

Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary (CCEA)  
Operating Guidelines and Program Information



*Cowley County*  
**Emergency**  
**Management**

# **Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary (CCEA) Operating Guidelines and Program Information**

## **Mission Statement**

The Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary (CCEA) is an organization of dependable volunteers who assist in the protection and preservation of life, limb, and property during times of disaster and emergency.

### **Purpose**

To assist Cowley County Emergency Management and the citizens of Cowley County during emergency and non-emergency situations. CCEA Volunteers will be trained to provide support in a variety of methods by specializing in one or more areas to include:

- Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Support
- Spotting
- Field/Event Support
- Communications Support

### **Membership**

Eligible applicants shall submit an application to the group. See by-laws for specifics regarding eligibility and application process.

### **Basic Requirements**

1. A valid driver's license and proof of vehicle insurance (must provide both to Emergency Management upon acceptance and must be kept current).
2. Maintain current address/telephone number with Emergency Management.
3. Volunteer a minimum of 10 hours per calendar year. Examples of acceptable volunteer work: storm spotting, EOC support, events, FEMA online training courses, training sessions, regular meetings and other pre-approved training courses.
4. See Volunteer Training Requirements for specifics.

### **Key Responsibilities**

1. Available on short notice to respond to requests for assistance.
2. Have clear, concise verbal communication abilities.
3. Perform a variety of duties as assigned. These duties can be at a request of an agency other than Cowley County Emergency Management.

### **Types of Support**

- **EOC Support** – work during activations of the EOC during severe weather or other emergency/disaster. During severe weather, volunteers can provide assistance with dispatching, logging, mapping, radar interpretation, and public information.

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- **Field/Event Support** – provide support to agencies or groups within the community during emergency or non-emergency events. Emergency events could include manning a barricade, providing traffic control, or supporting emergency shelter operations. Non-emergency events could include assisting with a parade or other public-oriented safety event.
- **Communications Support** – provide assistance to Emergency Management or other public safety entities by supporting or augmenting regular communications systems, or by establishing and maintaining backup systems in case of a primary system failure. Non-emergency activities may include communications planning or maintenance of communications equipment.
- **Spotting** – during severe weather, spotters are deployed into the field to provide the EOC with accurate and timely ground truth information. This information is relayed to the NWS so that appropriate warnings can be issued to assist citizens in making decisions to prevent injuries or deaths.

### **Training**

All new members will be called Auxiliary Trainees and must meet all of the mandatory minimum requirements within six months of acceptance.

New members shall choose at least one specialized section to pursue. The training requirements for each specialty are set forth in the Volunteer Training Requirements document.

Training will not be considered to be completed until all requirements are met, the training officer(s), the trainee and Emergency Management have signed off on the completion.

### **Development Opportunities**

The potential exists within the CCEA to become an officer. In addition, the experience gained from this position will enhance the qualifications of any candidate who may wish to pursue a position within the emergency response field. Anyone that desires to assume a leadership role with the CCEA must meet qualifications, including extra classes, as stated in the Volunteer Training Requirements.

### **Trainee Limitations**

CCEA trainees who have not completed formal training are subject to the following rules:

- Trainees will not respond into the field alone,
- Trainees will call the EOC to see if their services are requested. If put into service, all trainees will report to the EOC (unless other arrangements can be made to meet a training officer in the field)
- Trainees will be assigned to a training officer, based on availability, by EOC personnel

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- Trainees will not go into the field without first contacting the EOC and receiving an assignment
- If a trainee is working an event, they will check in like all members and be assigned to a training officer by the senior member in charge

### **Member Identification (ID Badges)**

CCEA members will be provided with two (2) photo identification badges that are issued by Emergency Management. ALL members are required to have at least one badge with them when representing the CCEA. One is required, but two are preferred in case of deployment as one may be used to help keep track of personnel at a scene.

At a minimum, CCEA members should carry their badges in their vehicles with the ability to attach it to their person with a clip or lanyard. ID badges should be visible when interacting with the public.

### **Confidentiality**

During emergencies and disasters, and in the field of Emergency Management, confidentiality is required and a breach of confidentiality will not be tolerated. Any volunteer with the Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary that divulges confidential information to any party outside of emergency personnel will be subject to suspension and possible termination.

Confidential information shall include, but is not limited to the following:

- Any information heard over a radio while in “scramble” mode
- Any information received in the EOC or discussed in the EOC which has not been approved for public release by the Emergency Management Director, or designee
- Any information obtained from photos taken as part of damage assessments

Any photos taken by CCEA members as part of a damage assessment or other assignment are not to be sent to any media outlet. These photos are only to be taken and shared with Emergency Management. Photos of storm cells, tornadoes, hail, flooding, etc. are an exception. Those are your photos, and can be submitted to the media after approval from Emergency Management. Remember, taking photos is not your primary purpose. CCEA members are not to take photos of any individuals while doing damage assessments.

### **Media**

Cowley County Emergency Management is committed to providing accurate and timely information to the public which is critical in the time of emergency or crisis. CCEA members are not permitted to talk to the media before, during or after an emergency. It is possible that volunteers will be contacted by the media, either by phone in the EOC or

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in person while in the field. Volunteers are to refer all media inquiries to the designated Public Information Officer in the EOC or to the Incident Commander if in the field. The PIO in the EOC is Emergency Management staff or appointed designee.

### **Use of Personal Vehicles**

All volunteer members use their personal vehicles for assignments and activities. The following applies to all members:

- Cowley County does not provide vehicle insurance for any CCEA member. However, each member must provide proof of car insurance to Emergency Management yearly and copy of their driver's license (if it has changed).
- Volunteers serving in the field may choose to install flashing amber lights in their vehicles for use only while parked. When used appropriately, lights can enhance visibility to other traffic.
- Red and/or blue flashing lights (or any color other than amber) are for emergency vehicles only and may not be used by CCEA volunteers. NO SIRENS!

### **Volunteer Preparedness**

CCEA members may be called upon at any time to Emergency Management or other agencies at their request. This can happen at any time, day or night.

It is imperative that all volunteers be prepared in the following manner:

- Vehicle is adequately fueled
- Flashlight(s) ready
- Have appropriate forms (214 and Damage Assessment)
- If applicable, handheld radio is charged
- Have appropriate clothing (vest, boots, hat, raincoat, etc.)
- Have a cell phone available and fully charged
- Have a go bag ready, to include items such as snacks, required medications, a change of clothes, and any other items that might be needed for an extended assignment. While every effort will be made to provide meals and breaks as soon as possible, volunteers should be prepared to sustain themselves for 12 to 24 hours.

### **Safety First!**

Safety should be first and foremost on the mind of all volunteers. Each specialty brings a variety of dangers that must be considered at all times.

Any volunteer in the field must be aware of their surroundings including weather, traffic and people, to name a few. Proper training and constant situational awareness are a must.

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It is preferable to travel and work in pairs; if at all possible. When travelling this allows the driver to remain focused on driving while the passenger handles navigation and communications. When stopped or on location, two pairs of eyes are available to focus on surroundings, and both individuals can support each other and work together to complete the assignment.

### **Volunteer Activation**

Volunteers will be notified when they are needed to assist, usually via text message or phone call using the Cowley Alerts automated notification system. Under no circumstances should a member self-activate. When volunteers are requested, they are asked to follow the directions provided within the notification. Available CCEA members may be asked to check in with the EOC for assignment via telephone (620-221-0470) or by radio on the EM-1 frequency. Unless instructed, do not come to the EOC! Not all available volunteers may be given an assignment immediately. If an extended duration event is expected, or the number of volunteers needed has been reached, you may be asked to stand by for assignment later on. If you are directed to report to the EOC, immediately check in with the senior staff member and logger when you arrive to make sure you are logged in.

### **Completion of Duties and Documentation**

When a volunteer member has completed their assigned duty, he or she must document their service. Documentation may be in the form of an ICS 214 Unit Log filled out individually or as a group (when appropriate), or a sign in sheet. These documents detail the times, locations and activities of the volunteer. Individual unit logs are to be turned into the Emergency Management office. Blank copies of the 214 Unit Log can be found at the EOC, sent to the spotter electronically, or found on the website at [www.cowleycounty.org/auxiliary](http://www.cowleycounty.org/auxiliary). Alternatively, if you are working in the EOC, your efforts will be logged via the EOC Event Log, and no other documentation is required. It is your responsibility to check in when you arrive and check out when you leave. That is as simple as letting the logger know this information.

## **EOC Support**

Cowley County EM operates with a small staff, and volunteers are essential during emergency operations. Volunteers will be notified as they are needed. Examples of EOC Support during severe weather or other events requiring EOC activation could be logging, dispatching, mapping, or answering phones. Additional assignments may be given on a case by case basis as needs arise. Volunteers will be given direction and tasks based on their training and abilities. For specific directions for the more common roles within the EOC, refer to the Severe Weather Guide and Communications Room Job Aid.

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### **EOC**

The EOC is a facility comprised of several rooms in the east end of the basement of the South Annex (321 E. 10th in Winfield) with the Communications Room being the primary room during emergency situations. The EOC facility houses the EOC Conference Room, the Ready Room and the Communications Room. During emergency situations, the Communications Room becomes very hectic; therefore, access to this room is limited to EOC personnel and assigned volunteers only. All other personnel must remain in the Conference Room or Ready Room until assigned a duty in the Communications Room or in the field. In other words, if you do NOT have an assignment, do not be in the Communications Room.

### **Activation of the EOC**

The EOC may be activated at any time (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) as soon as Emergency Management or a volunteer duty officer determines a potential threat exists. A volunteer duty officer is defined as a CCEA volunteer appointed by Emergency Management who has the training and capability to activate and operate the EOC until a staff member arrives.

## **Field/Event Support**

When called upon, volunteers are needed in the field to support events or activities. Common events are public education activities such as health and safety fairs or planned events such as parades. Unplanned events may also require volunteers to serve in a number of roles, including but not limited to support of emergency shelters, door-to-door notification of the public, and damage assessment. Depending on the type of assignment, volunteers may be assigned in pairs or groups for additional safety. Each event is different, so flexibility is important. There may be times when a volunteer reports to another agency such as a local police department. Volunteers will work with or under the person in charge of the event.

## **Communications Support**

Communications has a vital role in day-to-day and emergency/disaster operations. CCEA members trained in this field may be asked to provide a wide variety of assistance to support normal communications systems and needs, or may be asked to supplement or completely replace damaged or failed critical communications systems in times of emergency. In addition to the items and considerations described under the Volunteer Preparedness section on page 5, members should be prepared with additional supplies, equipment, and reference materials sufficient to carry out communications related tasks.

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## **Activation**

In addition to the procedure described in the Volunteer Activation section on page 6, members trained in communications support may also be activated via one of the pre-identified frequencies listed at the end of this section. If specifically requested by EM staff, RACES activation will occur in accordance with the Cowley County RACES Plan. Otherwise, a general AUXCOMM type of activation should be assumed.

As part of a notification to activate, a net may be requested on the primary Amateur Radio frequency, or as appropriate on an alternate frequency, and a roll call of available members conducted. After a list of available members is gathered, net control should attempt to contact the County EOC (call sign KOEMA) to relay the available roster and to receive further instructions. While contact with the EOC via amateur radio is the preferred method in this case, other means may be used as appropriate.

Should an event or incident that might warrant activation occur or be imminent, CCEA members with communications support training should make every effort to monitor at minimum the primary and alternate Amateur frequencies identified below for further information or an official activation request. If issued a public safety radio, members should also monitor the EM-1 radio channel.

## **Communications Support Common Amateur Frequencies**

<b>Channel Name</b>	<b>RX Frequency</b>	<b>TX Frequency</b>	<b>PL Tone</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Designation</b>
UR4025	444.025	449.025	97.4	Winfield	Primary
VR5190	145.190	144.590	-	Winfield	Alternate
VR7000	147.000	147.600	97.4	Arkansas City	Alternate

## **Storm Spotting**

The key to a successful warning system are weather spotters who make the difference between anticipating and reacting to hazardous weather. A spotter observes and reports all types of hazardous weather, such as tornadoes, large hail, wind, flooding, and rainfall.

### **Types of Weather Spotters**

Cowley County Emergency Auxiliary spotters are considered mobile spotters. However, there are instances when trained spotters will be asked specifically to report from their residence, or current location (ex. place of work).

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These spotters use portable communications and equipment to travel, observe and report weather conditions. Spotters can be assigned to a stationary location at any given time, but maintain the ability to be mobile.

### **Considerations When Making a Report to the EOC**

During severe weather, activities happen very quickly. It is vital that all conversations with the EOC either by radio or telephone be accurate, brief, and to the point. **DO NOT TEXT REPORTS TO THE EOC!!!!**

#### Report the following to the EOC:

- Tornado, funnel or wall cloud
- Hail  $\frac{3}{4}$ " or larger (penny, nickel, quarter, etc.)
- Winds greater than 50 mph
- Rain greater than 1" per hour
- Water over any roadway or roads that are impassable due to high water

#### When making a report, spotters should include the following information:

- Who you are (using your assigned radio number)
- Where you are and where the event is occurring (use distances from cities, state or local highway). Avoid using local terminology that may be unfamiliar to others (Bolack Corner, Horseshoe Hill, etc.) since the report is not only for the EOC, but also other spotters and citizens. The report will then be relayed to the NWS and they will also be unfamiliar with local landmarks.
- What you have seen or are currently seeing
- Movement of the event. When estimating movement, observe the entire storm for estimate of motion, not just one small portion

#### What NOT To Report To The EOC!!!

- Rain (light)
  - Lightning (unless it has caused injuries or damage)
  - Light wind
- (EXCEPTION: If the dispatcher checks with you and asks for a report, then report what you are observing)

### **Severe Weather Potential**

The potential for severe weather can be found on the National Weather Service website as a "Hazardous Weather Outlook". The site can be found at <https://www.spc.noaa.gov/products/outlook/day1otlk.html>. It is recommended that all spotters check that site after the 7:00am update and then periodically throughout the day. This site will indicate if spotter activation is a possibility. Alternatively, spotters may opt to receive these outlooks and any updates throughout the day in email form via the Emergency Management's "Weather Message" system.

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If the NWS deems a specific weather situation to be potentially hazardous, Emergency Management may send out a message requesting spotter availability. All spotters are asked to respond to the message from the EOC with their availability. This serves two purposes: (1) to give spotters a “heads up” that their services may be needed and (2) to give the EOC an idea of how many spotters will be available.

There are, however, times when the weather breaks very quickly. There are many instances when our county has gone directly into a warning situation even though no watch has been issued. If this occurs, spotters will be notified and asked for immediate availability. Dispatching of available spotters will happen at that time.

### **Placement of Spotters**

Severe weather that is approaching the county is monitored by the EOC. If, in the opinion of EOC personnel, a storm system is likely to present a threat to our county, trained weather spotters will be sent to watch the system as it approaches.

The availability of spotters may determine how many spotters are sent in any given direction. Cowley County is fortunate enough to have law enforcement and fire agencies in all rural communities that track storms as well.

Spotters are placed in locations in accordance to the location of the pending storm. Spotters are required to report their locations at all times. If a spotter is sent to a specific location, that spotter will stay at that location until dispatched elsewhere. The exceptions are as follows: (1) the trained spotter feels they are in danger at the current dispatched location or (2) the trained spotter feels they have a better view at an alternate location within the same general vicinity.

In either case, the spotter will notify the EOC dispatcher of their intentions and the reasoning while they are moving. **ALWAYS MAKE SURE THE DISPATCHER KNOWS YOUR LOCATION.**

If a spotter is unavailable to go in service due to work or family obligations; reports from work, home or other locations are still encouraged.

### **Use of Technology**

The advancement of technology has made it so where anyone can have radar at any given time in any given location. The use of your own radar sources (phone, computer, etc.) while spotting is acceptable. However, these devices are only to be used while your vehicle is stationary. If you are paired up in one vehicle, the passenger may use such devices while the vehicle is in motion. Do not rely solely on your device for radar. The primary source for information is still the EOC. Multiple sources such as radar, other reports and visual observations of the storm should all be taken into account while spotting.

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Submitting reports to the EOC are to be done on the EM-1 frequency. Phone calls are acceptable, but highly discouraged as the information needs to be audible to others in the EOC, spotters and general citizens.

Texting the EOC is highly discouraged, especially if a report bears the need to be heard by others as mentioned above. State law and County policy prohibit texting while operating a motor vehicle. If a text is to be sent, it shall be done while the spotter is stationary or has pulled to the side of the road for safety and shall be limited to storm photos or damage.

### **The “DO NOTS” For Weather Spotters**

- Exceed the normal speed limits or drive recklessly when responding either to the EOC or to a location for weather spotting.
- Put yourself or others in harm’s way by parking in such a way that would make you a traffic hazard while watching a storm. Make sure you are well off the road.
- Stand outside your vehicle when there is lightning in the area (See Safety First section).
- Try to talk yourself out of a traffic situation with Law Enforcement by stating you are with the National Weather Service or on a “mission from Emergency Management”. This is one of the quickest ways to lose your volunteer status we know of.
- Respond to any incident overheard on a radio or scanner unless specifically dispatched or requested.
- Leave for the EOC or a field mission without proper identification. Attempt to enter an area without identification, and you are turned away, respect the officer and leave without incident.

### **Weather Safety**

#### **Thunderstorms:**

Keep aware of the local environment at all times. When in the vicinity of a thunderstorm, keep a 2-mile “buffer zone” between you and the storm. Check the sky overhead and behind every so often to ensure no unexpected event such as a tornado is developing.

#### **Lightning:**

Lightning is the biggest weather hazard facing the spotter. When in the field and when possible, remain in your vehicle to minimize the chance of being struck by lightning. If you must leave your vehicle, crouch as low as possible to make yourself a less favorable target.

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### Hail:

A vehicle will usually offer adequate protection from moderate-sized hailstones. Hail larger than golf ball size may damage windshields, so avoid large hail shafts if at all possible.

### Flash Floods:

Remember that flash flooding is the most dangerous at night when the effects of flash flooding are difficult to see. When spotting in a flash food situation, follow these common sense tips. Avoid low water crossings and don't drive into areas where the water covers the road. If you are caught in a flash flood, abandon your vehicle quickly and get to higher grounds.

### Tornado:

Drive away from a tornado IF you are in open country, IF the location and motion of the tornado are known, and IF you are familiar with the local roads.

### **Night Spotting**

Spotting at night is obviously more difficult than spotting during the day. There are only a few allies to help you when night spotting. If possible use the light from lightning flashes to illuminate the important parts of the storm. If you are in large hail, the most dangerous part of the storm is near you and will probably move overhead within a few minutes. If you hear a loud roaring sound, then a tornado may be very close to your location. Use this tip with caution. Not all tornadoes have a loud roar, and some non-tornadic winds may also possess a loud roar.

Finally, if you think there is a tornado not far from your location (i.e. within spotting range), search along the horizon for bright flashes of light as the tornado destroys power lines and transformers.