

City Council Notification Matrix with Priority Scores

To ensure clear, consistent, and timely communication during both routine operations and critical incidents, this matrix outlines **when, how, and by whom** the City Manager's Office communicates with the Mayor and City Council. This matrix is intended as guidance and is not exhaustive; situations may arise that require professional judgment based on the nature, severity, or timing of an incident. The goal is to support continuity of leadership, maintain situational awareness, uphold trust, and ensure an appropriate and proactive response—while avoiding information gaps.

Council may receive certain notifications **for situational awareness**, sometimes while circumstances are still developing. In those instances, information may be preliminary and subject to change. Thoughtful discretion in how this information is shared or discussed helps maintain public trust and allows staff the space to manage operations effectively.

As a reminder, Council functions as a **collective body**, and communications related to operational matters are most effective when approached with a shared understanding. Council members are encouraged to reference the Council Organizational Rules and Order of Business for additional guidance related to confidentiality, closed sessions, personnel matters, litigation, and other sensitive information.

Authority & Responsibility

- **Primary responsibility** for Council notification rests with the **City Manager**.
- When the City Manager is unavailable (unresponsive to calls/texts for 20 minutes), notification may be made by an **authorized designee** (e.g., Assistant City Manager, Public Safety Director, or other designated executive).
- The notifying party is responsible for ensuring information is **accurate, verified, and consistent** with operational and public-facing communications.

After-Hours / Off-Hours Protocol

- "After hours" includes evenings, weekends, holidays, and times when staff and Council members are not actively monitoring email.
- For **Priority 1 (Critical)** incidents, **phone and/or text notification** to the Mayor is required regardless of time, followed by notification to Council.
- For **Priority 2 (High)** incidents occurring after hours, notification timing may be adjusted based on severity, but should occur **as soon as reasonably practicable**, typically no later than the next morning. "**Based on severity**" refers to whether an

incident, although not rising to Priority 1 (Critical), warrants more immediate **after-hours notification** due to its potential impact, visibility, or sensitivity.

- Lower-priority items may be queued for next-business-day notification unless circumstances escalate.

Priority Score Framework

- **Priority 1 – Critical:** Life-safety emergencies, major disruptions, or events with immediate public, legal, or political impact.
- **Priority 2 – High:** High-visibility operational disruptions affecting public confidence or essential services.
- **Priority 3 – Moderate:** Situational awareness, active or recently stabilized incidents where Council awareness is important due to potential public interest, operational impacts, or regional coordination.
- **Priority 4 – Low-Moderate:** Resolved incidents or post-event reporting provided to ensure shared understanding, transparency, and closure.
- **Priority 5 – Routine:** Regular informational updates as part of ongoing transparency and governance cadence.

Priority Score	Trigger / Timing	Communication Channels	Content / Notes	Incident Examples
1 – Critical	Immediate (30–60 min)	Phone + text to Mayor first, then email all Council	Critical incidents. Share verified facts; expectation for next update. If media is involved, share	Life-safety emergencies e.g., major fire, mass casualty, active threat, school lockdown, major hazmat, severe weather impact
2 – High	Short-Term (2–4 hrs)	Email Council	Significant operational impacts. Share situation summary, impacts, restoration timeline	Significant operational or infrastructure incident e.g., extended power or water outage, large traffic crash
3 – Moderate	Same business day (within 8 hrs)	Email Council	Active, stabilizing events or recovery efforts launched during ongoing situations Share key facts, recovery status, comms plan	Weather and operational readiness, infrastructure and utility disruptions (road closures, low-pressure event), public safety awareness (missing/found persons), regional coordination (POTUS visit),

4 – Low-Moderate	Within 24-4848 hrs	Email Council	Active, low-impact or isolated incidents. Incident resolved or transitioned to recovery. Share after-action summary, follow-up steps for incident closure	e.g., minor service disruptions/restored service (continued delayed recycling/trash), enforcement or compliance issues, protest/march
5 – Routine	Routine / Non-Urgent	Email Council	Maintain situational awareness	General updates, drills, call activity, VIP visiting community, large, planned events

Media Involvement – Council Notification & Spokesperson Protocol

Media involvement may elevate the priority level or timing of Council notification. If an incident involves media inquiry, anticipated media coverage, or active public reporting, the City Manager or authorized designee should:

- Coordinate with the Director of Community Relations & notify the Mayor & Council promptly.
- Ensure notification occurs before or concurrent with public statements, when feasible, so Council is not learning of the issue from the media.
- Include in the notification:
 - A brief description of the situation
 - What information has been shared publicly (or is planned to be shared)
 - The designated staff spokesperson
 - Anticipated follow-up or next update

Additional Communication Principles

- **Consistency:** Council notifications should align with internal leadership briefings and public communications.
- **Clarity:** Avoid speculation; clearly distinguish confirmed information from pending details.
- **Escalation:** If conditions worsen, the priority score should be reassessed and communication adjusted accordingly.
- **Documentation:** Significant incidents should be documented for institutional learning and future reference.