

Disaster Messaging Work Group

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Adopted: February 9, 2021



I. Background

The [Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization](#) (RDPO) is a partnership of government agencies and private and nonprofit organizations in the Portland Metropolitan Region (PMR) working together to build and maintain regional all-hazards disaster preparedness capabilities through coordinated planning, training and exercising, and investment in technology and specialized equipment. The PMR encompasses the five counties of Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah, and Washington in Oregon and Clark in Washington, along with the City of Portland. Membership in the RDPO is open to all government jurisdictions in this region, as well as private and nonprofit sector organizations working on disaster preparedness. The work of the RDPO is conducted and coordinated through a well-defined structure of committees and work groups, including the Policy, Steering and Program committees, discipline-specific work groups, and cross-discipline task forces.

Following the adoption of the RDPO's 2014-2016 Strategic Plan in 2013, the Program Committee chartered the Regional Disaster Preparedness Messaging Task Force to meet a priority need for a unified preparedness messaging program owned/shared by RDPO partners. The Task Force worked on several projects over the next few years. In 2019, the Task Force concluded that there was no foreseeable end to the need for regional disaster messaging work and thus decided to become a permanent RDPO Work Group. In 2020, they participated in RDPO strategic planning, developed a 3-year work plan, changed their name to Disaster Messaging Work Group (DMWG), and created this new SOP.

In 2014, the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management (PBEM) formed the PublicAlerts Steering Committee (PASC). [PublicAlerts.org](#) is a regional website administered and funded by PBEM on behalf of the region. The PASC provided oversight and support to PublicAlerts.org. It included representatives for the 5-county region and collaborated with RDPO Work Groups, Task Forces, Subject Matter Experts, and other advisors, as needed. In 2020, the Disaster Messaging Work Group absorbed the work of the PASC into its work plan, as PublicAlerts.org is a central component of regional disaster messaging.

In 2017, regional partners formed an informal (non-RDPO) Alert & Warning Committee that met occasionally to discuss regional use of the [Integrated Public Alert & Warning System](#) (IPAWS) and local opt-in alerting systems. In 2020, the Disaster Messaging Work Group formed an Alert & Warning Sub-Committee to absorb this work.

II. Purpose and Goals

- A. **Purpose.** To ensure effective and efficient all-hazards disaster messaging that spans all phases of disasters and meets the needs of the whole community in the Portland Metro Region.

B. Goals.

- i. Develop and maintain short and long-term vision, goals, and objectives and a regional disaster messaging “brand” that reflects our unified voice and is based on sound research, thorough assessment, community input, partnership development, and strategy testing.
- ii. Develop and maintain a set consistent preparedness messages and seek their adoption among RDPO partners around the region.
- iii. Consolidate and streamline disaster messaging efforts of the multiple partners involved.
- iv. Exercise a whole community approach by:
 - a. Focusing efforts on serving those who have been historically and continue to be underserved, underrepresented, and otherwise marginalized by the dominant culture and are therefore more susceptible to suffering the greatest impacts of a disaster. This includes but is not limited to Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other People of Color; those with access and functional needs; those with disabilities or preexisting medical conditions; non-English speaking communities; immigrant and refugee communities; those experiencing homelessness; low-income communities; and children.
 - b. Consulting with the whole community about needs and desires regarding disaster messaging during all stages of a disaster (before, during, after). This involves working with community members, community leaders, community-based organizations, subject matter experts, and other partners before, during, and after project execution.
- v. Develop and hone partnerships with key messengers (e.g., school districts, American Red Cross, fire service, business community, media outlets, public works entities, parks and recreation departments and agencies, animal services agencies, law enforcement, and other whole community partners).
- vi. Design and test new regional-focused disaster preparedness messaging projects/initiatives and/or adapt existing local and/or national initiatives/campaigns to the PMR context.
- vii. Develop strategies for transitioning from regional preparedness messaging to live emergency response and recovery messaging and back again.
- viii. Maintain a forum for networking, information-sharing, and learning through presentations and discussions with members of this and other RDPO work groups, as well as regional and state partners.
- ix. Maintain a three-year work plan based on community feedback, the RDPO Strategic Plan, and RDPO Program Committee guidance.
- x. Maintain a communications plan that outlines messaging priorities, best practices, goals, content and accessibility standards, and style guidelines.
- xi. Provide technical support and/or feedback to RDPO work groups/task forces developing communication tools to ensure regional consistency.

III. Roles and Responsibilities

The Work Group is responsible for:

- A. **PublicAlerts.org.** Maintaining and developing PublicAlerts.org; ensuring it is fully accessible and meets the needs of the community; providing robust hazard information and preparedness resources; branding and promoting the site; and developing new and engaging content to keep the site fresh and useful.
- B. **Alert & Warning.** Overseeing planning and improvement of alert and warning in the PMR via the Alert & Warning Sub-Committee.
- C. **New Projects.** Developing new messaging products or improving existing ones based on the Work Group's work plan and communication plan.
- D. **Partnerships.** Providing subject matter expertise and assisting other work groups and partners in disaster-messaging related projects.

IV. Partners

- A. **RDPO Work Groups.** Public Information Officers Work Group, Citizen Corps Work Group, and Public Health Work Group. Representatives of the DMWG provide two-way reporting at these respective work group meetings.
- B. **The Oregon Office of Emergency Management (OEM).** The DMWG Chair provides two-way reporting with OEM's GeoHazards Program Coordinator (Althea Rizzo) and Regional Preparedness Coordinator (Mike Lacina).
- C. **The Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD).** The DMWG Chair and several members participate in EMD's Basecamp project management site, which allows them to collaborate with the EMD and other Washington state disaster messaging partners.
- D. **Others.** OregonAsk, Lewis & Clark College, OSU Extension, etc.

IV. Membership and Voting Privileges

- A. **Membership.** Is voluntary and open to all individuals who represent a regional public, private, or nonprofit organization related to disaster messaging in the PMR. Those with an interest and/or investment in the Work Group's purpose but who do not represent a regional public, private, or nonprofit organization related to disaster messaging are welcome to attend meetings but are not eligible for official membership.

C. **Membership Categories.**

- i. Individuals from agencies/organizations signatory to the RDPO Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA).
- ii. Individuals from all other agencies/organizations that meet the criteria in Section IV, Paragraph A of this SOP.

D. **Voting Privileges.** Restricted to one vote per RDPO IGA signatory agency/organization.¹ RDPO IGA signatory agencies and organizations with more than one member on the Work Group shall decide who casts their agency's/organization's vote and must declare that individual to the Chair before a vote is taken by the Work Group. The identified members are collectively known as the "designated voting members." [See Section VIII below for more on Work Group decision-making.]

V. Officers

A. **Positions and Duties.** Work Group leadership shall include:

i. **Chair.**

- a. Oversees the maintenance of the DMWG [work plan](#) and ensures it is in alignment with the RDPO Strategic Plan;
- b. Provides updates and reports to RDPO Program, Steering, and Policy Committees, as requested;
- c. Ensures the DMWG SOP is up-to-date, accurate, and approved by RDPO committees;
- d. Distributes meeting logistics and agendas one week ahead of each meeting;
- e. Facilitates meetings, reminds participants of [Meeting Ground Rules](#), and ensures minute taking;
- f. Ensures DMWG representatives provide two-way reporting between partner work group meetings and DMWG meetings;
- g. Provides disaster messaging subject matter expertise and perspective to RDPO work groups and regional and state partners;
- h. Facilitates cross-discipline coordination and collaboration on regional messaging projects and ensures Work Group representatives on relevant RDPO task forces (i.e., those formed by the Program, Steering, or Policy committees); and
- i. Delegates a portion of these duties to the Vice Chair, as needed.

ii. **Vice Chair.** Serves in the Chair's absence and assists with duties as needed.

B. **Eligibility.** Any member of the Work Group, including RDPO staff, is eligible to serve as Chair or Vice Chair. Only one representative of an agency or jurisdiction at a time may hold an officer position, unless the Work Group passes a simple-majority vote to overturn this rule.

C. **Nominations and Elections.** Any Work Group member may nominate candidates (including themselves) to fill Work Group leadership vacancies. Work Group members shall nominate

¹ For the current list, see rdpo.net/governance

candidates for an officer position at least one month prior to the meeting at which an election is scheduled. An electronic nomination's process shall be administered by RDPO staff or another designated individual who does not serve on the Work Group. In the event no nominations are made or no Work Group member steps forward to be nominated, RDPO IGA signatory agencies must work together to identify one or more nominees from within their jurisdictions. Positions shall be filled by the candidates for office receiving a simple majority vote of the designated voting members attending the meeting in which an election is held or voting by email or other electronic means.

- D. **Term Limits.** There are no term limits as long as officers are elected each year by the nomination and election process described above. Nominations will take place in December, and elections will take place in January.

VI. Subcommittees and Task Forces

1. The Work Group shall form subcommittees and task forces as necessary to help advance its mission and work. Subcommittees are permanent committees focused on a specific subject area of relevance to the Work Group. Task Forces are temporary bodies formed as necessary to help the Work Group conduct business, such as develop a plan or work on a specific project.
2. Any Work Group member can recommend the formation of a subcommittee or task force. The Work Group Chair will employ the consensus model spelled out in Section VIII to assist the Work Group in deciding on the recommendation.
3. Each subcommittee and task force shall operate under a clearly defined standard operating procedure developed by that subcommittee or task force and approved by the Work Group through consensus.
4. Work Group members shall fill the positions on subcommittees and task forces. The Work Group may recruit subject matter experts from outside the Work Group as necessary to complete the work.

VII. Meetings

5. The Work Group meets on the last Monday of the month, from 0900 – 1100 hours via Zoom during the pandemic and otherwise at the American Red Cross office at 3131 N Vancouver Ave, Portland, OR.
6. Special meetings may be held when necessary to conduct Work Group business and may be called by the Chair or Vice Chair or by another member who submits a request to the Chair or Vice Chair.
7. Meetings will use agreed-upon [Ground Rules](#). Decision-making will be based on the consensus model spelled out in Section VIII below.

8. An attendance list and notes, including meeting outcomes, will be prepared following each meeting and retained by the Work Group Chair or Vice Chair on the RDPO Google Drive.
9. The Work Group Chair will document key decisions and, as appropriate, transmit them to the Program Committee and other partners.

VIII. Decision-Making

- A. The Work Group uses an open, inclusive, and transparent process for conducting business, such as responding to the RDPO Steering Committee's call to submit projects to the Program Committee for the projects pipeline process. All Work Group members may develop project concepts for Work Group review and consideration. The Chair shall set internal Work Group deadlines and establish procedures and meeting dates to ensure all projects are openly and fully considered. A vote of designated voting members shall be taken to determine which project proposals the DMWG Chair will include in the final package submitted to the Program Committee.
- B. Except as noted in Paragraph C below, the Work Group makes decisions using a consensus model. The consensus process allows all group members equal weight in the decision-making process. During discussion on an issue requiring a decision by the group, all group members participating are entitled to voice an opinion. The aim of consensus decision-making is to arrive at a decision that *best satisfies the group*. The Chair is responsible for facilitating the consensus process, which can include multiple steps of reviewing and amending a proposal or project to the point where all can live with the final decision.
- C. A vote of eligible members (see Section IV Membership and Voting Privileges) is required on decisions relating to:
 - i. The adoption of project proposals and amendment requests;
 - ii. Revision of the Work Group's SOP;
 - iii. Election of officers; and
 - iv. When a decision cannot be reached by consensus. A simple majority of votes cast (50%, plus one), either in person or through email or other electronic means, shall constitute the decision.
- D. Whenever a consensus decision or vote takes place, the results of the decision will be included in the notes from the meeting and circulated to all members.

IX. Conflict Resolution

If an irresolvable issue or decision-making impasse arises, the following steps lay out a resolution process:

- A. **Step One:** The Work Group Chair and Vice Chair work with the membership to broker an agreement using the consensus model.

- B. **Step Two:** The Work Group Chair and Vice Chair conduct a simple majority vote among the eligible voting members.
- C. **Step Three:** If a simple majority vote does not yield a decision, the Program Committee Chair shall be enlisted to help the Work Group come to an agreement.

X. Amendments to the Standard Operating Procedure

- A. Any Work Group member may recommend a change to the SOP.
- B. The SOP may only be amended by a simple majority vote of the active members.

XI. Approvals

Date approved by Program Committee: January 19, 2021

Program Committee Chair:

Jack Nuttall

Printed Name



Signature

February 10, 2021

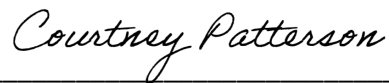
Date

Date approved by Steering Committee: February 8, 2021

Steering Committee Chair:

Courtney Patterson

Printed Name



Signature

February 10, 2021

Date