



## *Montana Sheriffs & Peace Officers Association*

34 West Sixth Ave., Suite 2E • Helena, MT 59601 • (406) 443-5669 • [www.mspsoa.org](http://www.mspsoa.org)

### **Recommended Best Practices for Evacuations**

It is the recommendation of MSPOA that agencies in Montana utilize a common plain text evacuation model to minimize confusion to the affected populace. The following model was developed in coordination with representatives from law enforcement, fire service and emergency management. The consensus is that the most important part of implementing evacuations is the use of standardized terminology between emergency officials and the public. Other details on the tactical implementation are of lesser concern and can vary among agencies.

#### **Recommended Terminology**

**Term:** Warning

**Definition:** A situation exists in a defined area that people should be aware of and monitor closely, and that may directly affect them. Instructions to the affected areas should be given at this point.

#### **Examples:**

- Wildfire is developing that may lead to an evacuation.
- Flooding is expected that could affect people and they should prepare and monitor the situation.
- A bear is roaming in a community, residents should use precaution.

*If the situation is not resolved, it would often lead to one of the following.*

**Term:** Evacuation

**Definition:** A situation exists where it is not safe for people to remain in the area. They should leave immediately.

#### **Examples:**

- A wildfire is about to burn into a neighborhood.
- A barricaded armed subject where the surrounding houses should leave.

*-or-*

**Term:** Shelter in Place

**Definition:** A situation that is unsafe exists and it is more dangerous to leave the building. The best situation for building occupants is to secure their building and remain inside.

#### **Examples:**

- A hazardous materials incident where a populace is better off inside rather than outside.
- A manhunt for a dangerous subject where residents should lock themselves in their houses.

