems. These sirens are meant to be heard outside to signal you to go indoors, take appropriate protective measures and tune your radio or television station to the local Emergency Alert System (EAS) Station. As homes continue to become more energy efficient and sound proofing enhanced, outdoor warning sirens that decades ago could once be heard inside of a home can no longer be heard. That’s why other means of warning are in place such as EAS radio alerts and scroll lines on placed on commercial and cable television stations.
The areas of blue represent the Countryside owned sirens, yellow are sirens owned by the Village of Hodgkins, and the green represents the siren owned by UPS and located at their facility in Hodgkins.
LEGAL BASIS FOR WARNINGS

The issuance of community warnings and the approved signals that are used to convey the warnings, as well as the procedures used to test warning systems, are based on authority provide by Federal and State law and supporting guidance documents.

Pursuant to provisions under federal law, the term emergency management is defined as:

... those activities and measures designed or undertaken (1) to minimize the effects upon the civilian population caused or which would be caused by an attack upon the United States or by a natural disaster, (2) to deal with the immediate emergency conditions which would be created by any such attack or natural disaster, and (3) to effectuate emergency repairs to, or the emergency restoration of, vital utilities and facilities destroyed or damaged by such an attack or natural disaster. Such term shall include, but shall not be limited to, (A) measures to be taken in preparation for an anticipated attack or natural disaster [including ... the provision of suitable warning systems].

This statement charges federal, state, and local agencies with developing and maintaining the capability of warning the civilian population of impending disasters.

The Illinois Emergency Management Act (20 ILCS 3305/4), further clarifies and assigns these responsibilities to units of local government. The Act defines emergency management as:

"... the coordination of such functions by the State and its political subdivisions, other than functions for which military forces are primarily responsible, as may be necessary and proper to prevent, minimize, repair, and alleviate injury and damage resulting from any natural or technological causes. These functions include, without limitation, ... warning services, communications, ... together with all other activities necessary or incidental to protecting life or property.

Providing effective warning is accomplished by a variety of warning systems, which emanate from the federal government level and ultimately rest with units of local government.

LOCAL WARNING SYSTEMS

The local portion of the system includes local government controlled warning and/or communications systems that are used to disseminate warning and emergency information to local government officials, the general public, and special facilities including schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and other facilities that require special warnings. These local systems include outdoor warning sirens, tone alert radio systems, and indoor warning systems supported by the Emergency Alerting System (EAS) and the All-Hazards NOAA Weather Radio System.
OUTDOOR WARNING SYSTEMS

The outdoor warning system includes sirens and public address systems that are used to alert residents who are outdoors when a warning is given.

Standardized signals, for outdoor warning devices, have been established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These standardized signals are used to alert the public and indicate survival actions to be taken in an emergency. These signals are ATTACK, WARNING and the ATTENTION or ALERT WARNING signal.

**Attack Warning Signal:**

An attack warning is a three (3) to five (5) minute wavering siren tone. The ATTACK WARNING signal means that an actual attack or missile launch against the United States has been detected and that protective action should be taken immediately. Per federal guidance, “this signal will be used for no other purpose and will have no other meaning”.

**Attention or Alert Warning Signal:**

An ATTENTION or ALERT WARNING signal is a three (3) to five (5) minute steady signal from sirens. This signal may be used by local government officials to alert the public of peacetime emergencies, including the occurrence of severe weather. In addition to any other meaning or requirement for action, as determined by local government officials, the ATTENTION or ALERT signal shall indicate to all persons “turn on your radio or television and listen for essential emergency information”.

SYSTEM TESTS

It is especially important that local warning systems be tested on a periodic basis to be certain that they are operating properly and to help the public learn to recognize the warning signals.

**Frequency of Tests**

FEMA recommends regularly scheduled tests of warning systems accompanied by advance publicity to inform the public of the tests. FEMA also recommends testing once a month, at a minimum.

The Illinois Emergency Management Act (20 ILCS 3305/112) specifically indicates:

"... the testing of disaster warning devices, including outdoor warning sirens, shall be held only on the first Tuesday on each month at 10 o'clock in the morning and during disaster training exercises that are specifically and expressly approved in advance by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency".
**Siren Test Procedure:**

Federal guidance (CPG 1-17/ VII-B) indicates that monthly warning systems tests should occur in the following manner.

"The ATTENTION or ALERT WARNING signal should be sounded for one (1) minute. This should be followed by one (1) minute of silence, followed by the ATTACK WARNING signal sounding for one (1) minute."

This testing procedure will establish a test pattern different from that used in an actual emergency, when the ATTENTION / ALERT WARNING or ATTACK WARNING signal will be sounded for three (3) to five (5) minutes.

**INDOOR WARNING SYSTEM**

Indoor warning devises are necessary for a well-balanced warning system. Outdoor warning systems are not effective for warning in air conditioned and tightly insulated buildings, and it is not economical to use such devices in areas of low density population. Indoor warning systems include: commercial broadcast radio and television stations, the Emergency Alert System (EAS), tone activated radio receivers (EARS), and the All-Hazards NOAA Weather Radio System. The equipment required for this type of warning system is not provided to residents or businesses by the City Countryside, it is the responsibility of the resident/business to commercially purchase the technology required to receive these broadcasts.

The City of Countryside does not endorse any specific brand of indoor warning system; they are readily available at locations such as Best Buy, Home Depot, Walgreens or other big box retailers. There are numerous manufacturers of these products and whatever system is purchased, we do recommend that it is Underwriters Laboratories approved.
EMERGENCY ACTIVATION
OUTDOOR WARNING SYSTEMS FOR SEVERE WEATHER

As indicated previously, the ATTENTION / ALERT WARNING signal may be utilized by local government officials for peacetime emergencies including severe weather. During a severe weather incident, local siren warning systems should be activated in the event of the following:

1. A confirmed sighting of a tornado, or funnel cloud aloft reported by a trained weather spotter within ten (10) miles of the community. This ten mile perimeter should be extended geographically around the perimeter of the community from the farthest northern edge to the farthest southern edge, at minimum.

2. A confirmed sighting, by a trained weather spotter. Reports from non-trained weather spotters will require confirmation before activation occurs.

3. The receipt of a tornado warning that has been issued by the National Weather Service, indicating that the community is in the path of an oncoming tornado.

A CONFIRMED sighting is defined as a sighting that is observed either by a National Weather Service trained employee/citizen or a National Weather Service trained Sky Warn weather spotter. Doppler radar used by the National Weather Service may also prompt the issuance of a warning that will require activation.

An UNCONFIRMED sighting is a report that is received from one or more members of the general public. The City of Countryside will dispatch either Emergency Management, Law Enforcement or Fire Department personnel to investigate an unconfirmed report, to determine if the report is valid or not. Confirmation of the sighting will result in a CONFIRMED report issued by the governmental official or spotter.

Activation Procedure:

Following the occurrence of a weather event meeting the above criteria, the dispatch center of Pleasantview Fire Protection District, who acts as the control center for the Outdoor Warning Sirens for Countryside, Hodgkins and UPS, will activate the outdoor warning siren system.

Once activated, the warning system should not be re-sounded for the same storm or sighting.

The warning system should be re-sounded for any new confirmed sighting, from a second storm cell, that meets the activation criteria described above.

All Clear Procedures:

In keeping with the policy of the National Weather Service, the issuance of an "all clear" statement will not be issued.
SEVERE WEATHER TERMINOLOGY:

Severe Weather Watches

For severe thunderstorm or tornado watches, they are traditionally issued for a period of four (4) to six (6) hours and when conditions are favorable for the formation of severe thunderstorms or tornadoes. The Weather Service may terminate a "watch" early if weather conditions change and the threat of severe weather is no longer present.

Severe Weather Warnings

For severe thunderstorm or tornado, these warnings are traditionally issued for periods of thirty (30) minutes to one (1) hour. Warnings are usually allowed to expire without early termination by the Weather Service, however if severe conditions exist, a warning may be extended or re-issued.

All Clear Notices

An "all clear" statement **will not be issued** by the City of Countryside or the National Weather Service. Information regarding requests for ongoing hazardous weather conditions should be directed to monitor commercial radio and television stations for further weather information. There will be no activation of outdoor warning signals to signify the termination of a weather watch or any kind of an "all clear" advisory.

REFERENCES

Public Law 93-288 The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief Act
FEMA CPG 1-17 Outdoor Warning Systems Guide