King County Regional
Inclusive Emergency Communications Plan

April 2022

RECORD OF CHANGES

Date	Description of Change	Posted By
7/26/19	Conversion to CPG 101 Format	Janice Rahman
9/5/19	Content edits/additions	Lynne Miller
9/25/19	Content edits/attachments	Lynne Miller
10/25/19	Incorporation of feedback	Hannah French
4/15/22	Plan Review and update	Sheri Badger

King County Regional
Inclusive Emergency Communications Plan

LEAD AGENCY
King County Emergency Management

SUPPORT AGENCIES
Cities and special purpose districts within King County
King County Sheriff's Office
King County Office of Interpreter Services
Public Health – Seattle & King County
Puget Sound Educational Service District (schools)

INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

This Inclusive Emergency Communications Plan (IECP) outlines the roles and responsibilities of King County Emergency Management (KCEM) to meet the inclusive emergency communication requirements of RCW 38.52.070[1] and support local jurisdictions in doing the same. It also includes the roles and responsibilities of KCEM to meet other requirements for inclusive communications, such as those outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. It represents a collaborative and coordinated effort by King County Emergency Management, Public Health-Seattle & King County, Seattle Emergency Management, and other regional stakeholders to enable all residents in King County have access to life safety information in a language and method they understand.

As a regional leader in emergency preparedness and operations, King County Emergency Management has a responsibility to invest in systems that enhance communication networks and the rapid dissemination of public messaging. This IECP delineates how the County's Joint Information Center (JIC) and the KCEM Duty Officers, in partnership with local support agencies, will relay critical, life-safety information regarding a given hazard or threat to communities throughout King County.

B. Scope

KCEM is responsible for supporting County Government, the unincorporated areas of King County, and the jurisdictions within King County. This IECP describes how the Joint Information Center (JIC) and Duty Officers will utilize a regional Joint Information System (JIS) and its regional alerting system(s) to inform the public about the dangers associated with emergencies and protective actions they should take to remain safe.

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[1] https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=38.52.070

King County is the 12th largest county in the United States, serving a culturally rich population of 2.27 million that speak upwards of 170 different languages and dialects. Additionally, there are people with other language accessibility needs, including those who are deaf and hard of hearing, those that are blind, and those with cognitive disabilities. Communicating life-safety messages to a population this diverse is challenging, especially given the current limitations in available technology to quickly produce multiple, accurate translations to targeted audiences.

Several communication tools and channels will be used for spoken and written emergency communications that are timely, accurate and accessible, by KCEM and within the King County region. These include mass notification systems (e.g., Alert King County), translated written materials, ethnic and culturally relevant media (e.g., TV, radio), in-person and telephone-based interpretation services, and community-based social media networks (e.g., Facebook, Trusted Partner Network).

King County Population

The Revised Code of Washington Section 38.52.070 (3)(a)(ii) defines "significant population segment" as "each limited English proficiency language group that constitutes five percent or one thousand residents, whichever is less, of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected within a city, town, or county."

The primary data sources used to determine the number of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations within the King County region, and their specific preferred languages spoken, include U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) data and the State Office of Financial Management (OFM) LEP data.

According to the OFM 2016 estimates, the King County region has 27 LEP language groups considered significant populations segments. Table 1 displays the significant language group populations in King County.

Cities in King County will utilize their own demographics to determine priorities.

Table 1 – 2016 Significant LEP Population Segments in King County			
	Languages	**Estimate of Lang. Speakers**	**% of population**
1	Spanish	85,345	3.962%
2	Vietnamese	18,899	.878%
3	Somali	9,730	.452%
4	Chinese-Mandarin	9,304	.432%
5	Russian	6,027	.280%
6	Chinese-Cantonese	5,929	.275%
7	Tagalog	5,236	.243%
8	Korean	4,838	.225%
9	Ukrainian	4,508	.209%
10	Punjabi	4,400	.204%
11	Arabic	3,639	.169%
12	Hindi	3,037	.141%

13	Amharic	2,904	.135%
14	Cambodian	2,873	.133%
15	Telugu	2,243	.104%
16	Japanese	2,034	.094%
17	Samoan	1,880	.087%
18	Urdu	1,656	.077%
19	Marshallese	1,632	.076%
20	Tigrinya	1,552	.072%
21	Tamil	1,542	.072%
22	Farsi	1,365	.063%
23	Lao	1,345	.062%
24	Nepali	1,178	.055%
25	French	1,176	.055%
26	Oromo	1,154	.054%
27	Rumanian	1,081	.050%
28	Burmese	938	.044%
29	Swahili	882	.041%
30	Portuguese	756	.035%
31	Turkish	725	.034%
32	Hebrew, Modern	694	.032%
	Total	**190,502**	**8.845%**

King County Government currently uses a tiered system for prioritizing translations. The tiered system breaks LEP languages into three tiers – the first tier (Spanish) indicates materials shall be translated, the second tier (eight languages) indicates that translation is recommended, and the languages in the third tier (11) encourages translations. Five different demographic sources were utilized to identify the top 20 languages. This plan will also utilize that information as it informs the LEP alerting program.

C. **Objectives**

Collaborative relationships with trusted voices such as community leaders and ethnic and culturally relevant media are critical to disseminating information quickly using formats and platforms that are understood and used regularly by communities. These partners can also provide important feedback regarding the effectiveness of those communication efforts.

Key objectives of this plan include:

1. Describing how information-sharing will flow between the King County JIS and local jurisdictions to ensure communities receive timely emergency information.
2. Outlining the roles and responsibilities of KCEM and support agencies in leveraging individual and regional resources and capabilities to communicate life-safety information in multiple languages.

3. Identifying and coordinating with regional resources for accurate, timely, and accessible translation and interpretation services

AUTHORITIES

This plan articulates how King County will communicate accurate, timely, and accessible messages during emergency operations in compliance with federal and state requirements. The requirements are found in RCW 38.52.070, as well as guidance for federal financial recipients from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security[2]. Additional requirements for accessible communication are outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This plan is part of the King County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). (See Attachment E: ADA Language Accessibility compliance tips)

SITUATION

A. Emergency/Disaster Conditions and Hazards

The King County Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (RHMP) identifies both natural and human-caused hazards that are most likely to impact the County. This IECP should be implemented during incidents where the dissemination of timely life-safety messages is imperative to the safety of residents and businesses.

B. Planning Assumptions

Regular emergency management public outreach and information is centered primarily on preparedness information, to prevent and/or reduce risk. During an emergency incident, this information and related services are more time-sensitive and may require extra staffing resources to produce.

Establishing strong relationships with community and faith-based leaders, as well as schools and businesses, before disaster strikes is key to building a robust network of information-sharing partners that can disseminate time-sensitive, official messages in appropriate and useful formats. The trusted partners can also provide situational awareness and community resource needs to emergency response organizations.

Regular engagement and inclusion in planning, training, and exercise activities strengthen these relationships. King County's population in LEP and other language access communities infrequently interact with Emergency Management and its programs. Most interactions between groups with LEP and other language access needs and County departments are through the court systems, public health facilities, Metro Transit operators and customer service staff, Election workers, and Sheriff's deputies.

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[2] *Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons*, https://www.lep.gov/guidance/guidance_Fed_Guidance.html#DHS, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, April 18, 2011. Also see page 19.

Emergency managers across the region will decide on the appropriate mix of language services – translations and interpretations – on a case-by-case basis based on impacted populations of LEP and other language access needs and operational needs. KCEM and local city partners will use the services of certified translators and interpreters to the extent possible and practical prior to, during, and after emergencies and disasters. Emergency managers will also utilize pre-scripted and pre-translated messages for a variety of hazards that threaten the region (e.g., earthquakes, flooding, landslides, fire).

Accessing "on-demand" translation and interpretation services during a catastrophic incident may be significantly delayed given impacts to transportation and communication infrastructure, the time it takes to coordinate with translation service providers, as well as delays in gathering situational awareness and appropriate actionable messages and directives.

For similar reasons, dissemination of life-safety notifications in languages other than English may be more delayed than these same notifications in English, depending on the nature of the incident, technology limitations, impact to communication infrastructure, and a community's ability to reach its own members.

Interviews with community leaders indicate that local language communities consider existing auto-translation programs inadequate. It is preferable for emergency messaging to be sent in English versus relying on auto-translation. Using auto-translation can be used as a stopgap measure while clarifying/re-translating with translators. When available, using certified translators is a recognized "best practice".

As pre-scripted messages are written, the use of plain language is stressed in the development of alert messages in English for easier translation.

Investing in pre-disaster education and community outreach regarding the importance of personal emergency preparedness and community self-sufficiency can counteract possible delayed or limited communications in any language.

This plan will refer to KCEM's emergency alerts as ALERT King County. This capability is housed within the CodeRED/OnSolve platform. The CodeRED/OnSolve alert system maintained by KCEM contains internal and external contact lists and has the capability of launching emergency alerts through ALERT King County or to internal groups such as the Trusted Partner Network (TPN). It also has a language alerting capability that will be utilized, although not all languages mandated are available.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS
A. Overview
Several communication tools and channels will be used for accurate, timely, and accessible emergency communications by KCEM and within the King County region. These include mass notification systems (e.g., ALERT King County), translated written

materials, ethnic and culturally relevant media (TV, radio, social media), in-person and telephone-based interpretation services, and community-based social media networks (e.g., Facebook).

ALERT King County is the name of the county's mass notification system, hosted by King County OEM. It utilizes the CodeRed/OnSolve platform. It has several different ways to send alerts using texts, email and voice. For immediate life safety messages, the system can access the 'reverse 9-1-1' database, which encompasses all landline phone numbers (excluding VoIP). The system can utilize WEA alerts for wireless devices, sending messages to an affected area(s) by geofencing or geocoding. Additionally, the last database is the opt-in database, where people sign up to receive alerts by including their desired contact preference (cell, email, home phone, text).

Processes are in place to access certified interpreters, qualified bilingual staff, and certified translators. In addition, machine translation is used to initially capture a draft of an alternate language communication; then reviewed and edited for proper context, meaning, and tone by a native speaker, when available.

B. Duty Officer role

KCEM staff members rotate week-long shifts as Duty Officers, providing 24/7 regional coverage for partners and local jurisdictions as the direct point of contact for communicating significant incidents and requesting emergency response support, including issuing emergency notifications to impacted residents. These Duty Officers are trained to use the ALERT King County mass notification system to quickly launch emergency alerts by voice, email, and/or text message to mobile devices and landlines in geo-targeted areas. They have also been trained to activate the TPN when requested.

C. Joint Information System Organization

The King County Joint Information System (JIS) serves as a central hub for emergency management-related information-sharing and County wide public message coordination. The JIS coordinates communication updates from partner organization and jurisdiction communicators and issues regionally applicable safety messages through interagency email, the County's Emergency News Blog, social media accounts (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), and news media channels, or other applicable methods.

Upon activation of the County JIS, the Joint Information Center (JIC) Manager will initiate correspondence with regional stakeholders to support coordinated messaging in multiple languages and in alternate accessible formats. Likewise, should an incident occur within a local jurisdiction, the given city will notify the KCEM Duty Officer and/or Public Information Officer to request specific messaging support, including interpretation and translation services.

D. Coordination with other agencies – Joint Information System

The JIS partners with other organizations to inform the public, through multiple channels, about the dangers associated with a given emergency and protective actions they should take to remain safe. Specifically, the County JIS will maintain and employ a regional contact directory of jurisdictional public information officers, media contacts,

and regional translation resources. In addition, County department and locally managed translation and interpretation networks will be leveraged to enhance culturally sensitive outreach to at-risk communities, in languages and language formats they can understand.

Agencies composing the County JIS include, but are not limited to:
- King County cities and special purpose districts
- King County Emergency Management
- Other King County Government departments (depending on the incident)
- King County Superior Court Office of Interpreter Services
- King County Sheriff's Office
- Public Health – Seattle & King County
- Puget Sound Educational Service District

E. Messaging strategies and methods

Utilizing a variety of systems, community networks, and communication methodologies, emergency managers will leverage these systems to relay critical, life-safety messages to residents, businesses, and visitors in King County, including LEP communities. These include mass notification systems (e.g., ALERT King County and Wireless Emergency Alerts), which can be used to reach the TPN, as well as communication resources available to King County Superior Court Office of Interpreter Services, city and special purpose district networks, and ethnic and culturally relevant media channels. In addition, pre-scripted hazard-specific emergency messages have been developed and translated to enhance the timeliness of developing and distributing appropriate messages in multiple languages.
(See Attachment A: Messaging Strategies and Methods)

RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Lead Agency

KCEM will take the lead in public communications coordination, reaching out to local jurisdictions during an emergency to identify translation and interpretation needs. It will also activate and update its regional Emergency News Blog[3] with public safety messages and resources.

In addition, the KCEM Duty Officer will support emergency alert needs of local jurisdictions, launching voice, email, and/or text messages through ALERT King County. This includes notifying the TPN.

B. Support Agencies
(See Attachment B: Individuals and Organizations Providing Language Assistance)

LOGISTICS AND SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

Pre-scripted and translated emergency messages are available on the King County website for timely dissemination through traditional, digital, and social media channels.

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[3] https://kcemergency.com

Additional public communications will rely on internal and external translation service availability. Public communicator and media contact lists will be maintained by the KCEM Public Information Officer (PIO) on a quarterly basis.

(See Attachment C: Key Life-Safety Messages)
(See Attachment D: News Media Contacts)

EVALUATION

King County will report yearly on the number of alerts issued, the reach of the alerted messages to other language communities (based on TPN reports), the translation and technological challenges and the recommendations for improvement to jurisdictional stakeholders with a copy sent to the WA EMD LEP Coordinator. (Opt-in system numbers)

PLAN MAINTENANCE

The KCOEM PIO is responsible for plan development and maintenance. The King County IEC Plan shall be formally reviewed with partners biennially, and updated as part of that biannual review, and as necessary following an exercise or real-world event that suggests changes through the after action/lessons learned process. Changes to and revisions of this plan will be made in accordance with accepted emergency management practice.

Simple revisions, such as changes to the succession plan or updates due to King County Code provisions, may be completed without full review and acceptance by all partners. Major revisions will be circulated to the partners, as identified in the Planning/Update Process, prior to incorporation and approval. All changes, whether simple or major, will be noted in the Record of Changes at the beginning of this Plan.

To evaluate the Plan, elements will be incorporated into appropriate training and exercises on an annual basis. Accepted emergency management practice for exercise design and the after-action review and improvement plan process will allow for effective evaluation by exercises; real-world events will also allow for evaluation through the after-action review process. Additionally, comments or suggestions for improving the Plan may be provided to KCOEM at any time by contacting the KCOEM PIO.

Planning/Update Process

1. Identify internal and external partners critical to the process.
2. Conduct a kick-off meeting or initiate communications with partners on intent to update the plan.
3. Establish a process and schedule for gathering partner input.
4. Gather information from partners based on changes to personnel, functions, risks, hazards, or resources; leadership input; and/or, lessons learned through exercises or real-world events.
5. Draft revised plan using input provided.
6. Distribute draft plan for review and comment.
7. Ensure draft plan complies with guidance and laws.
8. Finalize draft plan to include signatures.
9. Distribute final plan to partners, as necessary.
10. Implement the plan.

Implementation

1. The authority to activate/implement the King County IEC Plan rests with the King County PIO or designee.

2. Coincident activation/implementation of IEC Plan, the King County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), or other emergency plans may take place. The priority for emergency operations is:

- Life Safety
- Incident Stabilization
- Property and Environment Protection
- Restoration of COG and COOP Functions

3. Activation/implementation of this Plan may or may not require activation of the King County EOC.

REFERENCES

Attachment A: Messaging Strategies and Methods

Attachment B: Individuals and Organizations Providing Language Assistance

Attachment C: Key Life-Safety Messages

Attachment D: News Media Contacts

Attachment E: ADA Language Accessibility compliance tips

Attachment A: Messaging Strategies and Methods

A variety of systems, community networks, and communication methodologies will be leveraged to relay timely critical, life-safety messages to all residents, including LEP communities.

For critical, life-safety situations

ALERT King County and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)
The KCEM Duty Officer will launch a pre-scripted (if available) ALERT King County and/or WEA message to a geo-targeted area of impacted King County. Given technological limitations, this alert will initially be launched in English. When language options are available in this system, all available languages will be utilized, based on location of impacted area and opt-ins requesting a specific language. A second, similar alert will then be sent to the TPN contacts listed in CodeRED, requesting they share the message through their established community channels (e.g., Facebook, word-of-mouth, faith centers).

System used: CodeRED to issue emergency alerts to geo-targeted areas, and/or existing contact lists of stakeholders

Capability: Can broadcast in multiple languages simultaneously by mobile text, landline, and email. In 2019, WEA added Spanish capability to its alerts, and will utilize pre-scripted Spanish translations of English alerts.

Social media
Similarly, the KCEM JIC/JIS will relay the same critical, life-safety message through:
The County's **social media** channels (Facebook and Twitter), and the Emergency News Blog. Following best practices, the Facebook posts will feature the word "alert" in multiple languages, followed by a safety directive in English. Consider messaging in multiple languages on social media – put alert information on where to (blogs or webpages) and translated messages in single location. Additionally, some people who speak other languages utilize the translation feature on Facebook and other social media for their day-to-day communication needs.

Systems used: County's flagship social media accounts – Facebook: kingcountywa   Twitter: @kingcountywa

Capability: Has wide reach, including large media followership. Allows for written language translation coupled with English message. Allows for images and video to enhance communications and comprehension levels. However, Twitter limits number of characters for a given post, and not all residents are users of social media.

Local media, including ethnic and culturally relevant media channels

Initially, due to time-sensitivity, content will be sent in English with a request for non-English broadcast stations and digital news platforms to translate the message in their audience's preferred language. Then, the Regional JIS comprised of appropriate partners, will request they share the message through their networks and notify the JIC of specific language groups for which they require translation

Systems used: CodeRED and JIS contact directories

Capability: Contains up-to-date contacts for partner organizations and community networks who have local connections and proven mechanisms for communicating with their diverse customers and neighbors. These trusted voices reinforce official messaging, delivering information in culturally sensitive ways. They are also instrumental in helping dispel rumors and misinformation, as well as providing feedback to the Regional JIS on additional messaging needs.

Attachment B: Individuals and Organizations
Providing Language Assistance

Public Health – Seattle & King County
Maintain a contact directory for its Community Connections Network (CCN) members that serve as trusted voices within their respective communities. Make this program available to the KCEM Duty Officer and JIS for sharing timely public messages.
> Contact: CodeRED group list (directly accessible by KCEM) or Public Health's Duty Officer Line (call KCEM Duty Officer for contact information)

King County Sheriff's Office
Provide in-person information and/or leverage volunteers (e.g., King County Search & Rescue) to communicate safety information to impacted communities.
> Contact: KCSAR Coordinator/Detective Ed Christian – call KCEM Duty Officer for contact information

King County Government departments
Provide subject matter expertise and bi-lingual staff to help the JIS craft and deliver public messages in multiple languages to impacted communities.
> Contact: (See JIS contact directory for most current list)

King County Superior Court Office of Interpreter Services
Obtain interpreters for more than 160 different languages to assist non-English speakers with court matters. OIS has offices in all three of the Superior Court's primary facilities. Make the liaison available to the County JIS for sharing timely public messages, respecting the nuances of professional interpreters.
> Contact: KCEM liaison Rachael DelVillar through KCEM Duty Officer or
> https://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/superior-court/interpreter-services.aspx

Cities within King County
Pre-identify community language needs and establish connections with internal and external language translation providers. Make these contacts available to the County JIS for sharing timely public messages.
> Contact: (See JIS directory for most current list)

Puget Sound Educational Service District
Maintain contacts and coordinate communication with King and Pierce County school districts.
> Contact: Andrea Dombroski or L Michelle through KCEM Duty Officer

Attachment C: Resource Lists

Key Life Safety Messages

Pre-scripted, hazard-specific messaging have been created and translated in the nine most spoken languages in Seattle and King County – English, Spanish, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Vietnamese, Korean, Somali, Russian, Ukrainian, and Punjabi.

Topics include:

- Evacuation
- Flooding
- Winter Storm
- Heat
- Landslides/Mudflows
- Wildfires
- Shelter-in-Place

- Boil Water
- Earthquake
- Volcano
- Pandemic Flu
- Power Outage
- Reunification

- Dam Failure
- Terrorism
- 911 Outage
- Fire
- Driving
- Flooding

These messages can be found on the [KCEM website](#) [4] as well. They are organized by topic with an initial alert message for immediate action or warning, followed by related safety messages.

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[4] https://kingcounty.gov/~/media/depts/emergency-management/documents/plans/IEC/IECplan-translated-messages-byhazard.ashx?la=en

Attachment D: News Media Contacts

News Media (including ethnic and culturally relevant)

Reiterate and translate (as needed) public safety messages and situation updates provided by the County JIS. Provide feedback regarding additional public messaging needs, based on customer response.

Best practice will be to check Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affair's media list as it is regularly updated.

Attachment E: ADA Language Accessibility compliance tips

Some resources for ADA language accessibility are:
- [Guide to Cognitive Disabilities - ADA Site Compliance](#)
- [ADA Requirements: Effective Communication](#)
- [ADA Tool Kit: Chapter 3, General Effective Communication Requirements Under Title II of the ADA](#)