



City Tornado, Severe Thunderstorm, & High Wind Event SOP

Tornado, Severe Thunderstorm & High Wind Event Response

1. PURPOSE

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) establishes a coordinated response plan for tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, straight-line winds, and other high-wind events impacting the City. The objective is to protect life, property, and critical infrastructure while ensuring the safety of city employees and maintaining effective communication before, during, and after the event.

2. SCOPE

This SOP applies to:

- Mayor and City Administration
- Public Works Department (including Water, Sewer, & Natural Gas)
- Police Department
- Fire Department
- Other Utility Operations
- Emergency Coordination Staff

3. OBJECTIVES

- Protect life and public safety
- Maintain continuity of government operations
- Preserve and rapidly restore utility services
- Provide shelter options when needed
- Support county and neighboring jurisdictions
- Ensure clear command, communication, and documentation

4. AUTHORITY

This SOP is activated under the authority of the Mayor or designee during forecasted or active tornado, severe thunderstorm, or high wind events.

5. ACTIVATION LEVELS

Level 1 – Monitoring

- Severe weather forecasted or watches issued
- Department heads notified
- Equipment, shelters, and communications checked
- Department Head & Board Virtual or In Person Meeting

Level 2 – Partial Activation

- Warnings issued or storms imminent
- Incident Command Posts (ICPs) identified
- Public messaging initiated
- Crews placed on standby

Level 3 – Full Activation

- Tornado touchdown, widespread wind damage, or major outages
- Incident Command activated
- Emergency response operations underway
- Shelters activated as needed
- Mutual aid and regional coordination initiated

6. INCIDENT COMMAND & COORDINATION

6.1 Incident Command Structure

- Incident Commander: Mayor or Vice Mayor
- Operations Lead: City Director
- Law Enforcement Lead: Chief of Police
- Fire/EMS Lead: Fire Chief
- Utilities Lead: Utility Director

6.2 Incident Command Posts (ICPs)

To ensure continuity during power failures or access limitations, multiple ICPs are pre-designated:

- Primary ICP: Belmont City Hall – 94 Main Street
- Secondary ICP: Belmont Fire Station – 392 Second Street
- Tertiary ICP: Belmont Public Works – 5 Sun Air Drive

Each ICP should have:

- Radio communications
- Backup power or generator access
- Vehicle access during debris conditions
- Space for coordination and briefings

7. COMMUNICATIONS

- Mayor and City Director maintain radio communications with first responders
- Radios tested prior to storm arrival
- Backup communication plans in place if cellular/internet fails
- Internal Situation Reports (SITREPs) issued regularly
- Emergency public messaging coordinated through official channels

8. PRE-STORM PREPARATION

8.1 Facilities & Generators

- Test and fuel generators at critical facilities
- Secure loose items around facilities
- Confirm fuel availability and transfer switch operation

Critical Facilities Include:

- Police Department
- Fire Department
- Water & Wastewater Facilities
- Natural Gas Facilities
- Designated Shelter Locations

8.2 Vehicles & Equipment

- Fuel all vehicles and equipment
- Inspect emergency lighting, radios, and safety gear
- Stage chainsaws, loaders, and bucket trucks

- Position equipment across city for rapid response

8.3 Debris & Wind Response Readiness

- Fuel and sharpen chainsaws
- Inspect PPE (helmets, chaps, gloves, eye protection)
- Assign debris-clearing crews and backups
- Coordinate with utilities for downed-line response

9. UTILITY OPERATIONS

9.1 Electric (Coordination)

- Coordinate with electric provider on staging and priorities
- Clear access routes for linemen

9.2 Natural Gas

- Inspect regulators and valves
- Prepare for emergency shutoffs
- Monitor for damage caused by fallen trees or structures

9.3 Water & Sewer

- Confirm generator readiness at lift stations
- Inspect vulnerable infrastructure post-event
- Prepare boil water advisory templates if needed

10. ROADWAY & TRAFFIC OPERATIONS

- Prioritize emergency routes and access to critical facilities
- Police to manage traffic control around debris and downed lines
- Public Works to clear roads only when utilities declare areas safe
- Coordinate with MDOT for state-maintained highways

11. SHELTERS & SAFE LOCATIONS

11.1 Activation Criteria

- Tornado damage
- Extended power outages
- Unsafe housing conditions
- Medical needs requiring electricity

11.2 Potential Post Storm Shelter Locations

- Blue Springs Lodge – 1 Summers Street
- Belmont Schools Gym – 9 School Drive
- Calvary Baptist Church – 559 Green Street
- Belmont City Hall – 94 Main Street

Shelters should include:

- Restroom access
- Seating/cots as available
- Basic supplies
- ADA accessibility where feasible

12. DURING-STORM OPERATIONS

- Emergency responders shelter during active tornado warnings unless life-threatening calls exist
- Dispatch prioritizes life safety incidents
- No debris removal until winds subside and scene safety confirmed
- Public messaging emphasizes sheltering and avoiding travel

13. POST-STORM RESPONSE

- Conduct life-safety checks first
- Clear emergency access routes
- Assess utilities and critical infrastructure
- Support electric and regional partners
- Document damage and response actions

14. EMPLOYEE SAFETY & SUPPORT

- Employee safety is the top priority
- Verify employee home and family needs when possible
- Rotate crews to prevent fatigue
- Provide food, water, and rest during extended operations

15. MUTUAL AID & REGIONAL SUPPORT

- Coordinate with county EMA, utilities, and neighboring jurisdictions
- Provide assistance when resources allow
- Track and document mutual aid provided and received

16. DEMOBILIZATION

- Gradually return to normal operations
- Stand down ICPs
- Inventory equipment and fuel usage
- Transition to recovery operations

17. AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

- Conduct internal review within 30 days
- Identify lessons learned
- Update SOPs, maps, and checklists accordingly

18. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Life safety first
- Employee safety always
- Utilities and emergency access before cleanup
- Clear, calm, consistent communication
- Serve with compassion and coordination