



MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Kimberly Bell, Deputy CAO

DATE: November 2, 2020

CC: Mayor Bradburn
Matthew Huish, CAO

RE: Emergency Communications Update

Administration, Emergency Management and the Communications Department will be presenting an update on external Emergency Communications. We look forward to the opportunity to present the significant strides we've made in creating and utilizing various platforms to reach citizens during an emergency.

Background:

Local government municipalities have the duty and responsibility to provide current and updated information during an emergent situation or threat. Our goal is to serve the community with the utmost professionalism and a focus on the health, safety, and well-being of our residents. This commitment includes efficient and effective communication before, during, and after an emergency.

History of Emergency Communications:

Before 2018, Sandy City had not activated the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and had focused emergency communication primarily on the following channels: emails, phone numbers, social media, Reverse 911 and volunteer efforts by our Emergency Preparedness Leaders (EPL).

In the last year and a half, we have focused our efforts on improving and expanding our communication methods. As part of this endeavor, Administration, Communications and Emergency Management collaborated to create an Emergency External Communications Guide detailing the various methods for communications. As part of this process, we involved residents to obtain their feedback.

We have been able to increase our social media platforms with nearly 33,000 followers along with revisiting our volunteer programs. Prior to this effort, we had minimal social media following and little to no interaction via various social media platforms. Additionally, we have a few thousand email subscribers for our email news updates.

Email and SMS text messaging ranked highest in the March 2020 Citizen Panel survey as the methods in which they preferred to receive communication during an emergency. We are pleased to report that we now have nearly 32,000 subscribers to our emergency management notification systems and has the capability to send email, texts, and robocalls depending on the choices subscribers have selected.

Sandy Communications continually promotes emergency preparedness messaging through our news and social media channels and has created a mobile-friendly website including applications to reach even more citizens in our city. With the upgrade to a new web platform, we have the ability to reach residents by calling, texting, emailing, and geofencing. A privacy policy/terms of use was implemented in 2019 and a test of these emergency communication systems took place in early 2020. Our ongoing messaging encourages citizens to engage on our Citizen Connect communication channels: sandy.utah.gov/citizenconnect.

Additionally, we expect to utilize traditional forms of media including news releases, press conferences, flyers, and neighborhood signs/reader-boards. Our numerous volunteer groups will be contacted and assembled in the event we need their assistance, and timely information will be provided through all these channels as well. We are evaluating and restructuring our volunteer program to simplify and create more efficiencies for communications with our volunteers during an emergency. We currently have volunteers from CERT, VIPS, Emergency Preparedness Leaders (EPL), Community Coordinators, Ready your Business, and Neighborhood Watch.

Summary:

Today, we have the technology and data information to accelerate our emergency communications in the event of an emergency. We've seen a tremendous increase in social media followers, collected input from residents from surveys and citizen feedback, successfully tested our emergency communication system, and expanded our resident subscriber list. Additionally, with our new platform we are able to do robocalls and geo-target during an emergency and improve our notifications on our Sandy CityServe app.

Action to be taken:

No council action needed; this agenda item is informational.

References:

Included with this memo is the PowerPoint presentation to be presented at the City Council Meeting.

Please let me know if I can address any questions.

Thank you,
Kim