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## IA 10 – Telecommunications Failure

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**IA 10. Telecommunications Failure****1 Purpose**

- The purpose of this annex is to provide a framework of coordination among agencies to help ensure the safety of life and property during telecommunications failures affecting Klamath County. It defines roles, responsibilities, and organizational relationships of government and private agencies in response to telecommunications failures.
- The primary focus of this annex is telecommunications failures and the effect they could have on the safety and security of the population, as well as economic and business activity within the county.

**2 Situation and Assumptions****2.1 Situation**

- The failure of data transfer, communications, or data processing may be brought about by:
  - Physical destruction of computers or communications equipment; or
  - A performance failure of software needed to run such equipment, either through bad design or sabotage.
- A failure of this type may cause severe economic damage and/or may pose life-threatening situations, as seen by airport radar, 9-1-1, and other critical communication failures.
- The dependence of society on telecommunications and information technology is steadily increasing. Klamath County, like any other county, is vulnerable to the disruption of telecommunications and information technology.
- Klamath County may experience telecommunications failures or outages ranging from a few hours to several days. Computer and telecommunications failures may result from any of the following causes:
  - Ice and high winds may bring down telephone lines over a wide area, causing widespread outages.
  - Fires, explosions, floods, or an earthquake could destroy critical computer and communications switching equipment, resulting in widespread outages.
  - Using basic conventional weapons, vandals or terrorists could attack computer and telecommunications infrastructure, causing telecommunications failures and lengthy outages.

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- Information technology and critical computer systems are vulnerable to cyber attack by computer hackers.
- Telecommunications failures often occur along with other serious disruptions, such as heat waves, cold snaps, windstorms, snow storms, and other severe weather phenomena. Resources can be stretched to the limit, degrading response and recovery operations.
- Telecommunications failures and outages could impact Klamath County through the loss of critical information and communications services to citizens, businesses, and government agencies. This could threaten life safety, disrupt security, severely impact businesses, and interrupt vital government services.
- Fortunately, today many critical facilities in the county such as hospitals, police and fire stations, air traffic control centers, emergency operations centers, and key government and military facilities have alternate and backup communications systems. Schools, however do not.

**2.2 Assumptions**

- Nearly all telecommunications failures and outages will occur without warning.
- Restoration of telecommunications will lead to stabilization of emergency conditions.
- As urbanization and dependence on telecommunications increases, the potential problems and impacts that telecommunications failures can have on County resources will be compounded.
- All County equipment and personnel will be available to cope with emergency conditions. Assistance through mutual aid agreements may be necessary.
- Additional resources may be obtained through contracting with local vendors.

**3 Roles and Responsibilities****3.1 Public Works Department**

- The Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining and implementing departmental contingency plans in the event of telecommunications failure.
- Public Works should ensure that the alternate means of communications are tested periodically.

**IA 10. Telecommunications Failure****3.2 Sheriff's Department**

- The Sheriff's Office is responsible for maintaining and implementing departmental contingency plans in the event of telecommunications failure.

**3.3 Klamath County Emergency Management Agency**

- Monitor the impact of the telecommunications outage throughout the county. Coordinate closely with the communications company and alert department heads and other key staff of the status and expected duration of the outage.
- If the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is not activated, Emergency Management Agency is responsible for ensuring inter-department and inter-agency coordination. This may entail a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to implement the Incident Command System (ICS) and appointment of an Incident Commander (IC) through a Delegation of Authority.
- Inform Oregon Emergency Response System (OERS) of the status of the telecommunications outage and efforts to respond to, and recover from, any emergency conditions.
- Telecommunications companies will respond to the loss of commercial telecommunications, diagnose the problem(s), and restore service.
- During large emergencies when the EOC is activated, a liaison from the communications company should be available to the County EOC.
- Communicate with 9-1-1 regarding telecommunication problems they may be having and assist where possible.

**3.4 Information Technologies (IT) Department**

- Train information technology personnel in the safe and effective fulfillment of emergency duties.
- Ensure that a business continuity plan and procedures are established and tested to protect and restore critical computer systems and telecommunications.
- Provide computer and communications technical support to the IC and EOC.
- Ensure that critical applications are backed up regularly and tapes are stored off-site in a safe and secure location.
- Participate in emergency drills and exercises.

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- Maintain internal notification/call rosters.
- Establish internal lines of succession.
- Protect vital records.

**4 Concept of Operations**

- Restoration of telecommunications is the responsibility of IT and local telecommunications companies. They maintain and test emergency plans that will enable damage assessment, location of the source of the outage, and prioritization and restoration of telecommunications.
- County Emergency Management Agency and each County department need to have contingency plans for telecommunications failures and outages.
- Critical County facilities should have more than one reliable means of communication. Resources other than commercial landlines include cellular phones, radios, satellite phones, facsimile, email, and microwave.
- Planning, preparing for, and coordinating the response to telecommunications failures are primarily the responsibility of IT and Klamath County Emergency Management Agency. Other County departments are responsible for planning to recover and maintain their own operations and services during telecommunications outages.
- Under most circumstances, response to and recovery from telecommunications failures will be managed by each County Department director with support from IT.
- Depending on the scope of the incident, the County EOC may be partially activated and some assistance from other departments may be needed in the EOC.
- Some circumstances may require a unified command. For example, joint efforts of the County Incident Commander (IC) and the communications company IC may be needed to more efficiently manage response and recovery resources.
- In extreme cases, full activation of the County EOC may be required. In this case, representatives of the communications company should have key liaison positions in the EOC or be readily available.