Emergency Communications CONOPS Template

This file, adapted from content in Appendix F of *ACRP Research Report 201,* is provided in Word format to facilitate use by practitioners.

The Word document is designed to be used by airports as a ready-made base template; however, no two airports are the same. Recognizing that each has its own requirements, this template provides generic text that airports can edit to meet their own needs and those of the communities they serve by adding to and/or replacing generic text with specific details. Alternatively, airports may elect to copy some of the text from specific sections for use in other documents.

Please note:

* Generic text is found within brackets ([ ]). Bracketed copy in the template also is colored blue to stand out. Generic text should be replaced with text specific to your airport.
* [Airport Name] should be replaced with the appropriate airport name. For example, in Alabama:
  + “[Airport Name]” could become “Huntsville International Airport” or “HSV”; and
  + “[County Name]” could become “Madison County” or “Madison County, Alabama.”
* Where bracketed [ ] instructions suggest the insertion of additional material, the choice is optional as to what and how much to include.

This CONOPS template has been written from a local operational perspective. The template is intended to work in conjunction with the airport’s EOP.

The template begins with a sample cover page. To use the template simply delete this explanatory page.

**[Airport Name] Emergency Communications Concept of Operations**

[Date]

**Background**

On a day-to-day basis, an airport is responsible for communicating messages to staff and to the public. Most messaging and signage is planned and deliberate, using boilerplate language and standard messages that have been tailored to the many different audiences of people who are traveling through or working at an airport. When an airport experiences an emergency or disaster requiring the notification of people at the airport, then travelers, vendors, employers, and the general public have to be able to receive and understand the messages so they can respond appropriately, stay informed, and remain safe. These messages, with changing and updated information, must be able to be understood by all travelers and people at the airport.

**Overview**

In an emergency or disaster situation, [Airport Name] will provide messaging and communications to travelers, vendors, and other people at the airport. Recognizing that people with a variety of different abilities are on site at any given time, [Airport Name] will work to facilitate the communication of vital and potentially lifesaving information to all people at the airport, including those with disabilities or others with access and functional needs, as well as those with limited English proficiency.

**Intended Use**

This Emergency Communications Concept of Operations (CONOPS) identifies specific roles and responsibilities that [Airport Name] may undertake in an emergency or disaster in which [Airport Name] is impacted and needs to communicate with the many people at [Airport Name]. It also provides a checklist to support this function.

The [Airport Name] Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) is the primary document to support response and recovery when [Airport Name] is affected by an emergency or disaster. This CONOPS supplements existing plans and procedures with a focus on communicating with people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, as well as those with limited English proficiency.

**Audience**

The intended audience for this CONOPS includes [Airport Name] personnel, including all staff with essential emergency duties.

**Scope**

This CONOPS focuses on supporting the communications functions as it informs travelers, vendors, staff, and others at [Airport Name] during a disaster or emergency. These people may have disabilities or other access and functional needs, including limited English proficiency, so the ability of [Airport Name] to disseminate timely, relevant, potentially lifesaving information is essential to any emergency response. This document includes the following sections:

* Incident Management
  + Situation
  + Planning Assumptions
  + Implementation
  + Preparedness Roles and Responsibilities

**Situation**

In emergencies and disasters, [Airport Name] will need to communicate vital, potentially lifesaving information to travelers, vendors, and airport employees. This information may be dynamic, timely, and essential. [Airport Name], with its commitment to providing this information to all people, recognizes that varying modes of communication will be essential to completing this task. [Airport Name] also recognizes the importance of training and empowering all airport staff and vendor or contract employees and airport volunteers to help achieve the goal of accessible communication for all.

This CONOPS may be implemented in whole or in part depending on the scope of the event. This document supports established EOP protocols and procedures.

**Planning Assumptions**

* At any given time, airports contain a number of people with varying abilities, including people with disabilities or other access and functional needs (DAFN) and people with limited English proficiency (LEP).
* Some people with DAFN will need additional assistance for communication, alerts, and warnings.
* Critical infrastructure, equipment, and supplies needed to communicate information about the emergency may be unavailable due to the emergency or disaster. This may complicate, delay, or reduce the effectiveness of the response.
* Systems that transmit information to travelers will be treated as mission-critical systems.
* Rumors and inaccuracies will spread as the public attempts to gain information about the emergency.
* Social media may be used both to transmit information to people in the airport and to receive ground-truth information from people in the airport about what they are experiencing.
* Depending on the scope of an emergency, personnel with non-emergency roles may encounter travelers or other people who have not received emergency information.
* Every reasonable effort should be made to ensure that all people are able to access emergency information.
* During emergencies, there will be multiple stakeholders (airports, airlines, contractors, tenants, and so forth) pushing communications. These stakeholders should plan together in advance to ensure the best chance of coordinated messaging. This is of particular importance when immediate action is necessary.

**Implementation**

This CONOPS will be implemented whenever the [Airport Name] Authorized Representative activates the EOP or any time that communications and messaging outside of routine, standard communications to travelers are needed.

**Preparedness Roles and Responsibilities**

*ADA Coordinator’s Office*

* Participates in internal and multi-agency emergency planning, training, and exercises, focusing on emergency communications to all populations.
* Supports Public Relations and/or the public information officer (PIO) in developing and maintaining emergency communications and public information in a number of accessible formats, including, but not limited to, large print, universal signage, languages other than English, and braille.
* Ensures all communications are in compliance with all relevant regulations.
* Regularly conducts DAFN advisory group meetings to ascertain any gaps or needs that have recently developed in the airport and that have been identified by the DAFN community.
* Conducts periodic terminal inspections to ensure that accessible messaging systems are maintained.
* Conducts training that is made available to staff, airlines, and stakeholders on how to communicate with and assist people with DAFN during an emergency event.
* Coordinates with IT and/or the airport’s web administrator to share accessibility services with the public.

*Airport Operations*

* Landside Operations
  + Participates in internal and multi-agency emergency planning, training, and exercises, focusing on emergency communications to all populations.
* Terminal Operations
  + Participates in internal and multi-agency emergency planning, training, and exercises, focusing on emergency communications to all populations.

*Airport Volunteers*

* Attend available training offered by the ADA Coordinator’s Office.
* Install or bookmark mobile translation applications and available dictation applications to provide communication options for travelers with LEP or individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
* Review the safety procedures and be familiar with evacuation routes, shelter-in-place locations, and assembly points to provide direction during an emergency.

*Customs and Border Protection (CBP)*

* Participates in internal and multi-agency emergency planning, training, and exercises, focusing on emergency communications to all populations.
* Maintains accessible communications and instructions for the control and/or evacuation of passengers and employees from CBP facilities.

*Airport Emergency Management Department*

* Coordinates emergency planning, training, and exercise activities that support accessible communications to a variety of audiences.
* Ensures all exercises include a component (e.g., scenario, inject, player, or other element) that tests emergency communications to people with DAFN.
* Participates in internal and multi-agency emergency planning, training, and exercises, focusing on emergency communications to all populations.
* Ensures communications and public information are available in a number of accessible formats, including, but not limited to, large print, universal signage, languages other than English, and braille.
* Supports the implementation of accessibility training in coordination with the ADA coordinator’s office.

*Public Relations and/or Public Information Officer (PIO)*

* Participates in internal and multi-agency emergency planning, training, and exercises, focusing on emergency communications to all populations.
* Develops and maintains communications and public information in a number of accessible formats, including, but not limited to, large print, universal signage, languages other than English, and braille.

*Transportation Security Administration (TSA)*

* Participates in internal and multi-agency emergency planning, training, and exercises, focusing on emergency communications to all populations.
* Maintains accessible communications and instructions for the control and/or evacuation of passengers and employees from TSA facilities.
* Conducts ongoing evacuation drills that include the testing of messaging and communications with people with DAFN.

**Response Roles and Responsibilities**

*ADA Coordinator’s Office*

* Assigns DAFN communications function within the Incident Command structure as soon as reasonably possible during the initial response, with the capability to grow throughout the recovery; tasks would be to verify technology is utilized, coordinate additional messages, and develop real-time objectives to ensure ongoing communication as the event unfolds.
* Coordinates with established vendors and/or city or county mutual aid for American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services and translation services to support emergency communications with people with DAFN, including press conferences.

*Airport Operations*

* Landside Operations
  + In coordination with the Incident Commander, determines the needs for activation of the Crisis Communications Plan and the dissemination of messaging to people with DAFN.
  + Disseminates pre-scripted emergency communications messages in accessible formats via [fill in applicable formats] to airport transportation vendors and other relevant stakeholders.
  + Ensures that subsequent updates are disseminated per established procedures.
  + Coordinates with ADA Coordinator’s Office to include ASL interpreters and/or translators for updates to landside PA system announcements, visual paging, and other formats.
  + Coordinates with Public Relations and/or PIO regarding statements to the public, including the use of alternate messaging formats.
* Terminal Operations
  + In coordination with the Incident Commander, determines the need for activation of the Crisis Communications Plan and dissemination of messaging to people with DAFN.
  + Disseminates pre-scripted emergency communications messages and live audio emergency communications in accessible formats using all systems and technologies available to the airport, including closed-circuit television (CCTV), visual paging, audio paging, and [fill in other applicable formats] to terminal airport occupants, staff, tenants, airlines, and the public.
  + Ensures that subsequent updates are disseminated per established procedures.
  + Coordinates with ADA Coordinator’s Office to include ASL interpreters and/or translators for updates to terminal messaging via PA system announcements, visual paging, and other formats.
  + Coordinates with Public Relations and/or PIO regarding statements to the public, including the use of alternate messaging formats.

*Airport Volunteers*

* Without compromising their own safety, provide assistance to passengers, travelers, and other people at the airport who may not understand or be able to respond.

*Customs and Border Protection (CBP)*

* Without compromising their own safety, provide assistance to passengers, travelers, and other people in the CBP area who may not understand or be able to respond.

*Airport Emergency Management Department*

* Supports Airport Operations and Public Relations and/or PIO activities, as requested.

*Public Relations and/or Public Information Officer (PIO)*

* Implements Crisis Communications Plan and/or emergency communications procedures for the dissemination of messaging via [list applicable formats, which may include social media, text message, and email formats].
* Disseminates communications and public information in a number of accessible formats, including, but not limited to, large print, universal signage, languages other than English, and braille.
* Coordinates with ADA Coordinator’s Office to include ASL interpreters and/or translators for press conferences.

*Transportation Security Administration (TSA)*

* Without compromising their own safety, provide assistance to passengers, travelers, and other people in the security check area who may not understand or be able to respond.

**Checklists**

The following checklists provide reminders of details to be considered and/or addressed within the planning or response processes. These checklists are not inclusive of all possible checklists, subjects, or tasks within a function and can be expanded on as needed. [Airport may choose to add checklists as needed.]

**Planning Checklist**

* Evaluate existing communications notifications, messages, and resources and identify areas that should be adapted to reach people with DAFN.
* Review wayfinding signage to evacuation points, designated assembly points, and shelter-in-place locations, and evaluate accessibility.
* Evaluate the need for locating low-tech communications boards (alphabet and pictures), whiteboards, and erasable markers.
* Develop signage and information in alternative formats, including but not limited to: audio, large print, picture, languages other than English, and braille.
* Develop pre-scripted messages in other languages relevant to the airport’s passenger population and surrounding areas.
* Establish vendor contracts and/or on-demand services for ASL interpreters, if applicable.
* Establish vendor contracts and/or on-demand services for foreign translation, if applicable.
* Establish DAFN advisory group and keep a list of contact information for local advocacy groups for people with disabilities to help with supplemental planning.
* Ensure airport website is accessible and provides information about services available to people with DAFN.
* Develop and deliver DAFN awareness and emergency communication operations training to airport staff and volunteers.
* Integrate testing of accessible communications into emergency exercises.

**Response Checklist**

* Integrate the DAFN communications function into the Incident Command System (ICS) and staff a liaison position at the Emergency Operations Center, as needed.
* Repeat essential emergency information in simple message formats.
* Ensure that printed information:
  + Uses clear fonts (e.g., Arial), 12 points or larger, and **bold** text for emphasis.
  + Has a blank background.
  + Uses left alignment and proper punctuation.
  + Uses text to explain any images or charts.
* Ensure that emergency information is posted to an accessible website.
* Have TTY/TDD (text telephone, also known as telecommunication device for the deaf) capabilities when setting up emergency hotlines, if applicable.
* Provide information in alternate formats, such as large-sized fonts and various languages.