

ESF 15. External Affairs

1. Purpose

The purpose of this annex is to outline the process for disseminating emergency instructions and information to the public during periods of major emergencies/disasters and educating the public on emergency preparedness planning before disaster strikes.

2. Situation and Assumptions

2.1 Situation

During periods of major 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.

2.2 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. Thus, 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 utilization of the EAS may be used to give urgent information to the general populations.
- 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 Emergency Alert System (EAS) broadcasts.
- Demand for information during a disaster can be overwhelming if sufficient trained staff is not available.

3. Concept of Operations

3.1 General

- The timely preparation and release of public emergency information to the news media and public is the responsibility of the County's Information

Officer (IO) working under the general direction of the BOC and Emergency Management Office if the EOC is not open or the EOC's IC if the EOC is open. The IO is part of the EOC staff, but one could be appointed by the on-scene IC at the time of an emergency.

- The Public Information Officer (PIO) represents and advises the Incident Command on all public information matters relating to the management of the incident. The PIO handles media and public inquires, emergency public information and warnings, rumor monitoring and response, media monitoring, and other functions required to coordinate, clear with appropriate authorities, and disseminate accurate and timely information related to the incident, particularly regarding information on public health and safety protection. The PIO is also responsible for coordinating public information at or near the incident site and serving as the on-scene link to the Joint Information System (JIS). In a large-scale operation, the on-scene PIO services as a field PIO with links to the Joint Information Center (JIC), which is typically combined with the federal, regional, state, local, or tribal EOC tasked with primary incident coordination responsibilities.
- The IC from the lead response agency may determine who is to carry out IO duties. The responsibility for distributing emergency public information during the emergency will be that of the IO on scene. This on-scene IO may later serve as the County EOC Staff's IO or another designated person can perform that duty.
- There are some county departments and fire districts that have designated employees to deal with the release of information on daily emergency incidents to the media and the public. The incident IO, and the necessary IO staffing for a 24-hour emergency response operation at the County's EOC, will be drawn from this group of trained IO's. Pre-disaster agreements can be used to ensure that the necessary cooperation, coordination, and emergency management training occurs.
- Emergency information efforts will focus upon specific event-related information. This information will generally be of an instructional nature focusing on such things as warning, evacuation, and shelter (if the EOC is open). All protective action statements such as these must be approved by both EOC and local Incident Commanders. It is also important to keep the public informed of the general progress of events. In larger scale events, a Joint Information Center (JIC) may be established to facilitate coordination between various Command Posts, EOCs, and the media.
- In an event involving fatalities, the names of the victims or the cause of death shall not be released without authorization from the Medical Examiner's office. Neither shall confidential information be released, i.e., home phone

numbers and address of victims, response personnel, or volunteer emergency workers.

- A special effort will be made to report positive information regarding emergency response in order to reassure the community that the situation is under control. Rumor control will be a major aspect of the information program. Public feedback will be used as a measure of the informational program's effectiveness. Education efforts will be directed toward increasing public awareness about potential hazards and how people should deal with them. All education efforts will rely heavily on the cooperation of volunteer and commercial media organizations.

3.1.1 County

3.1.1.1 Emergency Management

- The County's EOC staff are responsible for the dissemination of emergency public information during a major emergency/disaster. The Emergency Management office is responsible for providing emergency preparedness information before a disaster strikes.
- The County EOC's IO is responsible for coordinating all activities of the emergency public information function, including ensuring that an adequate number of emergency management trained IO's are available to staff the County's EOC on a 24-hour basis.

3.1.1.2 Other County Departments

Those County Departments having an assigned IO function will be tasked with assisting the County's efforts in providing emergency preparedness information to the public and emergency public information during a response to a major emergency or disaster. This assignment may be as the lead IO or as a relief/support IO during large-scale responses.

3.1.2 Incorporated Cities

- Cities maintaining their own Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) are responsible for developing, maintaining and implementing emergency public information procedures as a part of their planning and operational response activities. Assistance in staffing the IO function at the County EOC may be requested in major emergencies.

City IOs may be invited to work in a Joint Information Center (JIC) that may be established at the County or State level.

- Cities without an EOP will utilize the County's External Affairs annex as a guideline in the release of emergency information or work directly with the County EOC's IO to incorporate the information into a joint release.

3.1.3 Fire Protection Districts

As a public safety emergency response agency, fire personnel are constantly on the scene as fire responders and frequently assign an IO to handle release of information to the media and public. This group of fire personnel, who are trained and knowledgeable in the functions of the IO position, might be utilized as a resource for county emergency management during a major emergency/disaster, as appropriate.

3.1.4 Support Agencies

3.1.4.1 Media

The print and electronic media will be the primary method of disseminating emergency public information during a disaster response. Community newspapers are effective in providing detailed self-help information in slow-developing emergency situations, i.e., inclement weather, drought, etc. The electronic media can be helpful in issuing bulletins to inform the public of emergency conditions with or without formal activation of the EAS. Activation of the EAS allows for a direct and immediate flow of information to the public.

3.1.4.2 Volunteer Organizations

Volunteer groups such as Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) may provide assistance in the dissemination of emergency preparedness/response information to the public.

3.1.4.3 Coos County Education Service District

The CC ESD can provide direct assistance in providing emergency preparedness information to Coos County Schools Districts, who in turn, would provide it to the schools within their district.

3.1.4.4 American Red Cross – Pacific Chapter

The American Red Cross (ARC) serves as the primary agency for disseminating emergency preparedness information, materials, and training at the local level. The ARC Disaster Health Function also has access to the Medical Examiner's list of fatalities as well as lists of hospitalized victims and sheltered individuals.

3.1.5 State Government

State officials will be responsible for the release of emergency public information on the response of state government to a disaster and effects on state highways, bridges, and other facilities. Oregon Emergency Management (OEM), in conjunction with the Governor's Office, will normally be the lead state agency in the coordination and release of emergency public information for a state disaster. However, in certain situations, a Joint Information Center (JIC) may be utilized that would involve both state and local government.

3.1.6 Federal Government

- Emergency preparedness publications are available from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for public education in the pre-disaster stages.
- FEMA, once on scene in a major emergency/disaster, will provide public information on federal assistance to be made available during the recovery phase.

3.2 NIMS (National Incident Management System) Requirements for Public Information System.

The Joint Information System under the National Response Framework, connection of public affairs personnel, decision-makers, and news centers by electronic mail, fax, and telephone when a single Federal-State-Local JIC is not a viable option.

3.2.1 Public Information

During emergencies, the public may receive information from a variety of sources. The mechanism established by NIMS for ensuring that information the public receives is accurate, coordinated, timely, and easy to understand is through the use of a Public Information Officer (PIO). (*PIO-A government official responsible for preparing and coordinating the dissemination of emergency public information.*)

3.2.2 PIO and JIC

The PIO coordinates public information by establishing a Joint Information Center (JIC). The JIC is a central point of contact for all news media near the scene of a large-scale disaster. News media representatives are kept informed of activities and events to public information officials who represent all participating federal, state, and local agencies that are collocated at the JIC. Using the JIC as a central location, information can be coordinated and integrated across jurisdictions, agencies, and among all government partners, the private sector, and nongovernmental agencies.

- The County's PIO function and EOC will operate as the County's JIC for localized events.
- For regional events, County's PIO may operate from a County or Regional JIC.

3.2.3 JIC Characteristics

JICs have several characteristics in common:

- JICs include representatives of all players in managing the response. This may include jurisdictions, agencies, private entities, or nongovernmental organizations.

- JICs must have procedures and protocols for communicating and coordinating effectively with other JICs and with the appropriate components of the ICS organization.

3.3 Direction and Control

3.3.1 Executive Actions

The Emergency Management office is responsible for emergency preparedness and education and emergency information activities as a part of the County's Emergency Management program.

However, in emergency situations posing an immediate threat to life any public official in the County, serving as an Incident Commander, or any other authorized public official may issue emergency public information. Such officials shall notify County Emergency Management as soon as possible to facilitate further notifications and actions, as required.

3.3.2 Coordination and Integration

- Public information functions must be coordinated and integrated across jurisdictions and across functional agencies; among federal, regional, state, local, and tribal partners; and with private sector and nongovernmental organizations.
- All JICs must communicate and coordinate with each other on an ongoing basis. Public awareness functions must also be coordinated with the information and operational security matters that are the responsibility of the information and intelligence function of the ICS, particularly when public awareness activities may affect information or operations security.
- All County Departments and agencies shall gather, share, manage, and coordinate with the assigned IO working at the County EOC in releasing information to the public, unless directed otherwise by the county Board of Commissioners.
- (See Appendix A, Emergency Management Information Officer Checklist, of this annex.).

4. Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities

4.1 Organization

- Each County Department shall respond in accordance with their role in the County Emergency Management organization as identified in the county EOP.
- Other jurisdictions should work within the framework identified by their respective EOPs or the County's EOP, as appropriate.

4.2 Task Assignments

4.2.1 Mitigation and Preparedness

4.2.1.1 County Emergency Management

The Emergency Management Program Manager shall work with the various resource agencies and local jurisdictions in distributing emergency preparedness information throughout the County.

4.2.1.2 Incorporated Cities

Those cities with emergency management programs are responsible for dissemination of emergency preparedness information to their citizens. Other cities should work with the County Emergency Management program in public education efforts.

4.2.1.3 Fire Protection Districts

County Emergency Management may request the assistance of the pool of trained IOs from fire districts to assist in the distribution of emergency preparedness information as a part of their fire safety training presentations or public safety exhibits.

4.2.1.4 Support Agencies

4.2.1.4.1 Media

County Emergency Management personnel will work with local media in providing emergency preparedness messages to the public, e.g., a series of newspaper articles or public service announcements by the broadcast media.

4.2.1.4.2 ARES/RACES

The Coos County Amateur Radio Emergency Services /Radio Amateur Communication Emergency Services (ARES/RACES) group will distribute emergency preparedness information as provided by County Emergency Management, to the public as part of their community education efforts at fairs and exhibits.

4.2.1.4.3 Coos County Education Service District

As able, the County Emergency Management personnel, upon request, shall work with the Coos County Education Service District (ESD) to periodically distribute emergency preparedness information to the school districts throughout the school year so that students may receive literature to take home to their parents.

4.2.1.4.4 American Red Cross, Pacific Chapter

American Red Cross Pacific Chapter maintains a supply of FEMA emergency preparedness information for distribution to the public. Volunteers are used to make public presentations to civic and church groups on emergency preparedness planning and techniques at the family and individual level.

County Emergency Management should work closely with the Red Cross in the coordination of the limited resources available to meet the need for community education in emergency preparedness.

4.2.2 Response

4.2.2.1 County Emergency Management

- The Emergency Management Office or EOC's IC should ensure that the Warning Function appendix to ESF 2 is utilized for emergency warning information, as appropriate.
- The Emergency Management Office or EOC's IC will appoint an IO for the duration of the incident, and that person will be responsible for managing the County's emergency public information process.
- See Appendix A, Emergency Management Information Officer (IO) Checklist, for specific duties.

4.2.2.2 Other County Departments

Departments with trained IOs may be requested to provide assistance in staffing the IO function for the County EOC. In a major event, such as an earthquake, these trained IOs should make contact with the County EOC's IO to determine if immediate assistance is needed unless their own department duties are clear priority.

4.2.2.3 Incorporated Cities

- Each jurisdiction is responsible for coordinating emergency response information with the County EOC's IO once the EOC is activated. Requests for IO staffing assistance at the County EOC may be made to any jurisdictions not impacted by the disaster.
- Participation in a Joint Information Center (JIC) may be requested in an effort to better coordinate the release of emergency public information.

4.2.2.4 Fire Districts

Fire IOs who have been trained to work at the County EOC in the event of a major disaster, should immediately determine their departmental needs and priorities and then contact the County EOC's IO to indicate availability.

4.2.2.5 Support Agencies

The volunteer and non-profit organizations can provide valuable assistance in disseminating emergency public information.

- American Red Cross Pacific Chapter will have primary responsibility for coordinating and disseminating information on disaster victims and people

utilizing emergency shelters, Red Cross is privy to the Medical Examiner's list of fatalities.

4.2.2.6 Joint Information System

The Joint Information System (JIS) provides an organized, integrated, and coordinated mechanism to ensure the delivery of understandable, timely, accurate, and consistent information to the public in a crisis. It includes the plans, protocols, and structures used to provide information to the public during incident operations, and encompasses all public information operations related to an incident, including all federal, state, local, tribal and private organization PIOs, staff, and JICs established to support an incident. Key elements include the following: interagency coordination and integration; developing and delivering coordinated messages; support for decision-makers; and flexibility, modularity, and adaptability.

4.2.2.7 Joint Information Center/Emergency Media Center

If there is a major event involving several jurisdictions in/or adjacent to Coos County, it is likely that a Joint Information Center (JIC) will be established to provide a coordinated method for release of emergency public information, i.e., serving as a clearinghouse. The decision to establish a JIC will be made by the EOC's IC in collaboration with the responsible officials of the other involved jurisdictions. (See Appendix B for potential sites and available resources – to be developed.)

4.3 Recovery

- County Emergency Management shall coordinate with other involved units of government and ensure that the public is informed of recovery operations in progress through the news media.
- County Emergency Management shall conduct an after action debriefing/evaluation on the effectiveness of the emergency public information function throughout the county.

5. Annex Development and Maintenance

The Emergency Management office is responsible for updating/revising this annex as needed. Each agency will develop and maintain standard operating procedures that address assigned tasks.

6. Appendices

- A. Emergency Management Information Officer (IO) Checklist
- B. Potential Sites for a Joint Information Center (JIC) [to be identified]

Appendix A. Emergency Management Information Officer (IO) Checklist

When an incident occurs that significantly involves county residents or requires the EOC to be activated:

- [] Information Officer (IO) appointed by the County Emergency Management Office/Incident Commander. This IO should be from the most involved agency/department, i.e., Law Enforcement, Fire Service, Public Works, Public Health. The title will be "EOC staff – IO".
- [] Emergency Alert System (EAS) activated with disaster notifications and public safety information. EAS utilized for area-wide information prior to the use of news releases.
- [] Assistant and relief IO's identified and scheduled by IO if needed for longer-duration incident. Logistics Section can assume this responsibility, if requested.
- [] Staffing for administrative support and work space obtained. Logistics Section can assume this responsibility if requested.
- [] Information for other EOC's and the 911 center sent.
- [] Appoint a media liaison to work at the JIC with other jurisdictions' IO's, i.e., Cities, Hospitals, other County Departments, State Agencies, Federal Agencies, adjacent counties (Curry and Douglas). (See Appendix 2 for potential sites and requirements.)
- [] News releases developed using approved emergency management format. (Computer support staff can assist.) The following should be considered in preparing a news release.
 - () Current information obtained from Operations and Planning Section Chiefs
 - () Other local EOCs coordinated with to ensure accuracy of releases
 - () Rumor control issues addressed
 - () Sources of information authenticated and verified for accuracy, before releasing
 - () Information is objective and concise but complete, and covers what the public needs and expects to know
 - () Regular times for news releases are scheduled in cooperation with media

- () IC approval and signature obtained, before releasing
- [] News releases issued to Communications Unit Leader for inclusion on the internet homepage and sent by e-mail to cities, department heads, and major industries.
- [] Decision made if a public information telephone number (“help-line”) should be established; Logistics Section Chief requested to establish and staff, (consider use of volunteer or non/profit organizations) and the number publicized.
- [] Logistics Section asked to provide the public with self-help/survival information through media and distribution points for “hard copies”.
- [] EOC staff assigned to monitor media for rumor control. Incorrect or unsubstantiated information immediately counteracted.
- [] Media will be allowed access to the EOC, or on-scene, only under limited, controlled circumstances, and only with prior approval of the EOC and local Incident Commanders.
- [] If not safe or practical to admit all media representatives, a media “pool’ may be created whereby media representatives select personnel, i.e., reporter, photographer, film crew, etc. to gather information for all of them.

Appendix B. Potential Sites for a Joint Information Center (JIC)

Purpose of Joint Information Center: During a major emergency/disaster, it will be the one central location to coordinate news releases from various jurisdictions/ departments to the media. Each EOC's IO will prepare a news release and provide the information to the liaison at the JIC for release at scheduled times. Media will utilize the JIC as the primary source of emergency public information on the major emergency/ disaster.

Location	Central Location	Adequate Space	Emergency Power	Cable TV Connection	Phones	Parking	Internet Connection	Copy Machine	Fax Machine	Restrooms

(To be identified)