

ESF 15 External Affairs

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1 Introduction: Purpose and Scope

Emergency Support Function 15 provides guidance and procedures for gathering, controlling, and disseminating emergency information to the public, media partners, community leaders, and other stakeholders. This ESF also establishes policies for internal review and approval of public information prior to its release to the community and/or media partners, while clearly defining clearance procedures within the incident command structure. This support function pertains to all response agencies and is applicable to all types of incidents.

Coordination and collaboration with local and regional media and public information personnel is essential to providing accurate, consistent, and timely information regarding the status of the emergency response/recovery. Where applicable, information should be provided in appropriate languages to accommodate non-English speaking populations. Public information and educational materials dealing with emergency management and preparedness can be provided to the general public and community partners prior to a disaster/incident. Information can be disseminated in a variety of formats and via multiple communication avenues.

The primary means for disseminating public information in this jurisdiction includes the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Internet, brochures, newspapers, community meetings, workshops, social media, purchased radio and television time and schools.

2 Policies and Agreements

The following agreements are in place to support Marion County Joint Information Center with ESF 15:

Chemeketa Community College, Keizer, Marion County, Polk County, Salem Fire, Salem Public Works, American Red Cross, Jefferson Fire, Marion County Sheriff's Office, Salem Hospital. August 21, 2006. This agreement assists the parties in their efforts to provide timely, accurate and appropriate information to incident victims, victims' families, involved organizations, staff and service providers, emergent volunteers, media and the community, while working with emergency responders.

Marion County, Chemeketa Community College, and City of Salem. This agreement allows for the use of the Chemeketa Community College facilities as a Joint Information Center.

3 Situation and Assumptions

3.1 Situation

During periods of emergency, the public needs detailed information regarding protective action to be taken for minimizing loss of life and property. There are times, however, when disaster strikes without warning and the public information system cannot react rapidly enough to properly inform the public about the hazard. For this reason, it is important that prior to the occurrence of an emergency, the public be made aware of potential hazards and the protective measures that should be employed.

3.2 Assumptions

An effective program combining both education and emergency information can significantly reduce disaster-related casualties and property damage. It is recognized, however, that people are generally unconcerned about hazards until affected, despite educational programs. Therefore, special emphasis must be placed on the effectiveness of the emergency information program for the public.

Both the media and the public will expect and demand that information about an emergency be provided in a timely manner.

The local media, particularly radio and television, can perform an essential role in providing emergency instructions and status information to the public, both through news bulletins and the EAS broadcasts.

Demand for information during a disaster can be overwhelming if sufficient trained staff is not available.

4 Roles and Responsibilities

LEAD AGENCY

Marion County Board of Commissioners Office, Public Information Officer
Marion County Emergency Management

SUPPORT AGENCIES/ENTITIES

Private or Non-governmental Organizations

American Red Cross
Area Hospital Public Information Officers
Chemeketa Community College
Local Television and Radio Stations
Valley Communities Active in Disaster

City/Special Districts

Incorporated City Public Information Officers
Fire Protection District Public Information Officers
Local Police Agencies
Willamette Education Service District

County

Marion County Department of Public Works
Marion County Information Technology Services Division
Marion County Health Department
Marion County Sheriff's Office
All Marion County Departments and Divisions

State (available without request through OERS)

Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon State Police

5 Concept of Operations

5.1 General

The timely preparation and release of emergency public information is the responsibility of the County emergency management organization's PIO working under the general direction of the EMD. An incident PIO will be appointed by the EMD at the time of an emergency.

There are several County departments, fire districts, and other organizations that have designated employees to deal with the release of information on emergency incidents to the media and the public. The Incident PIO and the necessary staffing for a 24-hour emergency response operation at the County's ECC will be drawn from this group of trained PIOs. Pre-disaster agreements can be used to ensure that the necessary cooperation, coordination and emergency management training occurs.

If an incident involves a criminal investigation, specific procedures are established to manage and control security-sensitive information locally and countywide. All media inquiries about an ongoing criminal investigation are referred to the Marion County District Attorney via the JIC. The JIC is a facility established to coordinate all incident-related public information activities. It is the central point of contact for all news media at the scene of the incident. Public information officials from all participating agencies should co-locate at the JIC.

5.2 Joint Information System (JIS)

Providing timely and accurate public information during an emergency of any nature is critical to the overall response efforts. A joint information system will be implemented in conjunction with the ICS and a local and/or regional JIC will be established under unified command (UC). Marion County will ensure procedures are consistent with those implemented by the existing regional and state public information network.

Depending on the size and nature of the incident, the JIC may be co-located with an existing ECC/Command Post or could be designated as an independent facility.

A lead PIO, representing the lead agency for the response, will be assigned to the incident and will maintain the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate information sharing among the larger PIO network;
- Develop and distribute materials to the general public and media partners;
- Implement information clearance processes set by the IC; and
- Schedule media briefings in a designated location away from the ECC and other emergency operations.

5.3 Message Development and Dissemination

Designated personnel, public officials, and/or response staff will inform and involve appropriate stakeholders, Subject Matter Experts, and other technical staff during the initial stages of a response.

Support activities of the lead PIO and other public information staff include:

- Creation and dissemination of key messages and incident updates to public and media partners (following review and clearance processes set forth by IC or designee);
- Activation and staffing a JIC (which may include appointing a JIC Manager);
- Development of fact sheets and situation updates for internal staff use;
- Designation of a spokesperson, alternate spokesperson, and supporting subject matter experts, if needed; and
- Development and distribution of news releases, status updates, and other emergency information through news conferences, websites, newspapers, television stations, radio stations, e-mail, and emergency hotlines.

Dissemination of public information during an emergency can be accomplished in a number of ways. The Oregon Emergency Response System will be used to provide key information regarding the incident(s) to the first responder community and key partners. Media partners play a significant role in information sharing and dissemination of information to the public and among private sector and governmental entities. Marion County will adopt and incorporate the principles of the public information system set forth by the NIMS. A “virtual JIC” system is a centralized electronic database that can serve as a tool for sharing information among the PIO network so that designated PIOs and support staff in a variety of remote locations can communicate with each other.

A list of subject matter experts has not yet been developed for the County but should include state resources for incident-specific needs, such as radiological support. A formal protocol for accessing subject matter experts through the State is established by Marion County Emergency Management.

6 Supporting Plans and Procedures

No plans or procedures have been developed to date.

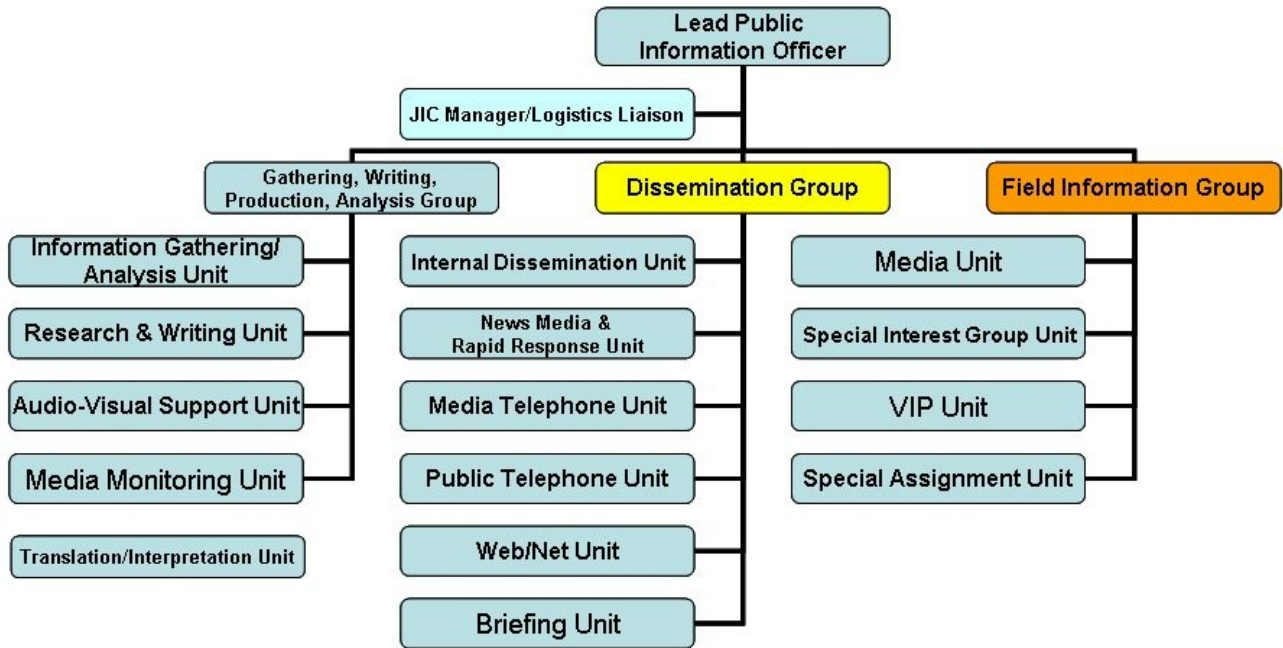
7 Appendices

Appendix 1 Joint Information Center Organizational Structure

Appendix 2 Joint Information Center Positions

Appendix 1
JOINT INFORMATION SYSTEM ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

PIO Team/JIC Organization and Functions



January 2007

Appendix 2
JOINT INFORMATION SYSTEM POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Guiding Principles

- All incident-specific information must be cleared by an IC prior to release.
- Each PIO may speak for his or her own agency on the general practices of that agency and communicate agency-approved, pre-scripted disaster/emergency information.
- The IC (or UC) may be located in an ECC supporting the incident or on-scene.
- Field JICs may be set up at or near an incident scene to provide service to news media who gather there.

The following functions should be considered when establishing a JIC. Depending on the scope of the incident, this may warrant having one individual staffing several positions or each of the following positions being staffed with one or more individuals.

Lead Public Information Officer

- Manages the JIC operation and obtains approval for the release of information from the IC (or UC).
- If necessary due to the size of incident, designates branch managers to oversee Information Gathering and Analysis, Production & Dissemination, and Field Operation functions.
- Establishes a staffing pattern.
- May attend planning meetings (ECC function).
- Creates JIC IAP for next operational period.
- Briefs next shift.
- Assists in verifying information about the incident or situation.
- Manages Very Important Person (VIP) visits to the JIC.

Assistant Lead Public Information Officer

- Assists the Lead PIO as directed.
- Manages JIC operations when the Lead PIO is unavailable.

JIC Coordinator

- Supervises daily operations of the JIC.
- Works with Chemeketa staff and participating agencies to procure needed supplies, equipment, and personnel.
- Executes plans and procedures.
- Collects and archives public information products.

Information Gathering, Verification, and Analysis Branch

Collects, verifies, and processes information from multiple sources, including the field and ECC PIOs and Ops branches, if formed, about the incident/situation and coordinates the development of key messages with the Information Production and Dissemination Branch.

Incident/ECC Liaison:

- Gathers information about incident(s).
- Communicates with Field PIO(s) and/or ECC(s) supporting the incident (cities, counties, FBI, etc.)
- Follows up on rumors and/or unconfirmed information.
- Helps facilitate VIP requests to tour incident site with Incident Lead PIO.
- Works closely with Situation Status and Operations (in ECC) to gather and verify information and determine which information has been approved by the IC for release.

Information Posting Unit:

- Categorizes and posts information in the JIC for reference (whiteboard, flip charts, etc.)
- Transmits confirmed and IC-approved information to Production & Dissemination Branch.
- Follows up on rumors and/or unconfirmed information.

Media Monitoring Unit:

- Monitors television, radio, and print media to ensure accuracy in reporting of incident and rumor control.

- Follows up on rumors and/or unconfirmed information and notifies Information Production & Dissemination Branch.
- Requests copies of news stories as needed.

Information Production & Dissemination Branch

Receives confirmed, IC-approved information; coordinates the release of information (with Lead PIO/IC); develops key messages with the Information Gathering Branch; identifies targeted audiences; and utilizes appropriate resources and tools to communicate key messages.

Media Briefing Unit:

Research and Writing Unit. (Note: Staff working here may cycle back and forth with staff in the Media Interview Unit as news releases are sent and media respond requesting more information from the originator of the news release.)

- Defines and composes incident status information and key messages.
- Develops press releases after consulting Information Gathering Unit.
- Develops protective action information for public.
- Develops “notebook” and/or other resources for Media Interview and Phone Bank Groups.

Media Interview Unit. (Note: Staff working here may cycle back and forth with staff in the Research and Writing Unit such when the media call requesting more information from the originator of a news release.)

- Responds to inquiries and conducts interviews with television, radio and print media.
- Conducts media tours of the JIC.
- Answers phone lines designated for incoming local media calls.

News Conference Unit.

- Determines and arranges for appropriate media contacts/speakers.
- Works with Research and Writing Unit to develop key messages.
- Sets up facility and equipment, working with JIC Coordinator.
- Develops necessary graphics/visuals.

National/International Media Unit.

- Facilitates requests for information from national/international media.
- Facilitates requests for information from magazine and publication journalists.
- Answers phone lines designated for incoming national/international media calls.

External/Internal Communications:

Phone Bank Liaison Unit.

- Ensures that Phone Bank has current information on the incident.
- Conducts periodic briefings with Phone Bank to ascertain and/or rule-out rumors.
- Periodically requests Phone Bank coordinator to relay FAQs.
- Routinely requests information on primary public concerns.

Multi-Jurisdictional Contact Unit.

- Disseminates information to other ECCs and all participating jurisdictions via established listserv and/or e-mail groups.
- Briefs ECC staff via posting of press releases, fact sheets, visuals, etc.

Community Outreach:

Special Populations Unit.

- Identifies special populations affected by the incident (seniors, hearing impaired, illiterate, non-English speaking, etc.)
- Develops protective measures information for special populations, working with content experts, e.g. health officer, hazardous materials personnel, transportation officials.
- Seeks and utilizes community resources as needed to communicate with and/or disseminate information to targeted special population audiences.
- Answers phone lines designated for incoming calls from special populations.

Community Meetings Unit.

- Posts key information (assistance programs, protective measures, etc.) at community locations.

- Conducts town hall and community meetings as needed.
- Works with Shelter Liaison to promote shelter information.

Other Media (Internet, Personal Digital Assistants, etc.):

- Works with Research and Writing Unit to post pertinent information on agency web site(s).
- Works with Research & Writing Unit to update virtual JIC (if established).
- Searches Internet for blog postings.

Field Operations Branch

Incident PIO(s):

- Coordinates the release of information with the on-scene IC.
- Conducts media interviews and tours of incident site.
- Provides incident updates to Information Gathering Branch.
- Establishes the media area in a safe location, with a good view of the incident and operations.

VIP Liaison.

- Conducts and/or assists IC with briefing elected officials, dignitaries, and politicians.
- Conducts tours of the incident site.

Shelter Liaison:

- Provides information on shelter openings to Information Gathering Unit.
- Helps facilitate requests for media interviews.
- Works with Community Outreach and Special Needs Unit to communicate shelter information to displaced individuals.

Special Interest Groups:

- Identifies potential organizations that may have a vested interest in the incident.
- Searches for “intelligence.”

- Collects and shares information on potential activists' efforts and shares with Information Gathering Branch.