

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)
ANNEX A | APPENDIX 3 | TAB N
COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)
2024 (Pre-Helene)

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

The State Emergency Response Team (SERT) Communications Emergency Support Function (ESF-2) supports the restoration of communications infrastructure and facilitates the recovery of systems and applications for state, tribal and local governments impacted by manmade and natural disasters. ESF-2 will coordinate communications resources (equipment, services, and personnel) that may be available from a variety of sources (i.e., state agencies, volunteer groups, county agencies, the telecommunications industry, broadcast technology groups, federal government agencies, and the United States Armed Forces) before or after the activation of the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

B. SCOPE

ESF-2 plans, coordinates, and assists with communications support to state, tribal and county disaster response elements. ESF-2 will coordinate communications assets, personnel, equipment, and services, available from federal, tribal, state, and local government agencies, volunteer groups, commercial telecommunications industry and the United States military. ESF-2 will be the coordination point for all first responder communications activity at the state level before, during, and after activation of the State EOC. For the sake of clarification, communications in this document do not refer to public information or the operations within the Joint Information Center (JIC). Specific ESF-2 organizational structure and specific roles within ESF-2 are outlined further in this plan.

Communications is the process of transmission of information through verbal, written, electronic or symbolic means. The foundation for first responder communications is based on being operable, interoperable, reliable, portable, scalable, resilient and, where possible, redundant. State assistance under this function consists of the utilization of equipment, personnel, and networks essential to coordinate and disseminate information before, during and after an emergency event. In the event normal first responder communications systems become overburdened or inoperable, other available systems may be utilized as necessary to augment communications and assist local public safety entities perform their missions successfully.

II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. SITUATION

Disaster conditions may result from significant natural, technological, or man-made causes. They can cause widespread damage to public safety and commercial voice and data communications networks. Incidents can result from day-to-day public safety activities that become overwhelmed and require assistance from the SERT. Events can be planned gatherings, festivals, fairs, or areas where there is a gathering of people that, due to natural, technological, or man-made causes, can result in an incident or disaster.

B. ASSUMPTIONS

1. Initial response by public safety entities will focus on lifesaving activities. Local government officials will work toward supporting and maintaining public safety functions in and around the affected area(s). County emergency management agencies will become the central point of coordination and control for local relief activities.
2. The entire SERT, i.e., all ESFs, will require large amounts of information. This information will be essential for ensuring the continuity of first responder communications and information sharing between all levels of government when communications networks become degraded or inoperable.
3. All available forms of notification to disseminate information in a timely manner should be considered for use during an emergency.
4. Parallel planning tracks may be occurring at the federal, tribal, state, local and commercial levels. The assumption is that all entities are communicating and integrating their plans.
5. Weather and other environmental factors may restrict mobile or transportable communications equipment movement and personnel deployment into the affected area(s).
6. Significant portions of the first responder communications systems in the affected area(s) may become overwhelmed or inoperable during an emergency or in the aftermath of a disaster.

COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)

2024 (Pre-Helene)

7. During the planning process, certain requests for resources may be unrealistic based upon anticipated disaster conditions (expectation of devastation to the natural or cyber environment).
8. There may be a situation or scenario for which communication networks are unattainable and public safety is required to operate in a “zero comms” environment for a period of time.
9. During a disaster, a citizen’s ability to access emergency services via commercial voice or data systems could be impaired or non-existent.
10. The affected area’s ability to communicate effectively to provide life safety related communications may be impaired.
11. The affected area’s ability to communicate with other parts of the state could be impaired.
12. Careful consideration of sites will be required to establish staging areas for centralized communications in the field.

III. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

A. LEAD STATE AGENCY

1. NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (NCDPS)

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (NCEM)

- a. Prepare and maintain a roster of Information and Communications Technology Branch (ICT) personnel that can be activated for service. This roster will contain Communications Coordinators (COMC), Communications Unit Leaders (COML), Information Technology Services Unit Leaders (ITSL), Communications Technicians (COMT), Incident Tactical Dispatchers (INTD), Telecommunicator Emergency Response Teams (TERT) and Auxiliary Communicators (AUXC) personnel that have been approved in partnership with the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC). TERT needs, both anticipated and identified, will be coordinated by the NCEM Communications Branch in partnership with SERT PSAP coordination.

COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)

2024 (Pre-Helene)

- b. Establish and maintain a database of communications personnel and resources and methods to coordinate and track the deployment and use of these resources.
- c. Assist SERT partners with access to the Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS), Wireless Priority Service (WPS) and Telecommunications Service Priority (TSP) process.
- d. Assist tribal and county partners with the authority to access the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS).
- e. In coordination with State EOC Operations, coordinate deployment of the resources to provide on-scene coordination of state emergency forces participating in emergency operations or in support of local government response, as required.
- f. Ensures all requests for assistance are addressed and routed to proper organization.
- g. Maintain proper information and intelligence gathering methods pertaining to potential threats to communications infrastructure.

B. SUPPORTING STATE AGENCIES

1. NC DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (NCDIT)

- a. Provide IT services to state agencies, many local governments and educational institutions.
- b. Maintain the status of North Carolina's Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and ensure the 911 system is operational and effective (NC911 Board Staff).
- c. Provide subject matter expertise and guidance for any matters of suspected or confirmed cybersecurity issues or attacks on communications infrastructure.

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)
ANNEX A | APPENDIX 3 | TAB N
COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)
2024 (Pre-Helene)

2. NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (NCDPS)

STATE HIGHWAY PATROL (SHP)

TECHNICAL SERVICES UNIT (TSU)

- a. Operate, manage and support the state's primary statewide land mobile radio system known as Voice Interoperability Plan for Emergency Responders (VIPER). Establish a mutual aid/incident management talk group is coordinated through the NCEM 24-Hour Watch.
- b. Identify and assign personnel to maintain contact with and prepare to support communications during periods of activation.
- c. In coordination with the 24-Hour Watch and the ESF-2 Coordinator, provide personnel to manage communications equipment using the Strategic Technology Reserve to include radio trailers, portable towers, cache radios, and personnel.
- d. Provide personnel to assist in managing VIPER talkgroups using established NCSPARTA resources to help coordinate response and recovery activities.
- e. Report tower site statuses based on "Active (on-air)," "Active (generator power)," "Degraded (site trunking)," or "Degraded (off-air)."
- f. Interface with other North Carolina radio system administrators to ensure status of infrastructure and operability of the system.
- g. Maintain readiness and resiliency of the VIPER LMR network.
- h. Ensure that the VIPER network is used efficiently during activations.
- i. Restrict talk group usage based on saturation due to eavesdropping by non-involved entities.
- j. Restrict users based on willful or accidental interference.
- k. Facilitate the maintenance, programming, and usage of the NCSHP strategic radio cache.

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)
ANNEX A | APPENDIX 3 | TAB N
COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)
2024 (Pre-Helene)

- I. Notify local users of any anticipated or actual degradations in radio coverage.

CIVIL AIR PATROL (CAP)

- a. Provide airborne or ground based logistical support for communications personnel or equipment.
- b. Provide emergency airborne data and voice relay services to both base and mobile EOCs.
- c. Identify and assign CAP personnel to maintain contact with and prepare to support ESF-2 efforts during periods of activation.
- d. Provide point-to-point high frequency (HF) radio communications assistance.
- e. Provide support for airborne and mobile ground repeaters.
- f. Voluntary organizations have a significant capability to help with emergency public communications during major disasters. CAP aircraft can provide logistics as well as communications support.

NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD (NCNG)

- a. Primary communications support exists within the Civil Support Teams (CST), Mobile Emergency Communications Operations Center (MEOC) resources, DIRECT force packages and Joint Incident Site Communications Capabilities (JISCC). This includes the 42nd CST, 145th Airlift Wing (MEOC), and the 196th and 295th Signal Support Co. (DIRECT/JISCC).
- b. Coordinate mission assignments of NCNG communications equipment.
- c. Assist with frequency coordination for military aviation assets and/or programming.
- d. Identify and assign Civil Support Team and Mobile EOC and other communications trained personnel to maintain contact with and prepare to support ESF-2 functions during periods of activation.
- e. Provide personnel and equipment for point-to-point or mobile communications support on a 24-hour basis, as required.

COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)

2024 (Pre-Helene)

- f. Provide backup generator support (if available) to include personnel to transport, install, operate, and maintain generators and communications equipment.
- g. Provide subject matter expertise, guidance and liaison activities regarding requests for military communications resources outside of those outlined above.

3. NORTH CAROLINA AUXILIARY COMMUNICATIONS (AUXCOMM)

- a. Designate specific single point of contact to receive mission information, other instructions, and guidance from the Communications Branch Manager.
- b. Identify, train, and assign personnel to maintain contact with, and prepare to execute missions in support of ESF-2 during periods of activation.
- c. Provide radio communications support or other assistance as assigned during activations.
- d. Establish a plan, conduct ongoing training, and provide data over radio frequency (Winlink, Winmor, Pactor, etc).
- e. Provide and relay situation reports from impacted areas.
- f. Staff AUXC radio positions at the State EOC, regional coordination center locations, or other locations.
- g. Assist the 24-Hour Watch with PACE planning and testing.
- h. Coordinate with local AUXC entities to ensure PACE planning and tactical readiness.
- i. Maintain connections to the SHARES network and pass all requested messages.
- j. Operate the State EOC FEMA National Radio System (FNARS) station as required.
- k. Operate public safety radios, as authorized, to facilitate the passage of messages.

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)
ANNEX A | APPENDIX 3 | TAB N
COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)
2024 (Pre-Helene)

- l. Coordinate with SKYWARN spotter groups to assist National Weather Service (NWS) Offices with damage reports.
- m. Provide and relay situation reports from impacted areas (SPOT reports) to include status' of:
 - Local television broadcast signals;
 - Local radio broadcast signals;
 - Status of landline telephone services;
 - Status of power at the reporting location; and
 - Status of commercial voice and data networks.

4. NORTH CAROLINA 911 BOARD (PSAP COORDINATION)

- a. Serve as the ESF-2 Technical Lead for all PSAP service disruptions to include, but not limited to:
 - Physical damage to PSAP structure(s);
 - Significant staffing shortages due to injury or illness;
 - Infrastructure degradation for which a PSAP is not functioning; and
 - Multi-system cyber disruptions, malicious or accidental.
- b. Provide coordination between ESF-2 and the Network Monitoring and Assistance Center (NMAC). This will provide status of the North Carolina Emergency Services IP Network (ESInet).
- c. Provide the status for all PSAPs (primary and secondary) to ensure that citizens can access the 911 network.
- d. Facilitate any 911 call alternate routing based on capabilities at the degraded PSAP and the back-up PSAP. Consideration will be taken regarding the geographic impact area and the potentially impacted PSAPs to prevent a cascading route of 911 calls with an unknown destination.
- e. Deploy 911 Board staff to RCCs.
- f. Coordinate commercial voice/data partners that have direct involvement with the restoration of networks that deliver 911 calls to PSAPs.
- g. Coordinate with NC211 to ensure 911 system optimization.

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)
ANNEX A | APPENDIX 3 | TAB N
COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)
2024 (Pre-Helene)

**5. FIRST RESPONDERS EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES PROGRAM
(FIRSTTECH)**

- a. Provide specific, event based, technology platforms for usage within ESF-2.
- b. Provide direct support to the ESF-2 Functional Lead.
- c. Serve as the point of contact for FirstNet (US Department of Commerce) coordination.
- d. Work with NCDIT to coordinate state agency restoration of voice, data and other infrastructure systems.
- e. Provide supplemental staffing to NCEM or local response agencies.

**6. NORTH CAROLINA LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS
ASSOCIATION (NCLGISA) IT STRIKE TEAMS**

- a. Utilize capable local IT professionals to form subject matter expertise resources to the SERT.
- b. Support IT systems at State EOC and RCC's at the request of NCEM Administration Section and/or ESF-2.
- c. Support NCEM Cyber with consequence management and recovery in response to a local, state or tribal system compromise.
- d. Provide incident/event-based support at the local, state or tribal level.

**7. UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA CENTER FOR PUBLIC TELEVISION
(PBS-NC)**

- a. Provide coordination with NCSHP TSU to ensure access and restoration of shared tower sites and shared resources (for example - VIPER microwave radio network) that become degraded.
- b. Ensure that the State EOC infrastructure is sufficient to provide for the broadcast of the Governor's press conferences. If it is not, work with NCEM External Affairs and ESF-2 commercial partners to implement solutions.

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)
ANNEX A | APPENDIX 3 | TAB N
COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)
2024 (Pre-Helene)

C. SUPPORTING FEDERAL AGENCIES

1. FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)

- a. Activate federal ESF-2 partners under the Stafford Act as required.
- b. Provide short-term restoration support to local, state, tribal, territorial, and insular area government first-responder communications.
- c. Provide personnel to support ESF-2 operations.
- d. Coordinate with FCC, NCC, CISA and other support agencies to develop appropriate documentation, policies and procedures.
- e. Provide first responder communications support to local, state, tribal, territorial, and insular area first responders as requested by the State Coordinating Officer (SCO) and as approved by the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO).
- f. Coordinate activities to assist with the restoration of public safety communications systems and first responder networks as requested by the SCO and as approved by the FCO.
- g. Mobilize Mobile Emergency Response System (MERS) resources.
- h. Provide communications and information technology (IT) to federal response/recovery facilities within the area of operation. This includes federal USAR assets that deploy.

2. U.S. FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSIONS (FCC)

- a. Assist with special temporary authorizations (STA) based incident specific needs. All STAs will be coordinated through ESF-2.
- b. Provide SME guidance on frequency assignment, allocation and coordination as required by law.
- c. Provide frequency analytics based on pre and post disaster conditions.
- d. Coordinate and compile the Disaster Information Reporting System (DIRS) which provides information about communications infrastructure.

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)
ANNEX A | APPENDIX 3 | TAB N
COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)
2024 (Pre-Helene)

3. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

**NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION
ADMINISTRATION (NTIA)**

- a. Manage the federal use of spectrum and identifying additional spectrum for commercial use as required by the incident/event.
- b. Ensure the stability and security of the Internet domain name system through its participation on behalf of the U.S. government in Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers.

FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK AUTHORITY

- a. Coordinate with the NC FirstTech to liaison between ESF-2 and AT&T (FirstNet.com) to ensure that contractual obligations are met between AT&T and their FirstNet customers.
- b. Assist with the coordination of AT&T FirstNet deployable resources as appropriate, as agreed upon.

**4. NATIONAL OCEANIC AND AERONAUTICS ADMINISTRATION (NOAA)
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE (NWS)**

- a. Maintain radio transmitting stations throughout the state to broadcast weather forecasts as well as alerts, watches, and warnings for severe weather and natural hazards.
- b. Support the Emergency Alert System and provide, in coordination with ESF-2, public dissemination of critical pre-event and post-event information over the all-hazards NOAA radio system, the NOAA Weather Wire Service, and the Emergency Managers Weather Information Network.
- c. Identify all needs for SKYWARN trained net control assistance during EOC activations.

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)
ANNEX A | APPENDIX 3 | TAB N
COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)
2024 (Pre-Helene)

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. GENERAL

Operational activities outlined in this plan will be executed in accordance with all North Carolina general statutes and policies of the NC Department of Public Safety. They will also align with the NCEM ESF-2 Communications Plan and remain consistent with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the National Response Framework (NRF).

B. NOTIFICATION

The Communications Branch Manager will determine the extent to which ESF-2 coordination activities are needed and will identify the Communications Branch positions that will be necessary to support the mission most effectively. The extent of activation and positions needed will be directly correlated with the needs and scope of the incident or event (e.g., less complex incidents may only require activation of certain positions, while larger scale, more complex incidents may require activation of all positions).

State EOC activations and subsequent ESF-2 staffing notifications will be communicated via phone, text messages, e-mail, and other means available. The current contact listings for Communications Branch members, ESF-2 positions, and Communications SERT agency representatives are maintained by the Communications Branch Manager. In some cases, a mission order will be processed through NCSPARTA to facilitate reimbursement processes.

C. RESPONSE ACTIONS

1. INITIAL

- a. Provide a general description of the situation as it pertains to ESF-2 and an analysis of the ESF's operational support requirements.
- b. Based upon the Situation Analysis, prepare a list of objective-based priority actions to support lifesaving and short-term recovery operations. The action list should be revised as the situation changes.
- c. Coordinate with the 24-Hour Watch/VIPER staff for the equitable distribution and recall of previously assigned VIPER state event talk groups.

COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)

2024 (Pre-Helene)

- d. Establish communications with the federal agencies and partner states to coordinate communications assets required beyond state capability.
- e. In coordination with the RCCs, coordinate and develop an ICS-205 Incident Radio Communications Plan for disaster operations. This plan will include SERT and RCC information.
- f. Monitor NCSPARTA and be prepared to coordinate any request for Communications support. All communications resource requests will be entered into NCSPARTA by the requesting agency or county at which time it will be sorted by the State EOC. From there, it will be tasked to appropriate RCC, tasked to a county for mutual aid, or sent to the NCEM Operations Chief (via NCSPARTA) to be tasked to the ESF-2 Coordinator to fill the request using available resources.
- g. Mobilize resources and coordinate communications support for all government, quasi-government and volunteer agencies using approved mission assignments.
- h. Prepare timely electronic briefings and paper reports on the status of ESF-2 response operations and the status of communications systems. Maintain copies of all reports for preparation of after-action reports and lessons learned.
- i. Keep track of all expenditures concerning operations and submit these to the Administration and Logistics Section after terminating operations.

2. CONTINUING

- a. Gather information from impacted area and determine which communications systems are operational, including but not limited to land-line telephone service, cellular telephone networks, and land mobile radio systems (LMR).
- b. Assess the communications requirements for any damage assessment teams who will deploy to the impacted area to survey damage. Coordinate the procurement and distribution of equipment.
- c. Coordinate, if needed, with federal ESF-2 partners to ensure that state staff has the necessary communications equipment such as telephone lines, and internet connectivity to function at a Joint Field Office (JFO).

COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)

2024 (Pre-Helene)

- d. Continue to coordinate with ESF12 Energy partners to ensure the continuity of networks and to prevent unnecessary damage to communications infrastructure.
- e. Coordinate with the NCEM Business EOC (BEOC) to delineate between commercial telecommunications support for public safety entities and public service entities (schools, shelters, places of worship, etc.). ESF-2 will handle support for public safety responders, while the BEOC will support the public service entities.
- f. Ensure ESF-2 team members, or their agencies maintain appropriate records of costs incurred during the event.
- g. Provide ESF-2 coordination and support as required for Recovery Operations.
- h. Assess the need for and obtain telecommunications industry support as needed.
- i. Prioritize the deployment of services based on available resources and critical needs.
- j. Provide ESF-2 coordination and support as required for Recovery Operations.

V. DIRECTION, CONTROL AND COORDINATION

A. LOCAL

Counties are responsible for their own first responder communications needs and systems. Counties will continue using existing communications equipment and service vendors as much as possible during emergencies and disasters. Counties will route those requirements that cannot be met locally to the SERT through the State EOC Communications Center.

B. STATE

State agencies are responsible for their own communications needs and systems. In the event of a disaster, the state will assess damage to its communications systems and make repairs using existing resources as much as possible. If additional resources are needed, the state will call on local governments and the Emergency Management Assistant Compact (EMAC). If resources cannot be identified locally or through EMAC, FEMA may also

COMMUNICATIONS (ESF-2)

2024 (Pre-Helene)

provide assistance as applicable. The state will also attempt to respond to resource requests from local governments. If the state does not have adequate resources from which to draw, local government requests will be forwarded to FEMA.

C. FEDERAL

ESF-2 partners described by the National Response Framework monitor disaster situations and determine when there is a need for federal response. FEMA's communications liaison from the National Communications System will contact state personnel to prepare for Joint Field Office operations and to determine whether federal resources will be needed for state and local governments.