

New York State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

Emergency Public Information Annex



**Prepared by the New York State
Disaster Preparedness Commission**

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Section I – General Considerations & Planning Guidelines

1. Introduction

New York State experiences a variety of disasters from human, nature, and technological causes. This annex outlines the Emergency Public Information approach to providing communications to protect and warn people throughout New York State during the response and short-term recovery phases of a disaster as outlined in the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).

During an incident or planned event, coordinated and timely communication is critical to effectively help the community. Effective and accurate communication can save lives, save property, and helps ensure credibility and public trust.

The annex also addresses actions for preparedness, incident response, Joint Information Centers (JICs), incident recovery, and Federal public information support.

2. Purpose

The State CEMP is structured into three distinct, but interconnected volumes. These are:

- Volume 1: All-Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Volume 2: Response and Short-Term Recovery
- Volume 3: Long-Term Recovery Plan

The purpose of the State CEMP is to identify the State's overarching policies, authorities, and response organizational structure that is implemented in an emergency or disaster situation that warrants a State response. The State CEMP serves as the foundational framework for the State's response levels and serves as the operational basis of which other functional and hazard-specific annexes are built upon. These annexes address a broad range of consequences to respond to the State's highest rated hazards.

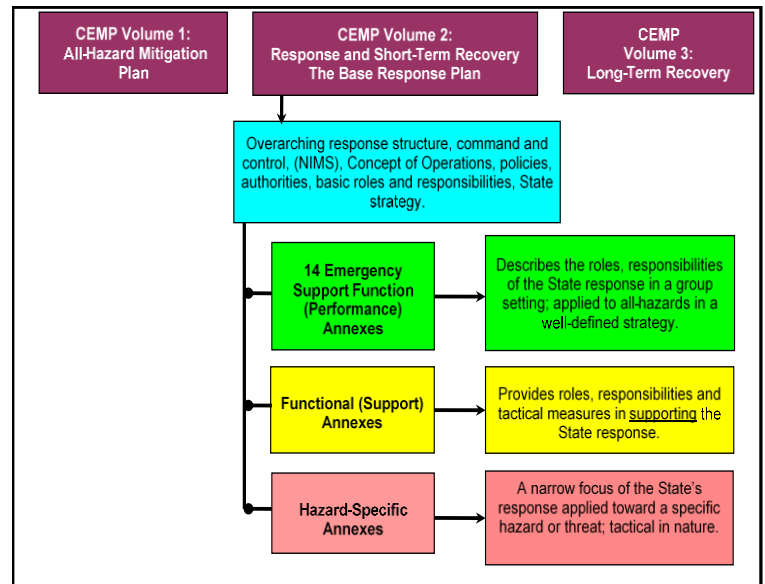


Figure 1: Structure of the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

The purpose of this annex is to establish policies and operational procedures for disseminating official information and instructions to the people of New York State through all available communications media before, during, and after an emergency or disaster in any location of the state in support of State response/recovery operations. This annex will provide a framework for the most efficient, accurate, and complete dissemination of information by the Public Information Office (PIO). This annex provides for the conduct and coordination of public information activities through the establishment of a mutual understanding of responsibilities, functions, and operations capable of the following:

- Issuing emergency instructions;
- Responding to the needs of the public, the media, and elected officials; and
- Conducting media monitoring and public inquiry (rumor control) activities.

3. Scope

The Emergency Public Information Annex is a strategic-level management plan that outlines the basic concepts required to manage and coordinate State agencies providing response and short-term recovery assistance to localities.

Disaster response begins and ends at the local level. State agency-level support begins and ends based on statutory requirements and/or the needs of the requesting community.

This annex will provide operational practices for performing PIO duties within the Incident Command System (ICS). It offers basic procedures to operate an effective Joint Information System (JIS).

4. Situation

The public has the right and need to know lifesaving and other important information related to emergencies or disasters that affect New York State. Additionally, the accurate, vetted, and helpful information needs to be delivered in accessible communication formats in a timely manner. Disaster response and short-term recovery activities generally begin and end at the local government level, including the dissemination of information. However, local emergency response agencies may be fully involved with operational issues that are critical for responding to incidents or the parameters and complexity of the incident may, in many cases, exceed the response capabilities of local government. The scope of the emergency will determine how many levels of system become actively involved in Emergency Public Information releases.

The news media, social media, and public information partners play a key role in assisting New York State to disseminate emergency or disaster-related information to the public. In order to provide verified official information to the public, interagency coordination, information sharing, and cooperation at all levels of government will be the key to an effective and efficient response to bring the event to a conclusion.

New York State needs to maintain a public inquiry and/or disaster information hotline or call center, especially during catastrophic events. Historically, the Department of Taxation and Finance provided the Tax Call Center during the 2001 World Trade Center disaster to assist with donations management and the Governor's Fund.

5. Planning Assumptions

- Timely, accurate, and helpful information reduces public uncertainty, calms fears, and enhances emergency response and recovery measures.
- Speed of communication is critical. The first message disseminated sets the stage for all future comparisons. Speed of response is perceived as a reflection of the State's level of preparedness.
- Factual content of the message is crucial. The public will want current information and recommendations for actions that will reduce their risk.
- A sole source for official information must be established to assure the coordination and consistency of essential emergency information to meet the needs of the public and the media.
- During and following disasters or emergencies, people both inside and outside the affected area will seek information concerning the situation.
- Upon the onset of a disaster, local public information officers will begin disseminating emergency information from local Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs).
- The news media will fill an active role in disseminating disaster information.

- An efficient and effective means of disseminating emergency information and instructions can be achieved by a cooperative program between the government and the news media.
- The Department of Taxation and Finance Call Center will provide the public inquiry function for the JIC for the Radiological Emergency Preparedness (REP) Program and any catastrophic event affecting New York State.

6. Concept of Operations

1. An emergency or disaster threatens public safety that may require an immediate dissemination of emergency public information.
2. Local, State, or Federal public information officers decide to issue emergency public information separately or in a coordinated manner, as appropriate.
3. Based on the event, emergency public information is issued in the following manner.
 - a. Local: If conditions warrant, local government public information officers may issue emergency public information within its own jurisdiction. Emergency public information affecting citizens outside the local jurisdiction should be coordinated with the proper contiguous county, State, and Federal authorities.
 - b. State: The State may issue emergency public information releases on its own initiative, if local government is unable to do so on its or, or for redundancy purposes. Contact centers may be activated to assist with the collect and dissemination of information.
 - c. Federal: If the event involves potentially life-threatening weather or a Presidential Alert following a national emergency, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the Federal government may issue public warnings or emergency public information releases. Weather-related public warnings are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS).
4. Emergency Support Function (ESF) #15 may be activated to assume responsibility for emergency public information releases and ESF #15 will become the central source for providing information to the public and the media. Releases of information are coordinated with and may occur through the Executive Chamber's Office of Communications.
5. If warranted, ESF #15 may deploy a public information officer to support field operations such as a Regional Operations Center (ROC), an established area command, or to support a State Incident Management Team (IMT).
6. In the event of a large-scale multi-agency, multi-jurisdiction event, and with the approval of the Chair of the Disaster Preparedness Commission (DPC), Commissioner of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES), Director of New York State Office of Emergency Management (OEM), or the EOC Manager, the State PIO may stand up a JIC to support dissemination of information through the JIS. The State PIO or designee shall review and coordinate all relative information releases and the JIC shall serve as the single dissemination point for all media releases in the incident. Other agencies wishing to release information to the public should coordinate through the JIC.
7. The Department of Taxation and Finance Call Center can be activated to handle phone calls during a catastrophic event and for purposed of public inquiry for the REP Program.
8. Should the event require the integration of federal resources, the ESF #15 coordinating agency, State OEM, will serve as the primary integration point for Federal ESF #15.
9. When an incident begins to subside, ESF #15 may continue to coordinate emergency public information efforts with the Executive Chamber's Office of Communication and/or ESF #15 agencies may transition to normal day-to-day operations.

7. Authority

This authority to develop this Annex and implement specific response actions is found in a variety of laws, regulations, resolutions, or orders.

New York State Authorities/Policies

- Executive Law, Article 2-B (4/1/78), as amended
- Executive Law Order #26 of 1996 and #26.1 of 2006 NYS Adoption of the Incident Management System

8. Plan Maintenance, Distribution, and Review Process

The State OEM Planning Section has the responsibility for the development, review, and maintenance of all multi-agency response plans under the State CEMP. DHSES PIO, with the assistance of the State OEM Planning Section, has the responsibility for the development, review, and maintenance of all emergency public information and media monitoring and public inquiry-related plans.

As required under New York State Executive Law Article 2-B, each plan shall undergo an annual review, update, and be posted online (if applicable) no later than March 31 of each year. During the annual review by the Planning Section for its material, this plan is examined for both content and format. For updates that do not impact operational mechanisms or processes, the appropriate edits are initiated within the Planning Section and do not warrant external involvement. Plan updates will also be conducted based upon experiences and lessons learned from exercises or real-world events, or through administrative changes in government. Planning Section updates and/or edits affecting operational capabilities, responsibilities, or otherwise impacting operations will engage stakeholders in a variety of ways, such as verbally, by document review, meetings, webinars, or any combination thereof. Final drafts will be socialized to all appropriate agencies/personnel upon completion.

Section II – Preparedness

1. Overview

To prepare for emergency situations that may arise, the State PIO and alternates developed mitigation, risk assessments, and tests, training, and exercise components to ensure there is a clear line of authority, coordination, and uniform procedures for public emergency information.

2. Mitigation

Volume 1 of the State CEMP is the State Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. Pursuant to the requirements of 44 CFR 201.4, the State Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan is required to focus on natural hazards that are likely to cause a substantial impact on the state. Mitigation planning efforts for technological and human-caused hazards are also recognized and are being implemented throughout the state as well. New York State participates in federal, state, and local mitigation programs and identifies ongoing mitigation opportunities. The State takes maximum advantage of available federal funding to implement mitigation measures at the state and local levels. Throughout the past several years, a substantial amount of funding has been invested in mitigating the impacts of various disasters in all parts of the state. Volume 1 addresses the overall State hazard mitigation planning process, risk assessment, strategy development, and plan maintenance. The State Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan was federally approved by Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/FEMA in 2018.

The State PIO and alternates develop public education programs that increase public awareness of potential hazards and how to deal with them and illustrate local emergency response capabilities. The focal State agency, as outlined in Volume 2 of the State CEMP, will be the source and generator of this information.

The State PIO and alternates develop working relationships with media outlets that will disseminate emergency information to the public. This assists the State PIO and alternates with maintaining an updated media list with call letters, contact names, addresses, fax and telephone numbers, email addresses, etc.

The State PIO and alternates maintain a list of State agency PIOs. The State PIO works with the Press Office to secure PIOs from other State agencies to support JIC activities as the incident warrants.

3. Risk Assessment

A variety of mechanisms are used to understand the various risks and associated threats and hazards facing the State. As required by the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) and the National Preparedness Goal (NPG), the State must complete an annual Threat Hazard Identification Risk Assessment (THIRA). The process involves the identification of scenarios that will most stress the State's capabilities and an assessment of those capabilities. Those capabilities are mapped to the core capabilities in each of the ESF Annexes created under the State CEMP. Further, New York State has developed additional programs and methodologies to better understand risk at the local level. This includes a County Emergency Preparedness Assessment (CEPA), which the State has conducted in each of the 57 counties of New York and New York City. Counties also participate in their own CEPA to help understand their risks. CEPA provides great insight as to the State's risk profile from a local level perspective. The CEPA does address each county's response capabilities for mass care and sheltering.

The State PIO and alternates have determined that alternate dissemination resources may be necessary, if conditions warrant. The State PIO and alternatives have identified back-up

communication resources in the event conventional methods fail. Additionally, alternate facilities have been identified for an information center and a media facility.

4. Testing, Training, and Exercises

The State PIO and alternates attend PIO or emergency preparedness meetings and trainings. This includes ESF #15 training and exercise opportunities. Trainings and exercises include:

- Emergency management public information courses offered by FEMA's Emergency Management Institute;
- Joint Information System (JIS) / Joint Information Center (JIC) Planning for Tribal, State and Local PIOs training course (G0291); and,
- Various federal and state exercises that require testing public information capabilities, such as annual radiological exercises.

The State of New York sponsors and conducts a variety of training to improve knowledge and response capability. This includes varying levels of training in the ICS and the Professional Development Series (PDS) curriculum. The State also participates in a wide variety of specialized training, including training to meet Federal program and grant requirements, such as the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG). Further, many State agencies identify training requirements within their own organization to meet the needs of the agency for that specific discipline.

The State of New York has incorporated the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) into its emergency management program. HSEEP consists of both doctrine and policy for designing, developing, conducting, and evaluating exercises. The State has instituted HSEEP into a host of exercise activities, including those that involve tests and activations of the State EOC. Further, some exercises are often linked to a specific grant requirement, while others are conducted as part of ongoing or existing programs, such as those for the REP Program.

The State also utilizes an exercise component as part of the planning process to test the effectiveness of an emergency management plan. These exercises vary in scope and cross several state-level plans or annexes.

5. After Action Reports and Corrective Actions Programs

Following an exercise or an actual event, an After-Action Report (AAR) should be completed by all staff involved in the event. The information gathered in the AAR will provide insight into future refinement of the Emergency Public Information Annex. AARs will be completed immediately following any relevant exercise and will be facilitated by the State OEM and PIO for plan updates. The AAR should be completed within 1 week of deactivation of the State EOC and provided to the State OEM. DPC agencies will support all exercises and AARs.

Section III – Response

1. Overview

Emergency public information support response activities by providing well-timed and effective messages to the public that can save lives and reduce property damage. This information may be escalated depending on the severity, timing, nature, or area affected by the emergency.

2. Alert, Notification, and Plan Activation

State OEM will assess the potential needs and demands of the incident, and then determine the level of activation necessary to effectively manage the response to the incident. The capabilities that are needed to support that activation are also identified, and agencies are notified to staff the State EOC using the ESF construct.

Flexibility will be key in activating this ESF #15. Not all incidents are the same, and not all activations of ESF #15 will require the full list of agencies to support the demands of the incident. Therefore, the representation of agencies that will be necessary to support ESF #15 may vary from incident to incident. The State CEMP identifies four activation levels of the State EOC. ESF #15 will activate to one of those levels as conditions warrant, with the coordinating agency serving as the ESF #15 lead/coordinator. These are:

Level 4 Enhanced Monitoring: A small, isolated, or a potential event that has some indicators that warrant extra attention, enhanced monitoring, or external communication.

- State OEM staff only.
- Agencies may be asked individually to support any remote operations or reporting from their home agency.

Level 3 Partial Activation: An incident or event requiring a partial activation of the State EOC with agency/ESF lead activation.

- The ESF leadership is activated on as needed basis.
- Additional agencies will be determined at the time of the event.

Level 2 Full Activation: An incident requiring full activation of the State EOC with ESF activation.

- The ESF leadership is activated on as needed basis.
- Additional agencies will be determined at the time of the event.
- ESF agencies will work in coordination with the coordinating agency to operate and report under the ESF.

Level 1 Full State/Federal Response: An incident requiring full activation of the State EOC with ESF activation, and Federal ESF integration and coordination.

- ESF leadership is activated.
- Most, if not all, support agencies will be activated.
- ESF agencies will work in coordination with the coordinating agency to operate and report under the ESF.
- The activities of the ESF will be integrated with those of their Federal ESF counterparts.

3. Direction and Control

The State endorses the development of one response organizational structure that will include all responding agencies. State agencies and ESFs will be organized under the framework of the

National Incident Management System (NIMS) ICS as required by Executive Order 26.1 of 2006 and Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5. As such, a variety of direction and control components may be utilized to manage and coordinate the State's resources in an efficient and effective manner and to provide interoperability between the local, and Federal response organizations.

The organizational structure of the State's ESFs is inherently different than the Federal construct under the NRF. With the exception of ESF #5 (Planning), ESF #7 (Logistics), and ESF #15 (External Affairs) the State ESFs will be situated organizationally in the Operations Section, and report directly to the Operation Section Chief (OSC), or Branch Chiefs if established. ESF #5 is assumed by the Planning Section in the State EOC; ESF #7 is assumed by the Logistics Section in the State EOC; ESF #15 (External Affairs) is situated in the Command Element.

ESF #15 is directed and controlled by the Executive Chamber or Command Staff during an activation. ESF #15:

- Shall be responsible for all public information related to an incident;
- Shall staff and manage any activated JIC;
- May request communication staff from activated partners staff any activated JIC; and,
- May request intergovernmental staff to coordinate the exchange of information and serve as a liaison with federal/state/local government or officials.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Emergency Public Information efforts of the State EOC will focus on public health and safety issues. The goal is to keep the public informed of the general progress of events with accurate and timely information. This is to reassure the affected community(ies) that the State is responding to the situation and that the public is being supplied with event-specific information, such as preparation, warning, emergency response, status of event, and human needs issues. Media monitoring and public inquiry (rumor control) will be a major aspect of the information program. All information and education efforts will rely heavily on qualified authorities and the cooperation of the media.

ESF #15

ESF #15 External Affairs, through the Coordinating and support agencies, shall manage the activities of the State EOC JIC, located in the State EOC.

The State Public Information Office

The State PIO may recommend deployment of additional PIOs to a forward location to support the State (such as IMTs) and/or local response activities. Ideally, a JIC would be established by Incident/Unified Command near the scene of the incident/emergency. The Chair of the DPC, the Commissioner of DHSES, and/or the Director of State OEM or authorized designee will have final authority over such deployments. If no JIC is established near the incident scene, a State agency PIO(s) should be assigned to the Incident/Unified Command located there.

To facilitate coordination among the response partners, the State PIO shall activate the PIO Coordination Line connecting all participating response organizations (government, voluntary, private sector, and tribal governments). The purpose of the telephone line is to share information and support the "single source" concept and coordinate the dissemination of vital information to the affected area(s). This telephone line will be functional during the operational hours of the JIC.

When a high-volume telephone call center is warranted to collect or disseminate public information, the State PIO shall coordinate the establishment of a New York State telephone hotline utilizing the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance Contact Center (See Appendix 6: Activation Procedures for NYS Department of Taxation and Finance Contact Center).

Emergency information dissemination will occur through all avenues of communication. Verbal communication may be conducted through media (press) conferences, briefings, tours, and over the phone in response to media and public inquiries. Written communication will use mediaContact (ITS online application) as the principal means of dissemination. Secondary means include social media applications (Twitter, Facebook).

The Public Information Center and/or the Joint Information Center

In the event of a major disaster/emergency with intense media interest, a JIC may be established by the State PIO in conjunction with other State, local, and Federal agencies, non-government response organizations, voluntary organizations, and tribal governments in coordination with the Press Office. The purpose of the center will be to facilitate a one-voice response and serve as the clearinghouse for accurate and timely information and enhance the dissemination of information essential to an effective emergency response. (See Appendix 5: Joint Information Center Procedures.)

The JIC will be equipped with communications equipment and necessary supplies. The JIC will contain an area for media briefings that includes a media work area, a public information work area, and facilities for inquiry functions. The JIC will be the sole source of official information. Ideally, a JIC will be established near the incident scene and supported by a JIC at or near the State EOC. If an incident JIC is not established, a PIO should be assigned to the Incident/ Unified Command. Other agencies/organizations can participate through the “virtual” realms (email, phone, fax, etc.) when physical presence is impossible.

The JIC will:

- Provide a central location for the news media to obtain information, eliminate conflicting reports, and reduce rumors.
- Support the Incident JIC, if one is established near the scene of the incident.
- Be equipped according to minimal requirements outlined in the Facility Equipment Appendix.
- Include a press briefing area.
- Schedule and facilitate press conferences and briefings.
- Collect and disseminate accurate emergency information in a timely manner through all available media including print, electronic including web-based, and through “boots on the ground” teams.
- Prepare press releases, factsheets, scripts, backgrounders, and any other materials as required or needed.
- Collect information about damage, casualties, and general conditions from all available sources (State agencies, response organizations, local government, and the media). This information will be verified before it can be provided to the Incident Commander or authorized designee.
- Monitor media reports to verify accuracy and issue corrections as needed.
- Counteract any rumors from the media or public.

- Coordinate with DHSES Technology (Communications) Section personnel to ensure that both video and audio feeds from the multi-boxes in the State EOC and the PIO room can be delivered to the exterior receiver in front of Building 22 for participating media.
- Coordinate personnel to escort media and visiting officials in the State EOC and/or disaster areas.
- Oversee the key functions of media relations.
- The JIC will conform with the DHS Basic Guidance for PIO under NIMS (See Appendix 7) unless it conflicts with policies and procedures established by New York State.

When operational activities begin to decline and the JIC is demobilized, public information functions will be transferred back to responsible jurisdictions and agencies. The decision to transition will be made by the IC/UC in consultation with the lead PIO and other Section Chiefs.

The PIO shall implement the following measures in demobilizing/deactivating a JIC:

- Prepare a comprehensive deactivation news release for lead-agency headquarters approval and distribution;
- Notify community, media, agency communications managers, and local officials about closing and provide regional contact information;
- Provide casebooks to communication managers whose organizations will assume responsibility for ongoing information;
- Support an after-action report and participate in evaluation discussions;
- Return borrowed equipment and supplies;
- Inventory equipment and supplies; and,
- Replenish “Go Kits” as necessary.

ESF #15 Support Agencies

- Shall maintain its own authority to manage its public information obligations but shall coordinate such public information obligations with ESF #15;
- May be required to provide communication or intergovernmental staff to support ESF #15; and,
- Shall make all reasonable efforts to comply with requests from the DHSES PIO or Executive Chamber Office of Communications in a timely manner.

In the event an incident impacts one or more of the following critical infrastructure sectors, the listed sector-specific agency or agencies may assume an enhanced role in ESF #15. These critical infrastructure sectors are defined by the Federal government as providing vital assets, systems, and networks to the United States. An enhanced role in ESF #15 may require an agency to assign a staff member to the JIC, provide background or technical information, or provide enhanced information sharing. The DHSES PIO or Executive Chamber Office of Communications may assign an enhanced role to any agency at any point before or during an incident.

Critical Infrastructure Sector	Sector-Specific Agency / Agencies
Chemical	Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Health, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services

Commercial Facilities	Empire State Development, Dormitory Authority of the State of New York
Communications	Department of Public Service, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services / Office of Interoperable Communication
Critical Manufacturing	Empire State Development
Dams	Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Defense Industrial Base	Division of Military and Naval Affairs, Empire State Development, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Emergency Services	Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, New York State Police
Energy	Department of Public Service, New York Power Authority, Long Island Power Authority
Food and Agriculture	Department of Agriculture and Markets
Government Facilities	Office of General Services, Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, New York State Police, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Healthcare and Public Health	Department of Health, Office of Mental Health, Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, Office for the Aging, Office of Children and Family Services, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
Information Technology	Information and Technology Services, Empire State Development
Nuclear Reactors, Materials, and Waste	Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Health, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Department of Public Service
Transportation Systems	Department of Transportation, Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Thruway Authority, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Water and Wastewater Systems	Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Health, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Department of Public Service

National Weather Service

- The National Weather Service's enhanced role may also involve providing additional public notice through its public warning system.

5. Integration with Federal ESFs

The Federal Government organizes its response resources and capabilities under an ESF construct. Similar to the State ESF construct, Federal ESFs are multi-agency operational components that serve as the primary means for coordinating Federal resources and capabilities into the State. The Federal ESFs bring together a wealth of capabilities of Federal departments and agencies and other national-level assets. In doing so, they are organized to provide the operating structure for building, sustaining, and delivering Federal response core capabilities in support of the State's Critical Capabilities. Integration and coordination are key to leveraging the resources of each Federal ESF.

As such, State ESF #15 will serve at the primary integration point for Federal ESF #15. Detailed response capabilities and activities are listed in each Federal ESF Annex.

Section IV – Recovery /Demobilization

1. Overview and Summary

Since mass media is frequently inoperative following natural (i.e. hurricanes, snow or ice storms) events, the agencies represented in the JIC will disseminate critical post-event life safety information. This includes, but is not limited to, food safety information, how to ensure drinking water is safe, safe handling of debris, safety re-entry methods, not entering flood water, etc.

The JIC shall also employ this “boots on the ground” method to disseminate life safety and emergency information to disaster victims post event. The JIC will provide critical information to those most associated with disaster response including uniformed State and local law enforcement personnel, firefighters, emergency medical services personnel, National Guard personnel, NYS Department of Transportation, and public works employees. These responders and others are visible symbols to disaster survivors. The strategy would put very basic, and possibly localized, health and safety literature into the hands of responders who are most readily recognized and located in disaster impact areas, and thus in a position to answer questions.

2. Recovery and Demobilization Process

Demobilization of agencies and ESFs from the State EOC will occur based upon operational needs and will be jointly determined by State OEM and ESF leadership. Based upon the needs of the operation, ESFs may begin to demobilize during the response/short-term recovery phase. However, it should be noted that agencies may be subject to a rapid recall for reactivation of the ESF, if needed based upon operational needs.

As the urgency of a response lessens and communities begin to focus their efforts on implementing recovery programs, the State’s focus will also shift to the long-term recovery needs of the affected areas. In Presidential Disaster Declarations, this will likely include the activation of a federally established Joint Field Office (JFO). JFOs are established, operated, and maintained by DHS/FEMA, and will include the temporary recovery organization structure put in place to support recovery. To properly ensure effective integration of State and Federal recovery activities, the State will organize in a similar structure to the Federal structure contained within the National Disaster Recovery Framework.

As emergency response operations subside, federal and state government transition from ESFs to Recovery Support Functions (RSFs). At this point, most State agencies transition from an ESF role to an assigned RSF role. In most cases, ESF #15’s public information duties will not transition into any RSF. Instead, each ESF #15 support agency resumes its day-to-day public information duties. Day-to-day operations include providing public information support if the support agency has an RSF role. At any time during recovery, if directed by the Executive Chamber or Command Staff, participating ESF #15 agencies may be asked to provide additional public information support to aid the recovery effort.

3. Documentation for Demobilization

As part of a standard incident management practice, staff will be instructed to document all activities until the State has returned to normal operations, including the use of electronic or hardcopy materials generated in the event. Systems are in place to monitor and facilitate:

- Use of ICS Unit Logs.
- File saving and transferring information from the JIC, JFO, ROC, or field operations.

- Tracking files, documents, and records (including emergency operating costs) for future reference.
- All records should be documented in NY Responds.

Appendices and References

- Appendix 1: Public Information Officer Description
- Appendix 2: Facility Equipment List
- Appendix 3: State OEM Public Information Officer Activation Checklist
- Appendix 4: First 48 Hours Checklist
- Appendix 5: Joint Information Center Procedures
- Appendix 6: Activation Procedures: NYS Department of Taxation and Finance Contact Center
- Appendix 7: Basic Guidance for Public Information Officers / NIMS
- Media list (electronic file)
- Contact list: State Agency Public Information Officers (reference)

APPENDIX 1: PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER DESCRIPTION

A. Position Description

The Public Information Officer (PIO) is responsible for collecting, developing, and then releasing appropriate information about the incident to the public through the news media, to organization and incident personnel, and to appropriate agencies and organizations. Information to be released must be approved by the Incident Commander or authorized designee in coordination with the Governor's Communications Office (Press Office).

The PIO ensures that information support is provided on request and that all information releases are consistent, accurate and timely.

The PIO shall review and coordinate all relative information releases and serve as the single dissemination point for all media releases in the incident. Other agencies wishing to release information to the public should coordinate through the PIO.

The PIO shall coordinate as necessary to ensure that the public within the affected area(s) receives complete, accurate, and consistent information about lifesaving procedures, health preservation instructions, emergency status, and other information such as relief programs and services.

B. Responsibilities

- Determine from the Incident Commander (IC) if there are any limits on information release. Determine what information is essential to protect life and property.
- Advise the IC of all unusual requests for information and of all major critical or unfavorable media comments. Provide an estimate of the impact and severity of such comments or information and make appropriate recommendations.
- Identify means for securing information as it is developed.
- Develop an information release program including:
 - Respond to, and log, media inquiries
 - Media briefings
 - Written news releases
 - Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
 - Incident Factsheets
 - Radio/TV Interviews
 - Internet (world wide web) Information
 - Social Media
 - Organization Background

- Develop schedule for regular news briefings. Arrange for preparation of briefing materials as required. Inform media and conduct media briefings.
- Obtain IC's approval of all media releases. Coordinate release with Press Office.
- Arrange for tours and other interviews or briefings that may be required. Assist in making arrangements with adjacent jurisdictions, etc. for media visits.
- Ensure that a rumor control/public inquiry function is established as necessary and has the means for identifying false or erroneous information. Develop procedure to be used to clarify such information.
- Monitor broadcast, print, and social media. Use information gleaned to develop follow-up news releases and rumor control.
- Obtain media information that may be useful to incident planning.
- Maintain current information summaries and/or displays on the incident for dissemination to the public and response personnel. Coordinate the Situation Unit in the established Planning Section.
- Provide information on the status of the incident to assigned personnel.
- Maintain Unit Log, including file copies of all information (and audio/videotapes) that is released.
- Provide copies of all releases to the Incident Commander.

APPENDIX 2: FACILITY EQUIPMENT LIST

The following list of equipment is required to perform public information activities:

- Appropriate work space for Public Information Officers
- Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS), e.g. backup generator
- Dedicated telephone lines and additional telephones
- Desktop and/or laptop computers with printer access, e.g., network or wireless
- Printer; printer ink/toner
- Internet access
- Access to photocopier
- Copier toner
- Adequate supply of paper
- Current telephone directory(ies)
- Current copy of State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) and Emergency Public Information Annex
- Updated list of local, State and regional news media outlets
- White board and erasable markers
- Cable TV
- AM/FM radio with antenna
- U.S. and State flags for media briefing area
- Podium for media briefing area / agency logo for podium
- Additional cell phones and other communications equipment necessary for field deployment
- Pens
- Sticky ("post-in") notes
- Tape
- Notebooks
- Poster board
- Standard press kit folders
- Staplers
- Paper punch
- Three-ring binders
- Paper clips

APPENDIX 3: STATE EOC PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER CHECKLIST

<input type="checkbox"/>	Sign in as present.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Open and maintain an event log. (ICS-214)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Report to the EOC Manager and obtain a briefing from Management Staff.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sign onto NY Responds, input your profile, check for any outstanding requests, and update tickets as required.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop initial media briefing points. Observe constraints on the release of information imposed by Management Staff.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain approval from the EOC Manager and State OEM Director on the release of appropriate information to the media.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish contact with the Governor's Press Office and provide an initial summary of events.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gather and disseminate public instruction, warnings, and announcements. Include warning about unsafe areas, structures, and/or facilities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advise State OEM Director, Governor's Press Office, and /or EOC Manager of all unusual requests for information and all major critical or unfavorable media comments. Provide estimate of impact and severity of such comments or information and make appropriate recommendations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish necessary contacts with the public information offices from the appropriate State agencies and the affected jurisdictions and responding entities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish necessary contacts with the media (Print, Radio, Television, and Wire Services).
<input type="checkbox"/>	If a NYS event includes multi-jurisdictions and multiple agencies, it may warrant a Joint Information Center (JIC: identify a location, then brief and obtain approval from the State OEM Director. (See JIC Annex)
<input type="checkbox"/>	If an alert is declared by one of the following nuclear plant sites: Ginna, Oswego, or Indian Point, coordinate the JIC with the declaring entity. If an alert is declared, coordinate with Logistics the dispatch of the State JIC team including availability of air transportation through the State Police. (See JIC Annex)
<input type="checkbox"/>	The Governor's Press Office, State OEM Director, and EOC Manager must approve any request for media to enter the State EOC. If approved and media are allowed to enter the State EOC, coordinate an escort to stay with the media representatives.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Notify the Check-In Status Recorder, Logistics, Security, and DSP to ensure media are only allowed in the PIO Briefing Room or the designated media area in the State EOC accompanied by Information officers on duty.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Before any media is allowed into the State EOC, inform all staff including the DSP Check-In Desk, Agency Liaisons, and Functional Groups.

<input type="checkbox"/>	If a press conference is scheduled to take place at the State EOC, coordinate with NYS ITS that all video, audio, and lighting is in place and functioning properly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Release approved information to the media. Use mediaContact (ITS online application) as primary vehicle for State EOC, DHSES websites, and the JIC.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attend all briefings and planning meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitor television, radio, print, and social media to verify accuracy and issue corrections as needed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain media information that may be useful to incident planning.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coordinate with the appropriate Sections the issuance of warnings through other communications systems, namely the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Executive Hotline and / or the National Warning System (NAWAS).
<input type="checkbox"/>	When needed and approved by the EOC Manager, establish and assign staff to support a public inquiry hotline. Follow procedures outlined in the Emergency Public Information Annex Appendix entitled, Activation Procedures for NYS Department of Taxation and Finance Contact Center. Post the number in the State EOC and JIC.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assign personnel to handle non-emergency calls and visitors.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that announcements and information is translated for special populations.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain Unit Log, including file copies of all information (and audio/videotapes) that is collected and or released.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide periodic updates and briefings to the EOC Manager.

APPENDIX 4: FIRST 48 HOURS CHECKLIST

Critical First Steps after Verification

<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure leadership is aware of the emergency and that they know you are involved.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use the crisis communication plan's notification list to ensure all of the communication chain of command is aware and know you are involved.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact Governor's Communications (Press) Office.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide leadership with your first assessment of the emergency from a communications perspective and inform them of the next steps you are taking.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide periodic updates and briefings to the EOC Manager.

Coordination

<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact local, State, and federal partners now.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Secure spokesperson as designated in the plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Initiate alert notification and call in extra communication, per the plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish Joint Information Center, per the plan.

Media

<input type="checkbox"/>	BE FIRST: Provide a statement that the agency/State is aware of the emergency and is involved in the response.
<input type="checkbox"/>	BE CREDIBLE: Give directions to the media about when and where to get updates from the agency.
<input type="checkbox"/>	BE RIGHT: Start monitoring media for misinformation that must be corrected.

Public

<input type="checkbox"/>	Initiate public information toll-free number if State anticipates public will be seeking reassurance or information directly from the State. If activated, dispatch liaison (see Appendix 6).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use initial media statement as first message to public – ensure statement expresses empathy and acknowledges public's concern about uncertainty.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give pre-cleared facts that are available and refer public to other information sites, as appropriate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Remind the public that the agency/State has a process in place to mitigate the crisis

<input type="checkbox"/>	Start monitoring public calls to capture and address trends or rumors.
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Partners / Stakeholders

<input type="checkbox"/>	Send a basic statement to partners to let them know that you are thinking about them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use pre-arranged notification systems – social media are the preferred methods.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Engage leadership to make important first phone calls, based on the plan, to partners and key stakeholders to let them know that the agency/State is responding.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use the internal notification system to notify employees that the agency is involved in the response and that updates will follow – ask for their support.

APPENDIX 5: JOINT INFORMATION CENTER PROCEDURES

A. Purpose

These procedures define the actions needed to accomplish coordinated public information functions by the Joint Information Center (JIC) in support of State and local response activities to an emergency/event. The JIC will operate in accordance with the policies and procedures outlined in the Emergency Public Information Annex of the New York State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).

B. Objectives

The JIC is the primary dissemination point for the coordinated release of information of State response and recovery activity to an emergency or planned event. It is capable of performing these functions:

- Issuing emergency instructions and protective actions
- Developing and delivering coordinated messages
- Responding to information needs of the public, media and elected officials
- Conducting media monitoring, analysis and rapid response
- Public inquiry (rumor control)
- Coordinating information flow among federal, State and local organizations

C. Staffing

The JIC may be staffed by representatives from all State, federal, and local agencies, as well as jurisdictions involved in the response and recovery operation, and through intrastate and interstate mutual aid agreements such as the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). EMAC may be a supplemental source or vehicle for bringing trained personnel together to support a JIC.

D. Location

The JIC initially will be established at the headquarters of the New York State Office of Emergency Management (OEM) where the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) also is located.

The physical location of the State EOC is:

Averell W. Harriman State Office Campus
1220 Washington Avenue
Building 22, Suite 101
Albany, NY 12226-2251

Should the size of the JIC outgrow adequate working space, it will be moved to an alternative location, preferably a State-owned/occupied facility.

When co-location is not feasible, a virtual JIC can be established, connecting Public Information Officers (PIOs) through e-mail, cell/land-line phones, video teleconferencing, web-based information systems, etc.

E. Access

State Police personnel provide security to Building 22. State agency ID or state-issued driver's license is required proof of identification to gain entry the State EOC for JIC personnel. When possible, a list of media personnel coming to JIC will be provided to State Police security. Media will be accompanied to staging area/briefing room by JIC personnel.

F. Activation

The JIC will be activated by the Public Affairs Office of the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) at the direction of:

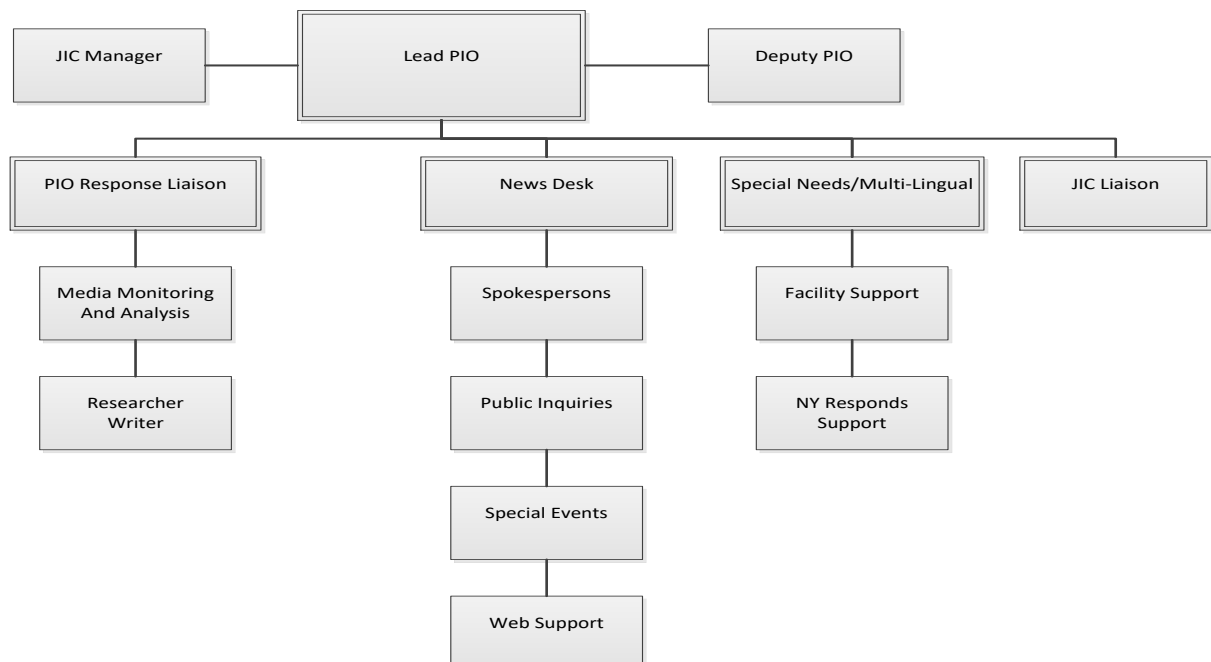
- The Governor's Communications Director
- The Chairman of the NYS Disaster Preparedness Commission
- The Commissioner of NYS DHSES
- The Director of State OEM
- The Manager of the State EOC

The JIC will be operational when the following requirements are met:

- Sufficient staff is assembled on-site or via virtual connectivity
- Off-site organizations are connected to the PIO Coordination Line

The State will announce the opening of the JIC via media advisory.

When activated, the organization and function of the JIC will follow the recommended structure as displayed below:



G. Notification

The number of State PIOs required to staff the JIC will depend on the magnitude of the incident. State agency PIOs will be notified of the activation of the JIC and either directed to report to Building 22, an alternative site, or to report in virtually by calling the PIO Coordination Line. The State Agency PIO list developed by the Governor's Communications (Press) Office will serve as the initial source of contact information.

Notifications will be made by DHSES PIO staff via email. Follow-up telephone calls will be made, if necessary.

H. Operations

The JIC is a management tool for providing accurate and timely information from the State of New York, State agencies and respective federal and local organizations to protect public health and safety in response to emergency and disaster situations and planned events.

The Lead PIO has overall responsibility for JIC operations. He/she may assign a Deputy PIO to oversee operational activities. The Deputy PIO will assume JIC operations and all Lead PIO responsibilities in the absence of the Lead PIO. Depending on the length and severity of the activation, multiple Deputy PIOs may be designated by the Lead PIO.

The Lead PIO also:

- Serves as advisor to IC/UC
- Provides overall communication policy direction
- Recommends and develops strategy for messages, briefings, and news releases;
- Obtains approval from those in authority before releases are made
- Conducts JIS/JIC briefings (live or virtual) to update staff regarding Incident Command /Multi-Agency Coordinating Group activities

The JIC Manager:

- Oversees JIC operations
- Ensures Media monitoring reports / new and public inquiries are thoroughly researched and answered in an accurate and timely manner
- Implements JIC strategy and makes product assignments
- Gets approval from Lead PIO for release of information through conventional means

I. JIC Staff Assignments

When State agency PIO report to the JIC, they will be assigned a position. While agency press officers serve as subject matter experts for their respective agencies' areas of expertise, they also will fill a functional position in the JIC. Each PIO will keep a log of his/her activities during the operational shift.

J. More than one PIO may be assigned to the following functional positions:

- JIC Liaison – Provides a coordinated two-way communication link with key program areas and other entities involved in the response and recovery operation (e.g., elected officials, community leaders, VIPs, and other governmental and NGO support agencies).

- PIO Response Liaison – Coordinates with supporting response agencies and their PIOs at EOCs, incident command posts, and other locations to gather information on the incident. Designates PIO personnel to monitor respective Task Group functions in accordance with areas of expertise. Supervises the State PIO Coordination line. Shares media monitoring issues on PIO Coordination Line. Posts summaries of media reports and their validity on JIC whiteboard.
- Media Monitor/Analyst/Rapid Response – Reviews media reports and social media for accuracy, content, and develops possible response based on all incident information provided to him/her. Will work with the appropriate agency PIO, or related subject matter expert (SME), for resolution. The nature of any problem/report should be discussed on the PIO coordination line. Inaccuracies / trends are brought to the attention of the Lead PIO. The Lead PIO, in turn, will appropriately brief the Incident Commander or Unified Command.
- Researcher/Writer – Prepares written products such as media releases, fact sheets, flyers, talking points, briefing papers, social media, etc.
- News Desk – Serves as the primary point of telephone/email contact for the media. Keeps track of and logs all media inquiries. Shares inquiries on PIO Coordination Line. Directs unanswered questions to the appropriate PIO in JIC or on PIO Coordination Line for follow-up. Ensures all inquiries are handled in a timely manner. Is provided with all incident information approved for public release.
- Spokesperson – Prepares and conducts regular news briefings and news conferences for the JIC. The Governor's Director of Communications may designate the lead spokesperson for the event.
- Public Inquiries – Entails responding to questions from citizens, making referrals, and developing a log of telephone calls, e-mails, etc., containing names, addresses, the type of calls, and any necessary follow up actions. Maintains JIC log. Is provided with all incident information approved for public release.
- Special Events – Entails handling events such as news conferences, media briefings, VIP visits, and tours for senior officials of affected areas.
- Web Support – Creates and supports web pages and blogs containing information about the incident for use by the public and the media.

- Special Needs/Multilingual – Entails providing language translation and other services (for visually impaired and deaf/hard-of-hearing populations) to ensure appropriate and timely information reaches those in the affected areas with special needs.
- Facility Support – Coordinates with the EOC Logistics Section to maintain and support the JIC operations concerning the facility and resources.
- NY Responds Support – Monitors NY Responds (State OEM/EOC mission and information tracking system) and provides pertinent information to JIC Manager for distribution. Provides all information products released to NY Responds management.

K. Information Dissemination

Incident information (news releases, fact sheets, etc.) will be provided through all means available including:

- Email to media in affected areas via mediaContact (ITS online application); the Associated Press (AP) and Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA) list-serves will be provided all information for release.
- Postings to the DHSES and State OEM websites: www.dhses.ny.gov and www.dhses.ny.gov/oem.
- Social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook).
- News conferences and briefings.
- Media call-outs.
- Agency-specific media lists.
- Incident and satellite JICs.
- Other dissemination methods deemed appropriate given the unavailability of traditional resources (examples: flyers, brochures distributed by hand, announcements via emergency response personnel, etc.).

L. Logistics

State OEM will provide logistical support to the JIC including computers and telephone communications. NYSOEM will ensure the provision of Internet and NY Responds access to all PIOs. If so equipped, all PIOs assigned to staff the JIC will bring their State-provided laptop computers and cell phones.

M. PIO Coordination Line

1. To facilitate coordination among the response partners, the State PIO shall activate the PIO Coordination Line connecting all participating response organizations (government, voluntary, private sector and tribal governments). The purpose of the PIO Coordination Line is to share information and support the “single source” concept and coordinate the dissemination of vital information to the affected area(s). This telephone line will be functional during the operational hours of the JIC.

2. The primary coordination for public information for the REP Program will be maintained through audio bridges connecting the emergency operations centers in the counties surrounding the nuclear power plant, the State EOC, the State Command Room, Department of Taxation and Finance Contact Center, and the Joint Information Center.

State PIO will set up all conference bridges using the ITS-supported WebEx application.

N. NYS Department of Taxation and Finance Contact Center

When a high-volume telephone call center is warranted to collect or disseminate public information, the State PIO shall coordinate the establishment of a New York State telephone hotline utilizing the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance Contact Center (See Appendix 6: Activation Procedures for NYS Department of Taxation and Finance Contact Center).

O. Demobilization

When operational activities begin to decline, public information functions will be transferred back to responsible jurisdictions and agencies. The decision to transition will be made by the IC/UC in consultation with the Lead PIO and other Section Chiefs.

Below are the major steps necessary for deactivating the JIC:

- Prepare a comprehensive deactivation news release for lead-agency headquarters approval and distribution. The release and/or media advisory should give media point of contact for agency(ies) assigned “(co-)lead” status for recovery operations
- Notify community, media, agency communications managers and local officials about closing and provide follow-up contact information
- Provide casebooks to communication managers whose organizations will assume responsibility for ongoing information
- Complete an after-action report and participate in evaluation discussions
- Return borrowed equipment and supplies
- Inventory equipment and supplies
- Replenish “Go Kits” as necessary

APPENDIX 6: CONTACT CENTER EMERGENCY ACTIVATION PROCEDURES

Acronyms in Contact Center Procedures

DTF: Department of Taxation and Finance

CCD: Contact Center Division

OPTS: Office of Processing and Taxpayer Services

VCC: Virtual Contact Center

IVR: Interactive Voice Response

OITS: Office of Information Technology Services

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Department of
Taxation and Finance

Contact Center Emergency Activation Procedures

Requesting Agency Required Steps

1. DHSES (Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services), the Governor's office, or other NYS agency whom is requesting a contact center activation, will notify the DTF Executives (see [Table I](#)) that an activation of the Contact Center is needed.
2. Provide DTF contact center with the nature and estimated scope of the activation. The scope should include an estimated call volume and the estimated hours of operations.
3. Provide appropriate phone scripts and procedures for contact center phone agents.
 - ❖ A basic (temporary) phone script will be used until official scripts are available. Temporary script will ask callers to identify their reason for calling and provide their contact information in order for a call back, once more information is available.
4. Provide a liaison to communicate with DTF contact center managers (see [Table IV](#)) to ensure phone agents have most up-to-date information & phone scripts pertaining to the activation. Depending on the event, an on-site liaison may be required.

DTF Contact Center Required Steps

1. DTF Executives (see [Table I](#)) will notify CCD Executives (see [Table II](#)) of the impending emergency activation.
2. CCD Executives (see [Table II](#)) will notify the following of the impending emergency activation:
 - OPTS Contact Center Services (see [Table III](#))
 - Contact Center Managers (see [Table IV](#))
3. Provide an available emergency activation toll-free telephone number to the requesting agency (see [Activation Phone Numbers and Skills](#) below). The local numbers listed are generally for internal purposes only.
4. Determine the required number of Contact Center personnel necessary for activation, based on scope and anticipated call volume. At least one grade 18 and grade 14 should be on-site prior to phone agents arriving.
5. If the activation is during **non-business hours**, contact center managers will utilize the 24/7 CCD Emergency Call-In lists (*w/ 5 miles and/or 5+ miles*) via the BOLD site to activate available phone staff.
6. Non-management staff do not have 24-hour building access. Upon staff arrival, the manager or supervisor on-site will be required to allow staff into the building. Staff must present their badge to the prior to entry and all staff should only use the main front entrance during non-business hours.
7. Contact Office Services Bureau for HVAC services (see [Table V](#)).
8. If any IVR updates or additional VCC assistance is necessary, contact OPTS Contact Center Services staff (see [Table III](#)).
9. If the activation will offer extended contact center hours, notify OITS Support Liaisons (see [Table VI](#)) of the activation and the need for them to activate their support procedures. This notification isn't necessary when an activation occurs during non-business hours; the notification can take place the following business day and only if the activation will continue to offer extended contact center hours.
 - Exception is if an activation occurs over the weekend. For example, we're activated Friday night or Saturday morning and will provide call center hours throughout the weekend.
10. Activate the designated IVR/phone number. This is performed by assigning **at least one agent** to the appropriate skill (see [Activation Phone Numbers and Skills](#) below). Once an assigned agent **logs into** VCC, the phone line will be **active**.
 - Note: All Emergency phone lines are pre-configured for 24/7 service. These phone lines will "shut-down" once all agents are logged out of VCC or removed from the associated skill.
11. Provide agents with proper phone scripts until Oracle/Portal Expert can be updated.

APPENDIX 7: BASIC GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS / NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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Table 1—PIO Major Responsibilities Checklist

Table 2—Types of Joint Information Centers (JICs)

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Figure 2—Sample Joint Information Center (JIC) Organizations and Functions

Figure 3—Federal ESF #15 Organizations and Functions – Field Level

Chapter 1: Introduction and the Incident Command System (ICS)

This guidance was developed in coordination with Federal, State, tribal, and local Public Information Officers (PIOs). The goal of this publication is to provide operational practices for performing PIO duties within the Incident Command System (ICS). It offers basic procedures to operate an effective Joint Information System (JIS).

During an incident or planned event, coordinated and timely communication is critical to effectively help the community. Effective and accurate communication can save lives, save property, and helps ensure credibility and public trust.

This *Basic Guidance for Public Information Officers* provides fundamental guidance for any person or group delegated PIO responsibilities when informing the public is necessary.

The guidance also addresses actions for preparedness, incident response, Joint Information Centers (JICs), incident recovery, and Federal public information support. The guidance material is adaptable to individual jurisdictions and specific incident conditions.

The guidance outlined in this document is based on the Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) -5, the National Incident Management System (NIMS), and the National Response Framework (NRF). All of these elements are integrated with and supported through the Federal Emergency Support Function (ESF) #15 structure.

The Incident Command System (ICS)

The ICS is a widely applicable management system designed to enable effective and efficient incident management by integrating facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure.

The Incident Commanders (ICs) structural organization builds from the top down; responsibility and performance begin with the ICS element and the IC. The IC(s) is/are responsible for the overall management of the incident. On most incidents, the command activity is carried out by a single IC. The need for a Unified Command (UC) occurs when an incident affects the statutory responsibility of more than one agency or jurisdiction. It provides guidelines to enable agencies with different legal, geographic, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively.

Command encompasses the IC and the Command Staff. Command Staff positions may be established to assign/delegate responsibility for command activities that the IC cannot perform due to the complexity of the incident or other situational demands. These positions may include the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, and Liaison Officer, in addition to others, required and assigned by the IC.

The PIO is responsible for communicating with the public, media, and/or coordinating with other agencies, as necessary, with incident related information requirements. The PIO is responsible for developing and releasing information about the incident to the news media, incident personnel, and other appropriate agencies and organizations. Depending on the size or complexity of the incident, a lead PIO should be assigned for each incident and may have assistants, as necessary, including supporting PIOs representing other responding agencies or jurisdictions.

The Safety Officer monitors incident operations and advises the IC/UC on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responder personnel.

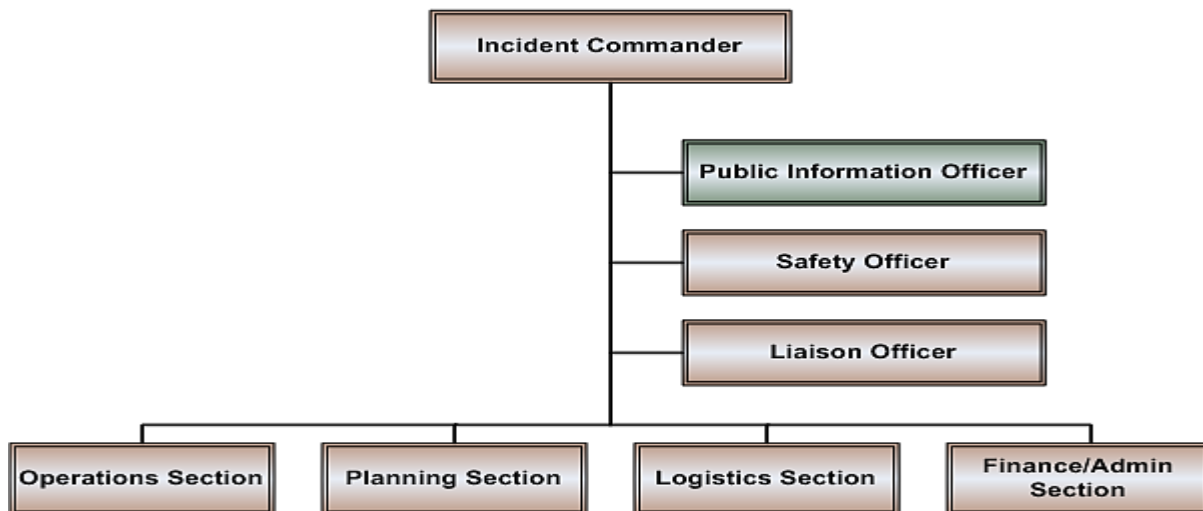
The Liaison Officer is the IC/UC point of contact for representatives of other governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and/or the private sector (with no jurisdiction or legal authority) to provide input on their agency’s policies, resource availability, and other incident related matters.

The ICS has five major management functions: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration. This structure is modular and can extend to incorporate all elements necessary for the type, size, scope, and complexity of a given incident (figure 1).

The IC/UC normally assigns one or more Section Chiefs to manage the following ICS functional areas (the Section Chiefs are the General Staff):

- Operations Section: responsible for managing on-scene tactical operations to meet the incident objectives as established by the IC or UC.
- Planning Section: collects, evaluates, and disseminates incident situational information to the IC/UC and incident management personnel.
- Logistics Section: meets all service and support needs for the incident, including ordering resources through appropriate procurement authorities from off-incident locations.
- Finance/Administration Section: responsible for all administrative and financial considerations surrounding an incident, including financial reimbursement to individuals, agencies, and departments.

Figure 1—ICS Organizational Chart



Chapter 2: Preparedness

Preparedness is essential for an effective response to an incident or planned event. Public information efforts should begin well in advance of an incident or planned event and may involve a combination of planning, resource gathering, organizing, and training and exercises. Public information planning allows for lifesaving measures, such as evacuation routes, alert systems, and other public safety information to be coordinated and communicated to diverse audiences in a timely, consistent manner. Public education contributes to preparing citizens to respond to a variety of hazards.

Public information preparedness includes developing and maintaining plans and procedures, checklists, contact lists, and public information materials. Below are some factors a PIO should consider when developing or planning prior to an incident or planned event.

Public Education Campaigns

Public education is the process of making the public aware of risks and how they can prepare for all-hazards in advance.

Prior to an incident, the PIO should conduct activities to educate the public about local hazards, prevention, family preparedness, and response-level activities. It is important to develop plans and resource materials that are appropriate for a target audience such as children, special needs populations, pet owners, local governments, or entire communities.

Public education may be accomplished through events (safety fairs) or products such as media releases or packets and the distribution of brochures.

Examples of a public education campaigns include:

- Hurricane preparedness
- Personal preparedness and developing family or business emergency plans
- Hazardous materials awareness
- Tornado and severe weather awareness
- Special needs population awareness

Training

PIOs should participate in ongoing training related to emergency management. This should include basic public information, ICS courses, and courses on writing media releases, conducting media interviews, and understanding the role of a JIC. Below are some of the required and recommended courses available. Additionally, public information courses are available that support NIMS through various other agencies and associations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP).

Required training for the Command and General Staff:

- Introduction to the Incident Command System (ICS-100)
- ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents (ICS-200)
- Intermediate Incident Command System (ICS-300)
- National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction (IS-700)

Recommended courses:

- Basic Public Information Officers Course (G-290)
- Advanced Public Information Officer (E-388)
- Advanced Incident Command System (ICS-400)
- National Incident Management Systems (NIMS), Public Information Systems (IS-702)
- National Response Plan (NRP), An Introduction (IS-800)

The URL for the FEMA training site, in which the above courses can be found is:

<https://training.fema.gov/is/>.

Exercises

Exercises provide opportunities to practice and test public information capabilities and to improve and maintain proficiency in a controlled environment. Exercises assess and validate policies, plans, and procedures, and clarify and familiarize personnel with roles and responsibilities. Exercises improve interagency coordination and communication, highlight gaps, and identify opportunities for improvement.

A PIO should be involved in all phases of exercises:

- Planning
- Development
- Participation
- Evaluation

It is also recommended to involve local media in drills and exercises and encourage them to role play during those drills and exercises in addition to covering the incident.

Media Relations

Working relationships with media will help during an incident. Establish a media contact list with after-business hours contact information. Keep media aware of all preparedness/awareness campaigns. Invite local media to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), JIC, or other areas prior to any incident or planned event to show them the location and to answer questions about how information will be disseminated during an incident or planned event.

Positive media relationships built during normal day-to-day activities will be valuable during emergency situations. Do not wait until an incident to make first introductions to the media.

Considerations for Special Needs Populations

PIOs should be able to gather, verify, prepare, coordinate, and disseminate information to all audiences, including those with disabilities, special needs, or language requirements. It is important to have materials translated into common non-English area languages and to utilize other formats such as Braille, large print, audio, etc. Contacts should be established to translate emergency information.

Know the local media; there may be specialized newspapers or radio stations in the community that reach specific audiences. These audiences may need to be targeted during awareness/preparedness campaigns.

Communications Equipment and Resources

During an incident, communication is critical to effectively help the community through the incident. Methods of communicating with the public may include the use of the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Web sites, hotlines, amateur radio, and other alerting messaging systems.

PIOs should have direct involvement in public warnings and instructions for personal safety. In major emergencies or disasters, the PIO should work closely with the warning or communications staff in issuing lifesaving or emergency information on the EAS or other means of alerting the public.

Web sites are an important tool in disseminating emergency and preparedness information. Additionally, Web sites can also be a vehicle for the media and public to submit inquiries during an incident, providing PIOs with useful information and feedback. If the agency does not have a Web site, working with local jurisdictions in order to use their Web sites for posting emergency information is recommended.

Emergency and preparedness information may include:

- Press releases
- Situation reports
- Maps
- Other emergency information

Web logs or blogs are also important. Blogs are periodically updated journals, providing online commentary with minimal or no external editing. Media institutions have adopted this format, with many television networks, newspapers, and opinion journals now hosting blogs on their Web sites. PIOs should be aware that blogs are a part of social media reporting virtually 24/7 throughout their area of responsibility.

Joint Information System (JIS)/Joint Information Center (JIC) Planning

The JIS integrates incident information and public affairs into a cohesive organization designed to provide consistent, coordinated, accurate, accessible, timely, and complete information during crisis or incident operations. The mission of the JIS is to provide a structure and system for developing and delivering coordinated interagency messages; developing, recommending, and executing public information plans and strategies on behalf of the IC; advising the IC concerning public affairs issues that could affect a response effort; and controlling rumors and inaccurate information that could undermine public confidence in the incident response effort.

The JIC is a central location that facilitates operation of the JIS. It is a location where personnel with public information responsibilities perform critical emergency information functions and crisis

communications. If possible, it is advised to have a location(s) identified that could be used as a JIC before an incident occurs, ideally in close proximity to the EOC. It is important that these locations meet the working needs of the PIO function and allow easy access for the media. Once a JIC has been identified, it is recommended to have appropriate equipment and other resources available and operational. The PIO should develop standard operating procedures on the actual use of the JIC and the equipment and staff that may be needed.

Contact Lists

Review and update all contact lists (e.g., media, PIO, and other agencies) every six months. Include basic information such as telephone numbers (e.g., office, home, cell), fax numbers, e-mail addresses, and Web sites.

Go Kits

It is important for the PIO to have tools and resources available for utilization during an incident.

Although this is not a complete list, a Go Kit might include:

- office supplies such as pens, paper, stapler, tape, etc.;
- laptop computer and portable printer with an alternate power source(s), including accessories (e.g., memory stick, CDs, mouse, etc.);
- maps;
- television, radio, and/or broadcast recording equipment;
- cell phones/Personal Data Assistants (PDAs);
- fax machine;
- agency letterhead;
- PIO and other emergency operations plans;
- camera;
- contact lists;
- battery powered radio; and
- pre-scripted messages and template releases.

Prior to an incident or planned event, establish agreements with businesses or agencies that can assist with the operations. Examples would be contracts with translation services; printing companies in order to publish brochures, fact sheets, or other emergency documents; and coordination with telephone companies to install landline telephones.

Additional Public Information Support

Whether the public information program consists of one person or several, it is important to develop a core group of other PIOs who can assist in the incident or planned event. These PIOs may be from other agencies or volunteers who have been trained in public information. These PIOs work at the JIC or EOC performing a variety of public information functions. Establish these relationships prior to any incident or planned event by providing EOC and JIC training, as well as other PIO training. Communicate with these PIOs on a regular basis and keep their contact information current.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)

Another resource for PIO support is the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). This national program that facilitates interstate mutual aid agreements could be used to provide

additional public information support. For more information on EMAC, contact the State emergency management office or visit: www.emacweb.org.

Chapter 3: Disaster/Emergency Response

Roles of PIOs in Emergency Response

The PIO gathers, verifies, coordinates, and disseminates accurate, accessible, and timely information on the incident's cause, size, and current situation; resources committed; and other matters of general interest for both internal and external use. All information in the field must be cleared by the IC prior to release. The following table (table 1) is a sample checklist of responsibilities for the PIO in an ICS structure, which would generally apply on any incident:

Table 1—PIO Major Responsibilities Checklist

Complete	PIO Major Responsibilities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine from the IC if there are any limits on information release.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop material for use in media briefings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain IC approval of media releases.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inform the media and conduct media briefings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange for tours and other interviews or briefings, as required.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluate the need for and, as appropriate, establish and operate a JIS.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish a JIC, as necessary, to coordinate and disseminate accurate, and timely incident-related information.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain current information summaries and/or displays on the incident.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide information on the status of the incident to assigned personnel.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain an Activity Log (ICS 214).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Manage media and public inquiries.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coordinate emergency public information and warnings.

Complete	PIO Major Responsibilities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitor media reporting for accuracy.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that all required agency forms, reports, and documents are completed prior to demobilization.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have debriefing session with the IC prior to demobilization.

Informing the Public and Additional Audiences

Informing the public and additional audiences during an incident is an ongoing cycle that involves four steps:

Step 1: Gather Information

Information is collected from the ICS Command and General Staff, which are a source of ongoing, official information on the response effort and other sources such as:

- response agencies;
- media;
- calls from public and elected officials;
- technical specialists;
- other agencies such as utilities and the National Weather Service; and
- emergency response guidebooks.

Step 2: Verify Information

Verify the accuracy of the information collected by consulting with:

- EOC sources and technical specialists;
- ensuring that information is consistent and accurate, striving toward accessibility to all affected by the incident; and
- other PIOs: Compare notes, especially with the lead PIO and PIOs who are liaisons to the various assistance programs or response/recovery partners, to verify the accuracy of information.

Step 3: Coordination of Information (Internal)

Coordination includes, but is not limited to:

- coordinating between ICS Command and General Staff;
- coordinating between EOC participants; and
- obtaining approval from appropriate authorities before information is disseminated.

Messaging

Initial information should include:

- actions the public should take;
- impact of the incident;
- actions the response agencies are taking;
- actions businesses and industries should take;
- a summary of the incident; and
- overall steps to be taken by the government and by citizens to return to normal after the incident.

Information Sharing

In addition to the public and media, information needs to be shared with the Command Staff; response community; other Federal, State, tribal, local, and volunteer agencies; elected and appointed officials, other community leaders; and other PIOs. Sharing information regarding response and recovery actions and objectives is critical to building situational awareness for a JIS.

Step 4: Dissemination of Information (External)

Information should be disseminated to:

- disaster victims;
- outside general public;
- affected jurisdictions;
- community leaders;
- private sector;
- media;
- nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (e.g., American Red Cross);
- response and recovery organizations (e.g., urban search and rescue, utilities);
- volunteer groups (e.g., Community Emergency Response Team – CERT, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters – VOAD); and
- other impacted groups.

Methods of Dissemination

Dissemination may be done through multiple media outlets or alternatives, including:

- news releases;

- blogs;
- mass e-mails and faxes;
- text messages;
- Web site posting;
- EAS;
- Public Service Announcements;
- closed circuit cable;
- reverse 911;
- reader boards;
- loud speakers;
- door-to-door;
- fliers/factsheets;
- briefings; and
- community meetings.

Monitoring the Media

Verify that the public and officials are getting accurate and complete information through the media in a timely manner. Inaccuracies and rumors that affect health and safety should be addressed immediately with the media and correct information distributed through the media or other means.

Planning Considerations

The following are factors to consider in the planning of PIO operations:

- field operations (e.g., EOC, JIC);
- communications tools (e.g., cell phone, PDAs, radio);
- tasking (e.g., gathering resources such as media contacts; preparing for media conferences; creating media packets, fact sheets, background information);
- duration of operations (e.g., lodging, food, 24/7 operations);
- resource management for various locations;
- documentation (e.g., logs, time cards, media interviews);
- logistics (e.g., equipment location, supplies, power, parking, credentials); and
- evaluate staffing needs for each operational period.

Chapter 4: Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC)

Joint Information System (JIS)

The JIS provides the mechanism to organize, integrate, and coordinate information to ensure timely, accurate, accessible, and consistent messaging across multiple jurisdictions and/or disciplines, including the private sector and NGOs. It includes the plans, protocols, procedures, and structures used to provide information to:

- general public;
- disaster victims;
- affected jurisdictions;
- elected officials;
- community leaders;
- private sector;
- media;
- NGOs (e.g., American Red Cross);
- response and recovery organizations (e.g., urban search and rescue, utilities);
- volunteer groups (e.g., CERT, VOAD);
- international interests (e.g., international media and donations); and
- other impacted groups.

Federal, State, tribal, local, and voluntary agencies, private sector PIOs, and established JICs are critical supporting elements of the JIS. Key elements include the following:

- gathering, verifying, coordinating, and disseminating consistent messages;
- interagency coordination and integration;
- support for decision-makers; and
- flexibility, modularity, and adaptability.

Agencies issue their own releases related to their policies, procedures, programs, and capabilities; however, messages need to be coordinated utilizing the JIS to ensure message consistency.

Joint Information Center (JIC)

To ensure coordination of public information during incidents that involve multiple agencies and/or jurisdictions, the IC/UC may use a JIC to support the gathering, verification, coordination, and dissemination of accurate, accessible, and timely information. The JIC is a central location that facilitates operation of the JIS. In the early stages of response to an incident, the PIO shall consult with the IC/UC regarding the opening of a JIC. The IC/UC shall retain authority to order the opening of a JIC, although the lead PIO may recommend when it is appropriate.

JICs are established:

- at the direction of the IC/UC at various levels of government;
- at pre-determined or incident-specific sites; and
- as components of Federal, State, tribal, or local Multiagency Coordination Systems (MACS).

JICs may be staffed:

- by representatives from all agencies and jurisdictions involved in the response and recovery operation; and
- through intrastate and interstate mutual aid agreements such as EMAC. EMAC could be a supplemental source or vehicle for bringing trained personnel together to support a JIC.

The JIC should be located close to the best sources of information, such as an EOC, without compromising safety or security of the personnel staffing the facility. A single JIC location is preferable, but the system is flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate virtual or multiple JIC locations, as required. The following table (table 2) provides a description of different types of JICs:

Table 2—Types of Joint Information Centers (JICs)

Incident	Typically, an incident specific JIC is established at a single, on scene location in coordination with Federal, State, tribal, and local agencies or at the national level, if the situation warrants. It provides easy media access, which is paramount to success. This is a typical JIC.
Virtual	A virtual JIC is established when a physical co-location is not feasible. It connects PIOs through e-mail, cell/land-line phones, faxes, video teleconferencing, web-based information systems, etc. For a pandemic incident where PIOs at different locations communicate and coordinate public information electronically, it may be appropriate to establish a virtual JIC.
Satellite	A satellite JIC is smaller in scale than other JICs. It is established primarily to support the incident JIC and to operate under their direction. These are subordinate JICs, which are typically located closer to the scene.
Area	An area JIC supports multiple-incident ICS structures that are spread over a wide geographic area. It is typically located near the largest media market and can be established on a local, State, or multi-state basis. Multiple States experiencing storm damage may participate in an area JIC.
Support	A support JIC is established to supplement the efforts of several Incident JICs in multiple States. It offers additional staff and resources outside of the disaster area.
National	A national JIC is established when an incident requires Federal coordination and is expected to be of long duration (weeks or months) or when the incident affects a large area of the country. A national JIC is staffed by numerous Federal departments and/or agencies.

Common Roles and Functions

The following roles and functions are common components of a JIC.

Lead PIO:

- responsible for managing the JIC;
- serves as advisor to IC/UC;
- provides overall communication policy direction;
- recommends and develops strategy for messages, briefings, and news releases;
- obtains approval from those in authority before releases are made; and
- conduct JIS/JIC briefings (live or virtual) to update staff regarding Incident Command activities.

Information Gathering:

- Response Partners – Coordination with supporting response agencies and their PIOs at EOCs, incident command posts, and other locations to gather information on the incident.
- Media Monitoring Analysis/Rapid Response – Entails reviewing media reports for accuracy, content, and possible response.
- Research and Writing:
- Products – Writing materials such as media releases, fact sheets, flyers, etc.
- Graphics Support – Entails designing layouts, developing PowerPoint presentations, and creating graphics for a range of materials (e.g., newsletters, flyers, etc.).
- Audio-Visual:
- Broadcast Operations – Entails developing video documentation, special productions, remote live interview feeds, and logistical support of public meetings and presentations.
- Photo Video – Entails providing still photography documentation to support print and internet media needs, and video documentation to support broadcast media needs. Also includes collecting materials for agency archives.

Information Dissemination:

- Briefing/Special Events – Entails handling events such as news conferences, media briefings, VIP visits, and tours for senior officials of affected areas.
- Media Relations:
- News Desk – Serves as the primary point of contact for the media.
- Spokesperson – Prepares and conducts regular news briefings and conferences.
- Web Support – Entails creating and maintaining web pages and blogs containing information about the incident for use by the public and the media.
- Public Inquiries – Entails responding to questions from citizens, making referrals, and developing a log of telephone calls, e-mails, etc., containing names, addresses, the type of calls, and any necessary follow up actions.

Operations Support:

- Special Needs/Multilingual – Entails providing language translation and other services to ensure appropriate and timely information reaches those in the affected areas with special needs.
- Facility Support – Coordinates with the JIC Facility Liaison to maintain and support the JIC operations concerning the facility and resources.

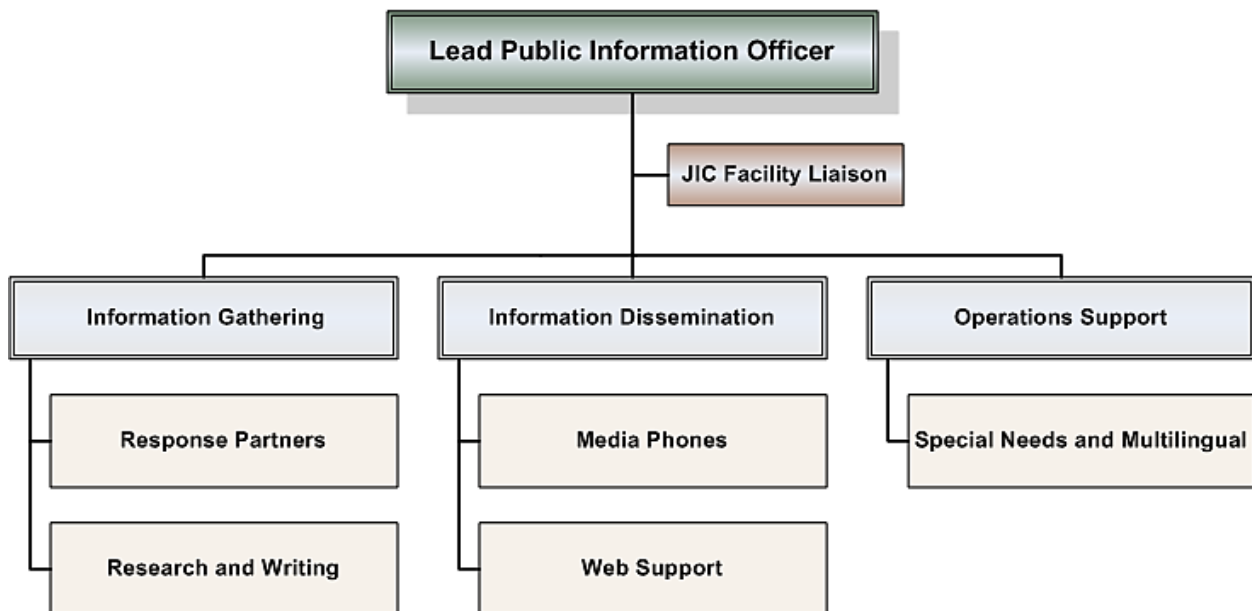
Liaison:

- Provides a coordinated two-way communication link with key program areas and other entities involved in the response and recovery operation (e.g., elected officials, community leaders, VIPs, and other governmental and NGO support agencies).

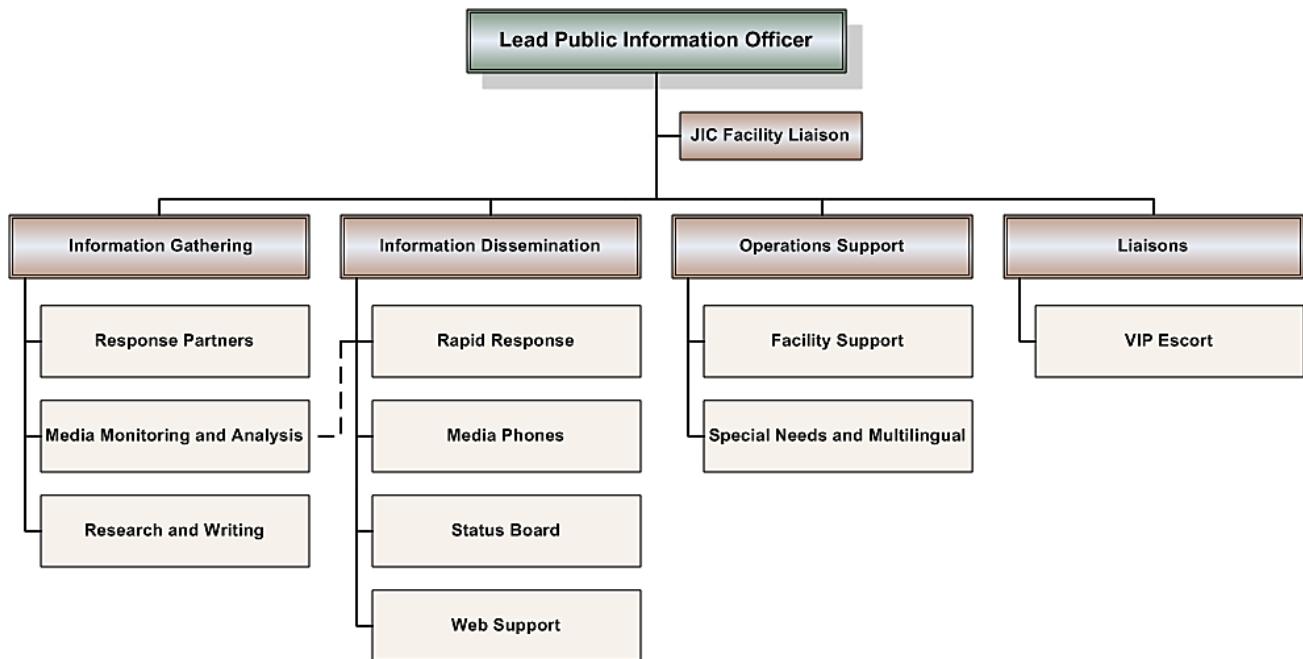
The following diagrams (figure 2) are examples of what JIC organizations look like at various stages of an escalating incident. They are scalable and flexible; certain functions may not be needed for every type of incident or planned event. Each box represents a function to be performed. One person may do many functions, or one function may be staffed by many people, depending upon the scope of the incident.

Figure 2—Sample Joint Information Center (JIC) Organizations and Functions

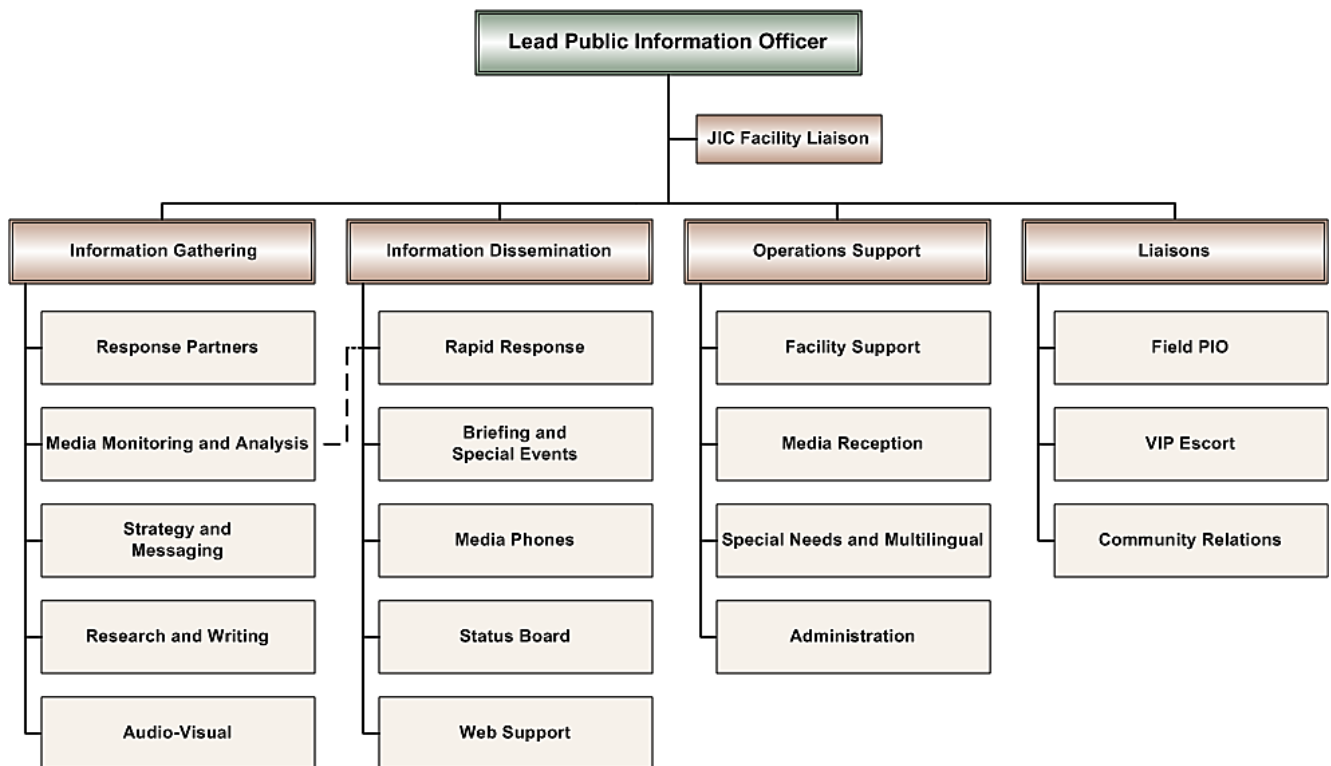
Initial Response or Local Incidents



Escalating Incidents



Large-Scale Incidents



Demobilizing the Joint Information Center (JIC)

When operational activities begin to decline, public information functions will be transferred back to responsible jurisdictions and agencies. The decision to transition will be made by the IC/UC in consultation with the lead PIO and other Section Chiefs. Below are the major steps the PIO would take in deactivating a JIC:

- prepare a comprehensive deactivation news release for lead-agency headquarters approval and distribution
- notify community, media, agency communications managers and local officials about closing and provide regional contact information;
- provide casebooks to communication managers whose organizations will assume responsibility for ongoing information;
- complete an after-action report and participate in evaluation discussions;
- return borrowed equipment and supplies;
- inventory equipment and supplies; and
- replenish “Go Kits” as necessary.

Chapter 5: Recovery

Recovery

The responsive dissemination of public information plays a critical role in the recovery process, and it begins the moment a crisis occurs. Regular communication about recovery efforts, even though response efforts may not be over, reassures the public that government agencies are working together to resolve the situation and to bring assistance to those who need it.

Communications among PIOs and the impacted audience should occur as often as necessary and continue until recovery is complete. This coordination may be accomplished through the JIC (which may still be active during the recovery phase). This information should be updated regularly and may include the following:

- actions the public should take;
- a summary of the incident or planned event;
- the impact of the incident or planned event;
- actions the response agencies are taking;
- actions the public, businesses, and industries may take to gain access to recovery programs and information on how these programs work;
- information on how to repair or restore damaged property;
- debris removal information;
- overall steps to be taken by the government and citizens to return to normal; and
- any other crisis-specific recovery information.

PIOs should:

- emphasize, as soon as appropriate, when the danger has passed, or the situation has transitioned from response to recovery;
- be prepared to direct questions concerning volunteers and financial contributions to the appropriate organizations;
- inform local businesses about special programs designed to assist them through the news media, appropriate business channels, and community outreach efforts;
- communicate information on service animals, pets, and livestock; and
- coordinate with their PIO counterparts at appropriate agencies concerning environmental, ecological, and agricultural impacts.

Recovery Evaluation

To help determine the effectiveness of recovery communication during an incident or planned event, PIOs should closely monitor media reports and assess public inquiries to determine if information is received and understood by its intended audiences.

Following an incident or planned event, PIOs should create a comprehensive report of media coverage, media inquiries, and public inquiries to determine the effectiveness of the recovery communications efforts. This report, or conclusions of the report, can be forwarded to the ICS planning section for inclusion in the After-Action Report (AAR). The PIO should also participate in AAR reviews.

Typically, AARs contain the following components:

- Executive Summary;
- Incident Overview;
- Analysis of Capabilities;
- Major Strengths;
- Areas of Improvement; and
- Lessons Learned.

Chapter 6: Integrating with Federal Support

Federal support in an incident will operate under the standard operating procedures of Emergency Support Function (ESF) #15. Under the title of External Affairs, ESF #15 integrates and coordinates the functional areas of public affairs; community relations; State, tribal, local, and territorial affairs; the private sector; congressional affairs; and international affairs. ESF #15 is led primarily by staff from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), but may also be led by personnel from other Federal agencies during specific response scenarios.

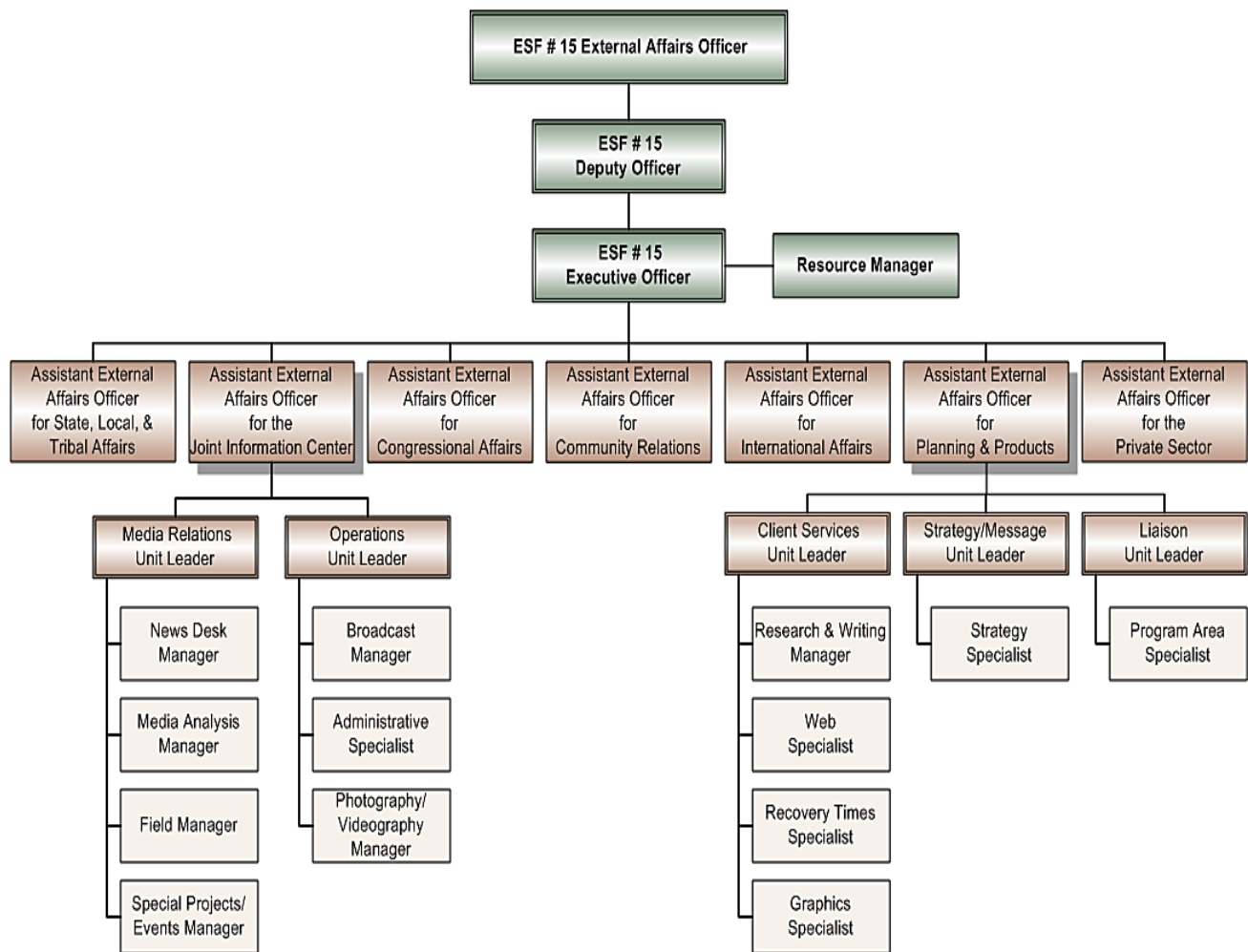
During an incident or planned event that requires a coordinated Federal response, DHS/FEMA will contact the affected State, tribal, or local jurisdictions to identify their public information needs. Based on this information, DHS/FEMA and ESF #15 will support State, tribal, and local communications plans with staff and other resources, which may include:

- satellite trucks;
- communications equipment;
- items for a media center such as TVs, computers, podiums, microphones, etc.; and
- personnel.

DHS/FEMA encourages Federal, State, tribal, and local entities to work in partnership to ensure effective and efficient emergency information is produced and disseminated. The Department encourages co-locating with the incident JIC, as it facilitates coordination, cooperation, and unified messaging between the Federal government's ESF #15 functions and their counterparts with State, tribal, and local agencies.

The following diagram shows the ESF #15 organizations and functions at the field level (figure 3). Each of the seven divisions that make up ESF #15 are represented by their own organizational chart; the structure for the JIC and Planning and Products sections are shown, but they are all a part of one large organizational chart that makes up ESF #15. Each division resides in the Joint Field Office (JFO), but the JIC could co-locate with a State-operated JIC if it is not part of the JFO.

Figure 3—Federal ESF #15 Organizations and Functions – Field Level



Communications Protocols

Pre-identified incident communications protocols are established and ready for use during large scale incidents and incidents requiring a coordinated Federal response. Two primary tools are described below.

National Incident Communications Conference Line (NICCL)

The NICCL was created to be a single source of coordination for DHS with all other Federal agencies. It can work as a call-in conference or as an open line that can be monitored 24 hours a day for the exchange of information and updates. It is primarily for Federal-to-Federal information sharing but can also include communicators from the primarily impacted State and local community. Specifically, the NICCL:

- is used for transmission and exchange of information primarily targeted to support senior State and local officials;
- originates with DHS Public Affairs and is an executive call to discuss happening events and their agencies' roles, activities, and response; and
- is typically conducted twice daily, but it could be staffed 24 hours a day and used as an open line for information dissemination if required by an incident.

State Incident Communications Conference Line (SICCL)

The SICCL was created primarily to bring States together to share information and discuss issues that have an effect on all of them following an incident. This line is typically used during a multiple State disaster such as a hurricane where impacted States may request support from other States. The SICCL is not a 24/7 line. Instead, it is a scheduled conference call, which would be set up as needed to address issues.

In summary, the SICCL is used for the transmission and exchange of information primarily targeted to State and local communicators; and typically activated with a multiple State incident, and there is need for cross border coordination.