

Emergency Support Function 15

Public Information

ESF Coordinator

- Grays Harbor County Division of Emergency Management

Primary Agencies

- Public Information Officers from the County and municipalities
- Grays Harbor County Division of Emergency Management

Support Agencies

- Grays Harbor Communications E 911 Center
 - County departments
 - Municipalities
 - Special Use Districts
 - Community organizations
 - Washington Emergency Management Division
 - Public and private media (cable television, radio, and newspaper)
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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs (ESF #15) provides for sufficient mobilization of county assets during emergencies or disasters to provide accurate, coordinated, and timely information to impacted communities, emergency responders, governments, media, and the private sector.

B. Scope

ESF #15 details the establishment of a command staff position to coordinate communications to various audiences. ESF #15 applies to all county departments and municipal governments that may require public affairs/information support or whose public affairs/information support and assets may be employed during an incident of countywide significance.

II. POLICIES

- A. The Grays Harbor County Joint Information Center (JIC) will do everything possible to ensure that the information provided is consistent, accurate, complete, and promptly delivered using communication methods that will disseminate information as widely as possible to affected populations.
- B. County departments, municipalities and community organizations will provide updates regarding response and recovery activities to Incident Command.
- C. ESF #15 follows the Incident Command System (ICS).
- D. Primary and support agencies will ensure that a continuity of operations plan is in place to maintain essential services.
- E. Primary and support agencies will participate in drills and exercises to test existing plans and procedures.
- F. All Grays Harbor County departments and municipalities will maintain at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) up-to-date contact lists for their identified Public Information Officers (PIO).
- G. Primary and support agencies will participate in post-disaster briefings and development of an After Action Report.
- H. It is neither implied nor should it be inferred that this plan guarantees that a perfect response to an emergency or disaster will be practical or possible. No plan can shield individuals from all

events. While every reasonable effort will be made to respond to emergencies or disasters, resources, and or systems may be overwhelmed. Some events provide little or no warning to implement operational procedures and all emergency plans are dependent upon tactical execution, which may be imperfect. This plan can only be fulfilled if the situation, information exchange, extent of actual capabilities and resources are available at the time of the incident.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. General

1. The Incident Commander is responsible for activating the PIO.
2. The PIO will coordinate activities between the EOC, assistant Public Information Officers, the Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD), and the JIC. The JIC is a facility where the PIO and staff can coordinate and provide information on the incident to the public, the media, and other agencies.
3. The EOC is responsible for supporting the JIC. The JIC is co-located with the EOC.
4. Primary and support agencies will provide communication resources to the JIC when requested and as resources allow.

B. Organization

1. The County and each municipality may designate an assistant PIO to operate within the JIC.
2. The JIC may operate from the disaster area to support local public information efforts, and during recovery operations, may relocate solely to the EOC as needed.

C. Procedures

1. Upon activation, the PIO will report to the Incident Commander to coordinate and disseminate accurate and timely disaster related information.
2. The PIO will determine methods for disseminating local emergency information depending on available means as appropriate to the emergency. This may include radio, newspaper, television, electronic communications, mobile public address systems, and door-to-door.
3. The PIO will determine the location and staffing needs of the JIC.

D. Phases of Emergency Management

1. Mitigation and Preparedness Activities
 - a. Identify areas where public education programs (i.e., personal preparedness) are needed.
 - b. Develop staffing procedures and checklists for the JIC.
 - c. Assign and train personnel to appropriate level National Incident Management System (NIMS)/ICS training in order to function effectively with Incident Command and/or the JIC.
 - d. Identify possible locations for a JIC and press conferences.

- e. Develop and maintain a list of equipment needed to activate the JIC.
- f. Develop and maintain an updated media contact list.
- g. Prepare for rumor control to address and correct misinformation and eliminate confusion.
- h. Prepare pre-scripted messages for quick delivery

2. Response and Recovery Activities

- a. Assess the scope, magnitude, extent, and the potential duration of the incident.
- b. Obtain status reports on all local and county activities, as needed.
- c. Collect information concerning field operations, as needed.
- d. Coordinate with the EOC and primary and supporting agencies to develop a flow of information, including situation reports, health advisories, and other public information releases concerning the response and recovery efforts.
- e. Establish and operate a JIC when appropriate. If activated, affected primary agencies will send a PIO to the JIC as requested by the Incident Commander.

- f. Establish and maintain contact with the pertinent elected officials representing the affected area to provide information on the incident.
- g. Conduct media briefings on a regular basis.
- h. Monitor media and implement rumor control process when appropriate.
- i. The EOC will coordinate with the PIO before deactivating ESF #15.
- j. Inform the EMD PIO of response activities.
- k. Coordinate with the appropriate agencies to deactivate the JIC.
- l. Disseminate information when disaster assistance programs are available.
- m. Keep elected officials informed of recovery activities.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Primary Agencies

1. Activate and manage the JIC as necessary to support emergency operations in accordance with ICS.
2. Each jurisdiction will designate staff to serve as the local PIO who coordinates information from that jurisdiction, if available.
3. Coordinate public information activities with other participating agencies.
4. Collect and coordinate information from all private and public sources to monitor overall response.
5. JIC staffing for extended operations will be coordinated by the PIO and maintained as long as indicated. This will be accomplished with staggered shifts staffed by JIC members.
6. Obtain approval for release of information from the Incident Commander.
7. Conduct and/or coordinate regular press conferences at the JIC.
8. Enlist agency staff to respond to media questions on technical or agency issues if necessary.

9. Provide maps, charts, status reports, photos, schematics, or other displays that clarify the emergency or disaster situation in support of press conferences and/or briefings.
10. Monitor media broadcasting articles to check for accuracy. Monitor and log incoming calls for information and rumor control.
11. Notify all affected jurisdictions and stakeholders of the operational and situational conditions and provide frequent and regular status updates.
12. Provide updates for the Grays Harbor County Division of Emergency Management website regarding the scope of the emergency or disaster, the impact to the county, emergency action steps, evacuation, collection sites, water and food distribution, etc.
13. Coordinate communication resource requests outside of mutual aid agreements with the EOC.
14. Designate the chief elected official or his/her designee as chief spokesperson following an emergency or disaster. Coordinate public information to the chief elected official and with the state PIO.

B. EOC

1. Maintain maps and status boards.

2. Serves as the collection point for information/situation reports regarding the status of the emergency.
3. Establish citizen call center with the assistance of Grays Harbor County Central Services.
4. Coordinate points of contact for agency representatives requesting expedient information from the JIC.

C. PIO

1. Develop news releases and other materials.
2. Manage rumor control and obtain verification of all information prior to release.
3. Respond to media inquiries as appropriate.
4. Conduct on-air press conferences.
5. Set up a media hotline with the assistance of Grays Harbor County Central Services.
6. Disseminate information approved by the Incident Commander.
7. Document, in chronological order, the information provided to the media and public. This entails the collection of releases, recordings of interviews (if possible), the sequence of statements and briefings, etc.
8. Coordinate interviews and provide escorts as needed.

9. Monitor other media to prevent redundancy and rumors.
10. Monitor web and/or internet updates.
11. Maintain current incident information on the county website.

D. JIC

1. Collect and analyze information from the EOC, hotlines, media, web and internet, etc.
2. Determine information needs of local community.
3. Provide information to the public concerning the status of the disaster and how to obtain relief services.

E. Support Agencies

1. Assist the PIO and JIC by providing pertinent public information for dissemination to media sources and, as appropriate, fact sheets for distribution to the public. Participate in press conferences and briefings upon request.
2. Interrupt regular programming and report emergency information as requested by the JIC.
3. Monitor and log incoming calls for information and rumor control. Monitor media broadcasts and articles for accuracy.