



Kern County Sheriff's Office

Policies and Procedures

TITLE: READY KERN		NO: H-1510	
APPROVED: Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner			
EFFECTIVE: 01/20/2023	REVIEWED: 01/20/2023	REVISED: 01/20/2023	UPDATED: 01/20/2023

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Kern County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) to inform the public whenever possible of immediate and serious threats to public safety. This includes, but is not limited to, fires, floods, earthquakes, criminal activity, or where known persons may be at risk of serious harm. The Ready Kern notification system is recognized as an available means by which public notification can occur quickly and efficiently. Ready Kern is essentially a "reverse 911" system, which alerts the public via text messages and phone calls with a pre-recorded message. The only members of the public who receive these Ready Kern notifications are those who have voluntarily registered with the system or those listed in the white pages and/or yellow pages. Activations between the hours of 2200 and 0700 require a Watch Lieutenant's or affected Division Commander's approval.

As used in this section, the word "**alert**" shall have the following meaning: A communication intended to draw the attention of recipients to some previously unexpected or unknown condition or event.

As used in the section, the word "**warning**" shall have the following meaning: A communication that encourages recipients to take immediate protective actions appropriate to an emergent hazard or threat.

Examples of conditions which may necessitate issuance of an alert or warning message via Ready Kern by KCSO include but are not limited to:

- Disaster scenarios
- Hazardous materials spills/incidents
- Wildland Fire
- Flooding
- Active shooter
- Barricaded violent suspect
- Escaped inmate
- At-risk missing person or kidnapping
- Any other emergency incident where mass public communication is deemed necessary

The following questions shall be answered before determining if an incident should be issued an alert or warning notification via Ready Kern:

- Is there an immediate danger to life or property? What are the potential impacts?
- Are there environmental considerations?
- What specific community/neighborhood does this message impact?
- What is the best way to push this information out?
- What time of day, how much reaction time for the public is there?
- What actions need to be taken by the public?
- Has an evacuation center/shelter location been established?

Ready Kern notifications must contain the following components:

- Identify the Agency issuing the alert or warning
- Description of threat, including its name (wildfire, flood, active shooter, etc.)
- Notification status (initial, update)
- Guidance for protective action (evacuation warning/order or shelter-in-place)
- Geographic area that is affected
- Location of evacuation areas
- Future information source (always include www.readykern.com and/or www.211kerncounty.org)

PROCEDURE A – PROCESSING READY KERN REQUESTS

Requests for Ready Kern may be made only by the rank of Lieutenant or higher or an allied agency watch commander.

Ready Kern activation requests will be initially reviewed by the Communications Center supervisor. The Communications Center supervisor will confirm the request is in accordance with the intent of this policy and gather all necessary information as it relates to the specific incident before causing a Ready Kern activation.

Every effort will be made for all notifications to be completed in both English and Spanish, text and voice formats. In the event there is not a certified bi-lingual Communications Center employee on duty to translate the Ready Kern notification into Spanish, the Ready Kern notification will begin with, “*Este es un mensaje de emergencia. Para Espanol, llame a 2-1-1. Gracias.*” This sentence will direct Spanish speakers to call 2-1-1 for more information.

The Communications Center supervisor will ensure local agencies in the area are notified of the activation.

The Communications Center supervisor will include the 2-1-1 Kern County Broadcast Copy from the contacts group list in each activation, as well as all 4 publishing channels.

DIRECTIVE A - ASSISTING OTHER DEPARTMENTS:

Only the Office of Emergency Services (OES), the Emergency Communication Center (ECC), the Kern County Public Health Department (KCPHD), and the KCSO can activate Ready Kern. If an allied agency requests the KCSO to issue a Ready Kern notification, the Communications Center supervisor will determine if there is sufficient staff to complete the request. The Communications Center supervisor will make every effort to assist allied agencies. If staffing is sufficient, the Communications Center supervisor will confirm the request meets the criteria pursuant to this policy and request approval from the Watch Lieutenant or the affected Division Commander prior to completing the allied agency's request.

PROCEDURE B - MISSING PERSONS:

The KCSO recognizes that a timely and proper response to the search of missing persons who are deemed at risk is imperative. However, Ready Kern should generally only be used in missing persons investigations when the following criteria has been met:

- Law enforcement confirms a child (17 years of age or younger) has been abducted or a reported mental or physical handicapped person has been abducted, regardless of age.
- Law enforcement believes the circumstances surrounding the abduction indicate that the victim is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death. Absent unusual conditions, parental or family abductions will not fit the criteria without indication of imminent danger.
- There must be enough descriptive information about the victim, abductor, and suspect's vehicle to believe an immediate broadcast alert to the public will assist in the safe recovery of the victim.

When appropriate, other investigative tools such as Nixle, the Nextdoor application, and Search and Rescue should be used as outlined in DPPM H-800 (Missing Persons – Reporting).

PROCEDURE C - CANCELING READY KERN:

When canceling a Ready Kern activation, the Communications Center supervisor must take into consideration the magnitude of the event and the time of day. For any event that would likely impact the public mind-set (impending flood, fires, evacuations, etc.), the Communications Center supervisor will keep the public within the affected geographic location updated with significant new information or cancellations at any time of the day. If the issue has a lessor impact (e.g.: missing person) on the general public, then updates and cancellations can wait, and the Communications Center supervisor will hold the cancelation during the hours of 2200 to 0700.

PROCEDURE D - EVACUATION REQUESTS

Evacuation requests through the KCSO, the ECC or the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for a mass evacuation require the Communications Center supervisor to confirm the borders of the evacuation area, designated evacuation routes, and the type of evacuation being requested.

Alerts and warnings issued by KCSO via Ready Kern will use the following California Standard Statewide Evacuation Terminology:

- **Evacuation Order:** Immediate threat to life. This is a lawful order to leave now. The area is lawfully closed to public access. (Note: **There are no mandatory evacuations in Kern County and the public will never be advised a mandatory evacuation is in effect.**)
- **Evacuation Warning:** Potential threat to life and/or property. Those who require additional time to evacuate, and those with pets and livestock should leave now.
- **Shelter in Place:** Go indoors, shut and lock doors and windows. Prepare to self-sustain until further notice.
- **Evacuation Order(s) lifted:** The formal announcement of lifting evacuations in an area currently under evacuation.
- **Hard Closure:** Closed to all traffic except fire and law enforcement.
- **Soft Closure:** Closed to all traffic except fire, law enforcement, and critical incident resources (utility, CalTrans, City/County Roads, or those needed to repair or restore infrastructures).
- **Resident only closure:** Soft closure with additional allowance of residents and local government agencies assisting with response and recovery.