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ARTICLE IX

Winter Storm Emergency Operation Plan

Sec. 2-9-10. Vulnerability.

Weld County and Northeast Colorado are as susceptible to major winter storms as the Rocky Mountain communities along the Front Range. The types of emergencies are the same: fire, traffic accidents, medical emergencies. Snow, ice, sleet and blizzard conditions will impede the normal quick response the public has come to expect. Heavy precipitation will bog down travelers and create emergency demands on the Department of Public Works to clear transportation routes. It is at this time that plans should be activated for auxiliary and special response to accommodate identified needs. The demands will be met in a timely fashion if all agencies are aware of the resources available to them in an emergency.

Sec. 2-9-20. Planning assumptions.

A. This plan has been developed to incorporate the snow removal plan developed by the Department of Public Works. While the Director of Public Works is responsible for snow and ice removal, the Sheriff's office, municipal law enforcement and Colorado State Patrol are charged with Incident Command in a field emergency, except for those emergencies where the Fire Chief is in command. This contingency is intended to address health and safety as related to the increased demands placed on County and private resources.

B. This plan has been developed based on the following assumptions:

1. The Department of Public Works has designated priority routes to maintain a minimum transportation system connecting hospitals, major transportation routes and communities.
2. The Department of Public Works will not be able to keep Priority #1 routes clear.
3. A state of emergency could last up to three (3) days. (Weld County Codification Ordinance 2000-1; Weld County Code Ordinance 2007-6)

Sec. 2-9-30. Purpose of plan.

This contingency plan has been prepared in order to:

- A. Ensure essential County services are maintained during a major snowstorm.

- B. Document procedures and policies to be followed by each County department, as necessary.
- C. Ensure all County departments respond in a coordinated manner.
- D. Assign duties and responsibilities to be carried out by each County department and by specific individuals within each department.

Sec. 2-9-40. Warning system.

Severe weather warnings by the National Weather Service can be monitored by telephone and NOAA weather radio as well as local radio. On-duty law enforcement and Public Works personnel in the field can observe and report weather conditions to the County Regional Communications Center and the Director of Public Works, when requested.

Sec. 2-9-50. Definitions and terminology.

The National Weather Service frequently uses the following terms in its weather bulletins. To prevent misunderstanding, definitions and descriptions are provided.

Blizzard warnings. *Blizzard warnings* are issued when winds with speeds of at least thirty-five (35) mph are accompanied by considerable falling or blowing snow and temperatures of twenty (20) degrees F or lower are expected to prevail for an extended period of time.

Blizzards. *Blizzards* are the most dramatic and perilous of all winter storms, characterized by low temperatures and by strong winds bearing large amounts of snow. Most of the snow accompanying a blizzard is in the form of fine, powdery particles of snow which are whipped in such great quantities that at times visibility is only a few yards.

Blowing and drifting snow. *Blowing and drifting snow* generally occur together and result from strong winds and falling snow or loose snow on the ground.

Blowing snow. *Blowing snow* is defined as snow lifted from the surface by the wind and blown about to a degree that horizontal visibility is greatly restricted.

Cold wave warning. *Cold wave warning* indicates an expected rapid fall in temperature within a twenty-four-hour period which will require substantially increased protection to agricultural, industrial, commercial and social activities. The temperature falls and minimum temperatures required to justify cold wave warnings vary with the changing of the season and with geographic location. Regardless of the month or the section of the country, a *cold wave warning* is a red flag alert to the public that, during a forthcoming forecast period, a change to very cold weather will require greater than normal protective measures.

Drifting snow. *Drifting snow* is used in forecasts to indicate that strong winds will blow falling snow or loose snow on the ground into significant drifts. In the northern plains, the combination of blowing and drifting snow is often referred to as a *ground blizzard*.

Hazardous driving (travelers') warnings. *Hazardous driving (travelers') warnings* are issued to indicate that falling, blowing or drifting snow, freezing rain or drizzle, sleet or strong winds will make driving difficult.

Heavy snow warnings. These warnings are issued to the public when a fall of four (4) inches or more is expected in a twelve-hour period or fall of six (6) inches or more is expected in a twenty-four-hour period. Some variations on these rules may be used in different parts of the country. Where four-inch snowfalls are common, the emphasis on heavy snow is generally associated with six (6) or more inches of snow. In other parts of the country where heavy snow is infrequent, or in metropolitan areas with heavy traffic, a snowfall of two (2) or three (3) inches will justify a heavy snow warning.

Ice storm. Freezing rain or drizzle is called an *ice storm*. Moisture falls in liquid form, but freezes upon impact.

Severe blizzard warnings. *Severe blizzard warnings* are issued when blizzards of extreme proportions are expected and indicate wind with speeds of at least forty-five (45) mph plus a great density of falling or blowing snow and a temperature of ten (10) degrees F or lower.

Sleet. Ice storms are sometimes incorrectly referred to as *sleet*. Sleet is easily identified as frozen raindrops (ice pellets) which bounce when hitting the ground or other objects. Sleet does not stick to trees and wires, but sleet in sufficient depth does cause hazardous driving conditions.

Snow. *Snow* in a forecast, without a qualifying word such as *occasional* or *intermittent*, means that the fall of snow is steady in nature and will probably continue for several hours without letup.

Snow flurries. *Snow flurries* are defined as snow falling for short durations at intermittent periods; however, snowfall during the flurries may reduce visibility to one-eighth ($\frac{1}{8}$) of a mile or less. Accumulations from snow flurries are generally small.

Snow squalls. *Snow squalls* are brief, intense falls of snow and are comparable to summer rain showers. They are accompanied by gusty surface winds.

Stockman's warning. A *stockman's warning* alerts ranchers that livestock will require protection from a large accumulation of snow or ice, a rapid drop in temperature or strong wind.

Wind chill factor. Strong winds combined with low temperatures cause a very rapid cooling of exposed surfaces. Unprotected portions of the body, such as the face or hands, can chill rapidly and should be protected as much as possible from the cold wind. A very strong wind combined with a temperature slightly below freezing can have the same chilling effect as a temperature nearly fifty (50) degrees F lower in a calm atmosphere. Arctic explorers and military experts have developed a term called the *wind chill factor*, which states the cooling effect of various wind and temperature combinations. In certain areas, the Weather Service issues this information as the *wind chill index*. (Weld County Codification Ordinance 2000-1)

Sec. 2-9-60. Command and control.

A. Agency in charge – Law Enforcement. The Sheriff, Municipal Police Chief or Colorado State Patrol is the official responsible for coordinating field operations during a storm to assist and support the Director of Roads and Bridges (Public Works or State Department of Highways) in order that they may perform snow removal duties. The law enforcement agency shall command and direct all public safety functions relating to the emergency until and unless relieved by the Emergency Management Board, city manager, mayor, town council or State Director of Public Safety, at which time the law enforcement official shall serve as advisor to the above stated titles.

B. Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The Emergency Operations Center for the Department of Public Works shall be at the Public Works headquarters in the case of the County activation and at the direction of the municipal and CSP officials. The address is 1111 H Street, Greeley. In the event of a major emergency in addition to the snow removal effort, the Sheriff's office will be used for the EOC. This address is 910 Tenth Avenue, Greeley. All designated County personnel shall be directed where to report when the plan is activated.

C. Mobile Command Post. The Mobile Command Post will be used to coordinate a major incident within the overall winter storm emergency. At present there is no vehicle assigned for the task of serving as a Mobile Command Post. However, there are two (2) vehicles in the County that have radios with all of the frequencies that may be used: the Weld County Ambulance vehicles; or, in the event there is a concurrent hazardous materials incident, the Greeley Fire Department Hazardous Materials Response Team has the same capability in two (2) vehicles. (Weld County Codification Ordinance 2000-1)

Sec. 2-9-70. Activation of plan.

A. The Public Works Annex concerning snow removal will be activated by the Director of Public Works, through the approval of the Board of County Commissioners or, if it is not readily available, at his or her discretion according to the Annex. It is requested that the activation of the plan include notification of the Office of Emergency Management. The Sheriff's office should also be notified of the activation.

B. The public safety portion of this plan shall be activated by the Sheriff, municipal police chief or Colorado State Patrol, whoever has jurisdiction over the involved location.

C. The on-duty commander of the law enforcement agency involved shall monitor the situation by keeping in touch with the Director of Roads and Bridges (Public Works or State Highway), the National Weather Service and any other involved response agency.

Sec. 2-9-80. Notification of activation.

A. If the Sheriff (municipal police chief or CSP) orders the public safety portion of this plan activated, the following individuals shall be contacted through the established County emergency fanout.

B. The following will report to the County EOC or have an authorized designee report to represent their agency: Sheriff, County Commissioners, Directors of Finance and Administration, OEM, Public Works, Communications, Ambulance and Buildings and Grounds, and Public Information Officer, .

Sec. 2-9-90. Critical County facilities.

The following is a list of County buildings that are essential to County operations during a storm and must be given the highest priority of services, staffing and snow removal:

- A. Public Works headquarters.
- B. County shops.
- C. Centennial Complex.
- D. Social Services.
- E. Health and Human Resources building.

F. Paramedic Service for Greeley, Evans and Fort Lupton.

G. Weld County Business Park administrative buildings.

H. Southwest Weld building.

I. Southeast Weld building. (Weld County Codification Ordinance 2000-1; Weld County Code Ordinance 2007-6)

Sec. 2-9-100. Four-wheel drive vehicles.

A. In the event snowfall is so great that County equipment cannot be used, the County will ask its essential employees to use privately owned 4x4 vehicles to perform their duties. If the employees agree to provide the vehicles, the County shall pay mileage per the County-adopted reimbursement schedule and shall assume full responsibility that may arise out of use during the storm.

B. If more 4x4 vehicles are needed, a request for citizens to volunteer their vehicles will be made; again, the County will assume full responsibility and liability.

C. A list of all County personnel with four-wheel drive vehicles will be compiled for entry into the Resource List.

D. All non-County 4x4 vehicles should be equipped with a communications device. (Weld County Code Ordinance 2007-1; Weld County Code Ordinance 2007-6)

Sec. 2-9-110. Snowmobiles.

A. In extreme cases, the County may ask its employees to volunteer personal snowmobiles for emergency purposes. If the employee agrees to provide the vehicle, the County shall assume the same responsibility for mileage reimbursement and liability as for the 4x4 vehicles.

B. If more snowmobiles are needed, a list has been compiled of citizens who are willing to provide their vehicles in an emergency. This list has been distributed to County Communications and is maintained by the Office of Emergency Management.

Sec. 2-9-120. Duties and responsibilities by department.

Each County agency is assigned the following duties during a snow emergency:

A. Board of County Commissioners:

1. Declare a snow emergency at the request of the Director of Public Works or when conditions are such that the Board deems it necessary.

2. Prepare to make policy decisions effecting the operations and/or financing of the Winter Storm Plan.

3. Public information.

B. Office of Emergency Management:

1. Provide emergency resources as requested.

2. Provide advice to the Board of County Commissioners regarding emergency operations.

C. Public Works:

1. Execute the Snow Removal Plan.
2. Request the Board of County Commissioners to declare a snow emergency.
3. Maintain and issue snow progress reports to the Board of County Commissioners.
4. Assist law enforcement and ambulances responding to an emergency.

D. Fire Departments/Districts:

1. Respond to fire alarms.
2. Respond to emergency medical calls with an ambulance if applicable.
3. Rescue stranded motorists.
4. Provide transportation for essential workers.
5. Provide food and bedding for essential city workers.

E. Law Enforcement:

1. Enforce emergency traffic regulations and parking restrictions.
2. Provide traffic control as requested.
3. Coordinate the towing of abandoned vehicles from snow routes (if applicable).
4. Rescue stranded motorists.
5. Coordinate 4x4 vehicles offered to the County by citizens.
6. Perform regular duties on a priority basis as required.

F. Buildings and Grounds:

1. Maintain snow removal operations at all County facilities.
2. Maintain/repair essential utilities.
3. Ensure emergency generator capability.

G. Paramedic Service:

1. Provide EMS services as requested.
2. In case of overload, triage response.

H. Finance and Administration:

1. Authorize open purchase orders.
2. Document all expenditures during disasters.

I. Department of Human Resources:

1. Activate snow day call-down for closing County offices.
2. Assist all departments with volunteer personnel as requested.
3. Register volunteered 4x4 vehicles and snowmobiles offered to the County.

J. Contractual Repair Services:

1. Maintain and repair equipment, as needed.
2. Maintain and repair communications, as needed.

K. American Red Cross:

1. Provide transportation for and to citizens and residents in need.
2. Provide food and shelter for snowstorm victims.
3. Provide emergency medical necessities for motorists or evacuees.

(Contact the Office of Emergency Management for a copy of the complete plan including appendices.)
(Weld County Code Ordinance 2007-4; Weld County Code Ordinance 2007-6)