

## **Town of Phillipston Reverse 911 Policy (Code Red)**

**Background.** The Town of Phillipston has implemented a Reverse 911 rapid notification system for distributing emergency messages to the public. The system can notify large numbers of people in a short period of time by several methods: telephone, text, email or TDD. The system used by the Town is called Code Red, although this could change in the future.

**Purpose.** The purpose of this document is to establish policy and procedures governing the use of the Reverse 911 system.

**Policy.** The Reverse 911 system shall be used in accordance with the procedures described in this document to maintain system integrity and usefulness while curbing overuse.

**System Use.** The primary use of the system is for the Town to send alerts to the public regarding an emergency situation. Acceptable uses for emergency notification include:

- Extreme weather event – e.g. flood, fire, hurricane, winter storm
- Search and rescue – e.g. missing child, adult, Amber Alert, escaped fugitive
- Man Made disaster – e.g. chemical spill, hazmat emergency, bomb threat
- Public health related notifications – e.g. lake water contamination
- Public safety evacuations, road closures, or other problems affecting specific areas
- Information to town employees

The Reverse 911 system shall not be used for any non-governmental purpose.

The Reverse 911 system will only be activated when approved by the Chief Administrative Officer or designee. If the Chief Administrative Officer cannot be reached, then the Chair of the Selectboard may authorize an activation. If neither the CAO nor chair is available, then any two of the authorized users together can authorize an activation.

**System management.** The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is the System Administrator and is responsible for the software and hardware for the Reverse 911 system, resolving operational issues, ensuring that there are sufficient authorized users, ensuring that users are properly trained to operate the system and ensuring that the system is tested regularly.

**Authorized Users.** Only trained and authorized town personnel have access to launch a message through the Code Red system. The Chief Administrative Officer will designate Authorized Users. Five positions are Authorized Users:

- Chief Administrative Officer
- Board of Health Office Assistant
- Fire Chief / Emergency Management Director
- Highway Superintendent
- Police Chief

**Procedure.** The five Authorized Users may activate the system on their own authority. When they activate the system they will submit a Message Form, detailing the date, time, target area, reasons and message sent, to the CAO within one business day.

Parties who are not Authorized Users will follow this procedure:

1. Notification is generally requested by a department head. The department head prepares a Message Form, describing the message text, identifying the residents and geographic target area to be notified, and verifying that the message contains accurate complete information. The CAO will post common message scripts on the town website. The department head submits the Message Form to the CAO, or to the proper authority as described above.
2. The CAO approves the message. The department head records the message for distribution.
3. The department head notifies Dispatch, the Police and Fire Chiefs, Highway Superintendent and any other department directly affected prior to issuing the Reverse 911 notification.
4. The CAO notifies the Selectboard prior to issuing the Reverse 911 notification. The message is then activated.

All non-crisis or informational messages (e.g. planned street closings, etc.) shall be sent so as to be completed prior to 8:00 p.m.

All messages will be sent to a list of news media contacts.

**Training.** Individuals authorized to activate the Reverse 911 system will be trained in its operation. The training will be based on the vendor's recommendations and the specifics of the system as it is installed. Authorized users will regularly refresh their skills by using the vendor's tutorials, webinars and other online resources.

**System Maintenance.** The System Administrator will collect, maintain and update lists of all residents authorized to be contacted through the Reverse 911 system. Residents may request to be added or deleted from the Reverse 911 system at any time. Requests must be in writing and contain the person's name, address, telephone number, and signature. All resident request forms, operator logs, reports, and authorized personnel information updates will be forwarded to the System Administrator and maintained in a file. The Reverse 911 system will be tested periodically to ensure it is working properly.

*Adopted by the Selectboard, August 27, 2018*