

MEMO

TO: Finance
FROM: Fire Chief Reynen
DATE: March 15, 2026
RE: Tornado Siren Replacement

Background

The City's outdoor warning system currently consists of eight matching tornado sirens operating on the same make, model, and control platform, along with one outdated siren scheduled for replacement this year. All existing units are maintained and supported by Emergency Communication Systems (ECS), allowing the City to maintain a standardized system with consistent service and maintenance practices.

Multiple vendors were contacted in accordance with City purchasing policy. While one vendor submitted a lower initial purchase and installation quote, their proposal would introduce a different manufacturer and service model that is not compatible with the City's existing system.

Maintaining a standardized warning system is important for operational reliability and efficient maintenance. Introducing a different manufacturer would require the City to manage separate equipment platforms, service processes, and parts inventories, creating additional maintenance complexity over the life of the system.

Additionally, the alternative vendor, American Signal Corporation (ASC), is not a certified service provider in this region. If parts replacement or repairs are needed, ASC must purchase those components through Emergency Communication Systems, which is the only certified service provider locally. This additional layer can increase repair costs and delay service when maintenance is required.

For a critical life-safety system such as the City's outdoor tornado warning network, maintaining system compatibility and certified service support remains an important operational consideration.

Financial Impact

The cost for the tornado siren, pole, batteries, and installation is quoted at \$27,950, which is included in the 2026 Capital Improvement budget.

While the quote from American Signal Corporation (ASC) appears lower initially, it is not an equivalent model of siren head. The installation quote does not include the cost to replace an aging pole that needs to be replaced.

ECS Siren Head, Antenna, radio connection and freight: \$17,875.00
ASC Siren Head (different brand), radio connection and freight: \$16,070
Difference of + \$1,805 for matching siren purchase.

ECS Install: \$6,575.00
Pole Replacement \$3,500
ASC Siren Head install: \$7,272.00
No Pole Replacement option



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The City is also currently under contract with ECS through 2030, which supports maintaining a consistent service model across the entire siren system. ASC is not a certified regional provider, replacement parts and certain repairs must still be obtained through Emergency Communication Systems, creating additional coordination and potentially higher repair costs.

The City currently contracts with Emergency Communication Systems (ECS) for annual siren maintenance at \$475 per siren, totaling \$4,275 annually for the City's system. The ECS service model includes annual inspection of siren heads and direct manufacturer-certified support. ASC services and inspects siren heads every other year rather than annually, which reduces routine inspection and increases the potential for issues to go undetected between service intervals.

Battery replacement remains a predictable maintenance expense regardless of vendor. Batteries typically require replacement every five years, with each siren requiring four batteries at approximately \$135 each. In 2026, eight batteries are scheduled for replacement due to end of life. After that cycle, the City expects approximately four batteries per year through 2030 unless premature failures occur.

Additionally, Dodge County Emergency Management utilizes and recommends Emergency Communication Systems for tornado siren service based on their evaluation of regional vendors. Maintaining the same service provider supports coordination with county emergency management partners and ensures the City's warning system remains supported by an experienced and established vendor.

Given the life-safety function of the outdoor warning system, maintaining certified service support, system compatibility, and consistent maintenance practices represents the most reliable long-term approach for the City.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Finance Committee approve the purchase and installation of the replacement tornado siren from Emergency Communication Systems. Selecting this vendor will allow the City to:

- Maintain a fully standardized siren system across all locations
- Ensure certified service and maintenance support
- Avoid introducing a non-compatible one-off siren into the network
- Maintain consistent maintenance practices and predictable lifecycle costs
- Align with the vendor currently utilized and recommended by Dodge County Emergency Management

Approval of this purchase will allow the Fire Department to continue maintaining a reliable and consistent outdoor warning system for the community.