

EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION # 15 - PUBLIC INFORMATION**PRIMARY**

Henderson County Judge Executive,
Henderson County Emergency Management Director
City of Henderson Public Information Officer

LOCAL SUPPORT

Chief Elected Officials
County Road Department
City Public Works
County Health Department
City/County EMS
City Fire Department
County Volunteer Fire Departments
County Agriculture
City/County Rescue Squad
County Sheriff's Department
City Police Department
Kentucky State Police
County Emergency Management

LOCAL RESOURCE

Board of Education
County Finance
City and County Law Enforcement
American Red Cross, Kentucky Chapters
Salvation Army
County Extension Service

STATE RESOURCE

Kentucky Division of Emergency Management
Kentucky National Guard
Public Service Commission
Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster

(Not all agencies are listed under this section, as it would vary and be difficult to include all agencies that could be affected by the impact of a disaster. This ESF will expand/collapse as needed during an incident.)

PURPOSE

To establish the basic roles and responsibilities for Emergency Support Function #15 – Public Information (ESF 15) to ensure that local resources are deployed during potential or actual incidents to provide accurate and timely information to the general public. Also, to provide resource support to implement the Joint Information Center (JIC) for briefing the news media if a JIC is opened.

SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

- The County EM Director, or his designee, may or may not be the Public Information Officer (PIO). designee for the incident.
- An incident has occurred, and public perception is that they have been placed in danger by a natural or manmade incident.
- Emergency public information actions will be determined by the severity of the incident.
- Local jurisdictions and other response organizations will be notified by the designed County PIO, when an emergency or disaster has occurred that requires an emergency public information response.
- The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is activated as one of the principals mean to disseminate emergency warnings and priority emergency instructions to the public.
- The PIO will coordinate the dissemination of all official public information from county, local and private emergency services and disaster response agencies providing support during the incident.
- Responding agencies will provide instructions and information through the PIO to the public, about the incident and actions people should take to save and protect life, property, economy, and the environment. They will also provide information to the public, through the PIO; to answer questions, to reduce public concerns about the incident, and to update the public regarding the response activities.
- The PIO has established close working relationships with the news media for the dissemination of emergency public information.

MISSION

To keep the citizens of the County informed of the developing situation, to give instructions for protective actions in a threatened or actual incident, to control rumors and speculation, and to provide recovery operations instructions.

DIRECTION AND CONTROL

The Public Information Officer (PIO) will be the spokesperson for the incident, and for all responding agencies, when a Joint Information Center (JIC) has been activated.

The PIO will have all media releases approved by the Incident Commander before putting the messages/notifications out to the public.

The function of the JIS is to coordinate information and have it approved by the Incident Commander (IC) before it is released to the public and the news media.

The following information concerning a major incident will be provided to the media as soon as possible:

- Nature of incident
- Location of incident
- Time of incident
- Number of people involved
- Continuing hazards
- Environmental impact
- Economic impact
- Agencies involved in response
- Scope of agency involvement and activity
- Extent of estimated public and private damages
- Safety instructions
- How / where to get assistance, and
- How the public may volunteer and provide assistance

Information should be disseminated to:

- Disaster victims.
- Outside general public.
- Affected jurisdictions.
- Community leaders.
- Private sector.
- News media.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (e.g., American Red Cross, Salvation Army).
- Response and recovery organizations (e.g., urban search and rescue, Utilities).

- Volunteer groups
- Other impacted groups.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Phases of Management

Preparedness

- Public information resources are coordinated by the Public Information Officer (PIO) at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
- The staff at the EOC coordinates messages with PIO(s) from all involved agencies/organizations.
- The PIO will provide the local news media with the proper emergency information for the public.

Response

- Information disseminated throughout this stage will consist primarily of instructions to individuals, families, and other organizations regarding actions to take to help protect life and property. This information will include specific definitions of the threat, its unique characteristics, identification of evacuation routes, and similar information.
- All available means to disseminate emergency public information to the general public will be used if necessary, including:
 - Amateur Radio
 - Broadcast Media (Cable, Radio, Television, and websites)
 - Door to Door Notification
 - Email Lists
 - Facsimile (FAX)
 - Official Internet Websites (County and municipal)
 - Mobile Public Address Systems
 - Print Media (Local Newspapers, Brochures, Handouts, and websites))
 - Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)
 - Telephone (reverse communication system)
 - Voice
 - Txt
 - Email
 - Emergency Alerting System
 - Weather/Tone Alert Radios via NWS/NOAA

- The PIO should be prepared, if necessary, to establish a rumor control section to answer inquiries from the public; to alert emergency agencies, Emergency 911 dispatchers and the news media of erroneous rumors and provide them with correct information; and to act as a media monitoring group to monitor broadcasts to ensure accuracy of released information.

Recovery

- Information disseminated throughout this stage will consist primarily of instructions to individuals, families, and other organizations as to returning home, rebuilding, relocating, and where/how to receive help and support, etc.
- To effectively and efficiently convey information, maps, and graphic products (if available) to the media and the general public.

ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The PIO will identify and coordinate with local, state, and federal agencies to disseminate coordinated and approved timely emergency information throughout all phases of the incident.

GENERAL ORGANIZATION RESPONSIBILITIES

Operational control remains the same during emergency situations as during normal activities. The EOC will act as a central point of overall coordination. The Public Information Officer must be prepared to assist in lengthy operations that start in response and continue through recovery and involve clean up activities and return of resources.

- Public Information Officer (PIO) Normal Operations

The Public Information Officer, with the assistance of other government and non-government organizations, will manage the public emergency information awareness program.

- Joint Information Center (JIC)

The Joint Information Center (JIC) is comprised of the County, surrounding municipalities, military and other public information representatives as appropriate to the emergency situation, including but not limited to Kentucky State Police, Henderson Police, Henderson Fire, Henderson County Sheriff's Office, county volunteer fire departments

representative, Henderson City-County Rescue Squad, Methodist Hospital, City-County Ambulance Service, Henderson County Coroner's Office, Emergency 911 Dispatch, Henderson County Health Department, National Guard and/or other appropriate agencies.

- The JIC will be a media focal point, central repository of all public information in the County during the emergency situation, and a clearinghouse for official media releases and dissemination of emergency public information for all organizations that are supporting emergency operations in the County. The JIC will normally operate out of the County EOC or alternate County EOC.
- News briefings with the news media will be conducted at a location to be determined by the PIO, with consideration given to avoid interfering with EOC operations. In the event of an ongoing emergency, consideration should be given to conducting news conferences at a specified time on a daily or twice-daily basis.
- The JIC will require multiple supplies and equipment dependant on the event.
 - Office supplies
 - Computer and printer (with alternate power source)
 - County/regional maps
 - Television, radio and/or recording equipment
 - Cell phone, land line
 - Fax machine
 - Camera
 - List of contacts
 - Battery powered radio

SPECIFIC KEY POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES

Primary – ESF 15 Coordinator

- Will be responsible for assigning JIC functions to other agency/organization PIOs when a JIC has been activated and is operational.
- Will coordinate messages with public information/affairs officers from all involved departments/agencies/organizations active in the Joint Information Center (JIC) and share the information with other PIOs through the Joint Information System (JIS) for ESF 15.
- Is responsible for issuing Emergency Alert Service (EAS) and Reverse Communication System messages to the public, through the National Weather Service and all other available media, in a timely manner.

- Will provide incident-related information through the media and other sources to individuals, families, businesses, and industries directly or indirectly affected by the incident.
- Is responsible for handling appropriate special projects such as news conferences and press operations for incident area tours by government officials and other dignitaries.
- Will inform local elected and appointed officials on response efforts, protocols, and recovery efforts.

Support

- All supporting agencies for this ESF will provide information and resources as required to ensure the proper functioning of ESF 15.
- Supporting Agencies will ensure their representatives to ESF 15 are properly trained and exercised on the plans and procedures relating to their work.
- All supporting agency PIOs will issue news releases pertaining to their agency's specific roles and responsibilities during the incident.

REFERENCES

Kentucky Revised Statutes 39A - 39G

The National Incident Management System

"Basic Guidance for Public Information Officers" (FEMA 517/November 2007)

Federal Emergency Management Agency Public Information Officer Position Checklist (attached)

SUPPORT DOCUMENTS:

Henderson ESF #15-1 Public Information Officer Position Checklist

Henderson ESF #15-2 Media Directory