
Public Alerts

706.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for notifying the public of vital fire safety information and/or emergency evacuation instructions.

706.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Blue Ridge Fire District to use Public Alerts to notify the public of critical fire prevention campaigns, fire hazard warnings, and emergency evacuation instructions. A Public Alert shall require the authorization of a Captain or higher rank.

706.3 PROCEDURE

Public Alerts are intended to inform the public about incidents and recruit public assistance through proactive activities via a widespread media alert. In addition to any local radio, television and press affiliates, the public will be notified of the circumstances of an emergency affecting the health and safety of people in a geographic area, and what the public can do to assist emergency responders during the incident.

The Fire Chief should be involved in any communiqué released via a Public Alert, if time permits, but certainly in the case of fire prevention campaigns, fire hazard warnings, weather alerts or notification of health information (e.g., pandemics, heat events).

In the event of a widespread emergency, such as a hazardous material (HAZMAT) release, biological threat or a major fire, Dispatch will likely be operating at or beyond capacity. Any Public Alert should include a telephone number outside Dispatch for the public to call for additional information and explicit instructions not to call Dispatch for additional information.

A Public Alert should include, but is not limited to:

- (a) The Blue Ridge Fire District has generated the alert.
- (b) The nature of the alert.
- (c) The location and scope of the incident/prevention campaign/fire hazard.
- (d) What the listener should do to assist in the effort.
- (e) Established routes and/or destinations, if applicable.
- (f) Where the listener can call to get additional information, if applicable.
- (g) Instructions regarding what the listener should not do, if applicable.

706.4 SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION

The Fire Chief or the authorized designee shall appoint an administrator for the Public Alert system. The administrator shall be responsible for all liaison contact with the Public Alert system

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vendor and all maintenance and upgrades of the system and will ensure the address/telephone number database is updated periodically in accordance with the vendor contract.

The administrator shall also conduct periodic audits of the system to ensure peak performance in terms of volume of calls reaching the desired number of recipients in a reasonable time. Based on audit results, adjustments may need to be made on the number of outgoing telephone lines or the system capacity.

The Training Coordinator and the administrator shall coordinate training in the use of the Public Alert system and ensure that the appropriate members receive training.