

Public Notice Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of the Public Notice Policy is to establish a standard of practice for the Town of Antigonish to distribute Public Notices to residents, businesses, and community partners for planned or unplanned disruptions to municipal services, winter parking ban enforcement, 72-hour emergency preparedness, and major traffic disruptions. This policy is focused on the roles and ownership levels required by departmental staff and will also highlight the limitations of the process as it related to staff availability and responsiveness.

Definitions:

Public Notice – A communication issued by the Town regarding updates or information related to municipal services, proceedings or construction alerts that impact the regular community functions. Public Notices are issued to make residents, business, and community partners aware of the Town’s intentions in as timely of a manner as possible.

Mass Notification System – A platform designed to alert and inform the public by sending one-way Public Notices to mobile or landline devices.

Notifications – A message that makes someone aware of a situation or incident that will take place or has already occurred.

Alert – A urgent notice of any unusual situation or incident that has occurred.

System Administrator – A person who manages the operation of a computer system or electronic communication service.

General Statement:

1. Antigonish Town Council supports that regular, clear, transparent, and timely communication between Town Council/Administration and the public it serves promotes positive relationships that are mutually beneficial.
2. It is the policy of the Town of Antigonish that the level of communication detail and magnitude of content related to service disruptions will be conducted in a systematic way to reflect the severity of disruption to the public, in a way that is manageable within reason, based on staffing resources available.
3. In certain instances, provincial government regulations have the potential to supersede this policy. As a result, the Town will be required to follow the messaging and guidelines set by the government of Nova Scotia.

4. It is the intent of this policy to outline a standard of practice for issuing Public Notices and the use of a Mass Notification System. The Public Notice Policy will determine when a Mass Notification System will be used to provide urgent Public Notices related to municipal service interruptions, major traffic disruptions and winter parking ban enforcement that impact residents and businesses within the Town of Antigonish.

5. This policy provides clear guidelines for the manner in which a Mass Notification System will be used and who is authorized to issue Public Notices.

Standards of Public Notices:

1. The Town will issue Public Notices through a Mass Notification System that pertain to the following:

- Boil Orders
- Mandatory Water Conservation Orders
- Water Main Breaks
- Planned or Unplanned Electrical Outages
- Winter Parking Ban Enforcement
- Street Closures or Major Traffic Detours
- 72 Hour Emergency Preparedness Notices
- Localized Flooding

Public Notices issued outside of regular business hours using a Mass Notification System will be issued based on the availability and responsiveness of staff. It is understood that the Communications Officer or designate has a 12-hour time period upon receiving initial notice in which to publish communications related to service disruptions outside of normal working hours.

2. All other Public Notices from the Town will be disseminated using the Town’s social media, the Town’s website, and Public Service Announcements with local radio. Public Notice notifications or alerts the Town will issue through social media, web and radio include:

- Event Cancellations/Postponement
- Council/Committee Meetings
- Partial Street or Sidewalk Closures
- Hydrant Flushing
- Seasonal Public Works Maintenance (i.e. street cleaning, tree trimming, etc.)
- Solid Waste or Curb Side Pick-Up
- Minor Traffic Disruptions
- Damaged Street Lights
- Facility Closures

Public Notices issued outside of regular business using a traditional method will be issued based on the availability and responsiveness of staff. It is understood that the Communications Officer or designate has a 12-hour time period upon receiving notice in which to publish communications related to service disruptions outside of normal working hours.

3. Emergency notifications that pertain to the threat of life or property that may require the public to take immediate action fall under the responsibility of the Provincial Emergency Management Office (EMO) or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Public Notice notifications or alerts that are not included within the Town's scope include:

- Evacuation Orders
- Shelter In Place Orders
- Law Enforcement Emergencies
- Fire Emergency
- Flood Emergency
- Emergency Shelter Opening
- Hazardous Materials Spill

Roles and Responsibility

1.0 Communications Process for Municipal Led Work:

1.1 Supervisors or designates of Public Works, Water Treatment Facility or Electric Utility Supervisor will notify the Director of Public Works or designate of required work, or work underway in an emergency situation, providing scope, anticipated times, and the area impacted.

1.2 During regular business hours, the Director will be responsible for the delivery of the information to the CAO and Communications Officer or designate through the duration of the disruption.

1.3 The Communications Officer will develop a Public Notice using premade templates and distribute in a method deemed appropriate and which meets the intent of this policy.

1.4 It is understood that there is potential for inconsistent responsiveness to distributing information when events occur outside of normal working hours (i.e. evenings and weekends). It will be the responsibility of the department supervisor or designate overseeing the municipal work to make attempts to relay information to the Communications Officer, regardless of the time of day, so there is an opportunity for the information to be published.

1.5 It is understood that the Communications Officer or designate has a 12-hour time period in which to publish communications related to service disruptions outside of normal working hours.

If the service disruption has been resolved during this 12- hour time period, no communications are required. If the issue is ongoing, Public Notices will be issued using the method deemed appropriate by the Communications Officer.

1.6 Outside of normal working hours, the department supervisor or designate is responsible for updating the Communications Officer throughout the duration of the service disruption or emergency at timely increments until the situation is resolved.

2.0 Administrative Roles for Mass Notification System:

2.1 It is noted that the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) (or designate) assigns the Communications Officer, and other staff as required, the System Administrator role for any Mass Notification System the Town uses to disseminate Public Notices.

2.2 The System Administrator will be responsible for drafting notices, seeking approval from CAO or appropriate department director, and distributing the notices to the public.

2.3 The Communications Officer is responsible for the management of the Mass Notification System.

2.4 The CAO or designate and the Communications Officer or designate shall make the recommendation to Directors/Council regarding the use of non-emergency messages shared through a Mass Notification System.

3.0 Resident Communications:

3.1 Residents and businesses who wish to receive Public Notices from the Town's Mass Notification System must subscribe online or by contacting Town staff.

3.2 Residents and businesses that who decide they no longer wish to be contacted by the Town's Mass Notification System will have the option to be added to the Do Not Call List, either through the online system or by contacting Town Staff.


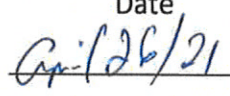
3.3 The Town will never release the personal information of residents who have signed up to receive Public Notices from the Mass Notification System, as per Part XX of the Municipal Government Act.

Disseminating Messages

1. The CAO or designate and appropriate department director will determine when a Public Notice needs to be issued by the Town. The CAO or designate and the Communications Officer or designate will determine if the Public Notice falls within the parameters determined for a Mass Notification System.

2. The Communications Officer will issue the Public Notice through the Mass Notification System.

- 2.1 The Mass Notification System sends Public Notices to those with registered addresses in the impacted area or by the GPS location of their mobile phone if they have downloaded the mobile app.
 - 2.2 Residents can sign up to received public notices by SMS message, email, phone call or mobile app notification.
 - 2.3 The System Administrator will post the same Public Notices sent through the Mass Notification System on the Town’s website and social media and share with local radio to ensure the information is widely broadcasted.
3. If it was determined the Public Notice does not meet the parameters of a Mass Notification, then the Communications Officer will use Town’s traditional practices of posting the notice to social media, website and sharing with local radio to publish the notice.

CAO’s Annotation for Official Policy Book	
Date of Notice to Council Members of Intent to Consider (Minimum 7 Days): April 19, 2021	
Date of Passage of Current Policy: April 26, 2021	
I certify that this Policy was adopted by Council as indicated above.	
Chief Administrative Officer	Date
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