

ESF 15: External Affairs

Primary Agency

Pacific County Emergency Management Council
Pacific County Emergency Management Agency
Pacific County Department of General Administration
Pacific County Department of Community Development
Pacific County Sheriff's Office

Support Agencies

Pacific County Emergency Response Agencies

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

1. To ensure effective dissemination of emergency information and instructions to the public during and after an emergency or disaster.
2. To ensure education of Pacific County residents in respect to emergency preparedness prior to an emergency or disaster.

B. Scope

1. This ESF addresses responsibilities to process, coordinate, and disseminate information for Pacific County, municipal jurisdictions within the county, city and county officials, employees, the media, and the public.

C. Policies

1. It is essential that accurate, timely, and consistent information be disseminated to the public when the EOC is activated. City and county departments and offices will coordinate the development and dissemination of all disaster related public information through the EOC Public Information Officer.
2. The Pacific County Emergency Management Agency will conduct a public education effort throughout the course of the year.

II. Situations and Assumptions

A. Situations

1. Pacific County residents expect accurate, up to date, and timely information as

quickly as it becomes available.

2. Normal means of communications in the affected areas may be either destroyed or largely incapacitated; therefore, only limited and incomplete information is anticipated from the disaster area until communications can be restored.
3. Sufficient support personnel may not be available to coordinate public information and interface with the media and other agencies.
4. Demands for information from media outside the county will be significantly increased in a disaster.
5. Sufficient communications capabilities may not be available to support public information efforts.

The media may or may not transmit accurate information.

B. Assumptions

1. Following a disaster, the Emergency Alert System (EAS) may be available to notify residents of Pacific County.
2. Health and welfare checks will be handled based on public safety priorities and personnel availability.
3. In a disaster, State Emergency Management and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) to coordinate federal, state, and local information.

III. Concept of Operations

A. Overview

1. The need for rapid dissemination of essential information during an emergency necessitates the activation of a public information system. The Public Information Officer within the EOC will coordinate this system. The nature of the emergency and the level of EOC activation will define the extent to which this system is engaged.

2. Level 1: Routine Operations and Low Impact Emergencies

The Emergency Management Director will coordinate public information needs in consultation with the Pacific County Sheriff. Additional assistance will be requested as necessary.

3. Levels II and III: Medium and High Impact Disaster

The Public Information Officer, as appointed by the EOC Manager, will activate the public information system.

B. Objectives

The public information objectives during a disaster are:

1. To inform the public and City and County employees of the presence of a hazardous situation, its effects, and proper counter-measures.
2. To coordinate the County and City releases of public information to the media.
3. To inform the public on protective measures that can be taken during an emergency.
4. To control rumors and reassure the public.
5. To provide ongoing timely information about emergency operations, emergency services and timelines.
6. To instruct the public on disaster assistance and recovery services, procedures, and timelines.

C. Dissemination

1. Methods for dissemination of local emergency information and instruction will be determined by the Public Information Officer depending on available means as appropriate to the emergency including radio, newspapers, television, electronic communications, mobile public address systems, door-to-door, community bulletin boards, neighborhood preparedness organizations, and amateur radio.
2. Information will be disseminated to the Board of County Commissioners, City Mayors, other elected officials, emergency personnel in the field, and all affected agencies so they know what information and guidance is being released to the public.
3. Dissemination of public information regarding city and county activities and services relating to an emergency shall be reviewed and coordinated between the Public Information Officer and the EOC Manager.
 - a. A Joint Information Center (JIC) may be established to coordinate emergency public information where multiple jurisdictions are involved in the emergency response. This facility would be in direct contact with the EOC, may include information officers from other jurisdictions, and may be established in conjunction with state/federal information efforts. The location of the JIC will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
 - b. Public information contact and distribution lists will be maintained by the Emergency Management Office.

D. Access and Functional Needs

1. There are several non-English speaking communities in Pacific County. In the event that public information needs to be translated, interpreters will be coordinated through the EOC as available.
2. Special instructions and provisions may be made for hospitals, nursing homes, schools, or other access and functional needs residents.

IV. Organization

- A. Within the EOC the Public Information Officer serves as part of the command staff under the direction of the EOC Manager.
- B. The Public Information Officer position is filled by the Pacific County Chief Administrative Officer, the Department of Community Development Director, or the Sheriff or his designee. Following the principles of ICS, if the function of the PIO is not assigned, the responsibility falls to the EOC Manager.

V. Actions

A. Initial

1. Activate a PIO prior to or immediately upon activation of the EOC.
2. Coordinate information dissemination with each agency and section.
3. Establish and maintain of a system to support dissemination of information and coordination with the State EOC or other coordination entities as appropriate.
4. Disseminate evacuation, deployment, or demobilization routes to the extent possible. .
5. Establish information sharing with appropriate field personnel to ensure readiness for timely response.
6. Participate in EOC briefings, development of Incident Action Plans, and Situation Reports, and meetings.
7. Coordinate with support agencies, as needed, to provide appropriate information regarding emergency activities.
8. Upon request, coordinate information to resources in the affected areas to designated staging areas.
9. Relay all emergency traffic conditions/regulations to all affected personnel.
10. Report to the public information needed at locations for general navigation through and around the disaster area.

B. Continuing

1. Ensure the PIO position is staffed throughout and following a disaster.
2. Continue to provide information as required until EOC activities are concluded or until they can be managed and staffed by the primary incident agency or Jurisdictions.
3. Conduct planning with ESF 15 support agencies and other emergency support functions to refine public information operations.
4. Assign and schedule sufficient personnel to implement ESF 15 tasks for an extended period of time.

VI. Responsibilities

A. Primary Agency

1. Pacific County Emergency Management Council
 - a. Establish policy pertaining to the release of emergency public information.
 - b. Represent the County and/or City (as suitable) at press conferences, public hearings, and other public events as appropriate to the disaster.
2. Pacific County Emergency Management Agency
 - a. Submit emergency information to the Public Information Officer.
 - b. Provide adequate assistance and training opportunities for the Public Information Officer and support staff as resources allow.
 - c. Plan and coordinate with the local news media to ensure assistance in disseminating emergency information in conjunction with the Public Information Officer.
 - d. Maintain local EAS Plan and Agreement(s).
 - e. Coordinate with State and Federal agencies on the release of emergency information, as appropriate.
 - f. Designate facilities where media representatives can be briefed. Whenever possible, these facilities will provide telecommunications capabilities for media use.
Coordinate and deliver public education information, materials, and/or events as needed or requested.

3. Public Information Officer

- a. Coordinate with the Logistics Section to identify a workspace, equipment, and additional staff to support the emergency Public Information function.
- b. Establish and coordinate emergency public information during and after an emergency.
- c. Prepare and distribute public information releases regarding disaster response and recovery.
- d. Review and coordinate releases of information from affected offices and departments through the EOC Manager.
- e. Respond to media inquiries.
- f. Provide information to elected officials and to employees, as necessary.
- g. Monitor news media coverage of the incident.
- h. Establish rumor control capability.
- i. Coordinate the release of public information, or establish a JIC, with other jurisdictions, as appropriate.

B. Support Agencies

1. Pacific County Emergency Response Agencies

- a. Provide pertinent information (e.g. road closures, emergency instructions, available assistance, place of contact for missing relatives, restricted areas, etc.) to the EOC for use by the Public Information Officer for dissemination to the public.

2. State

- a. Throughout the emergency, public information staff from the state EOC will work with the Governor's press secretary to develop and disseminate information regarding the emergency and state response efforts. State EOC staff will also be available to assist local officials in disseminating emergency information to affected communities.
- b. In the absence of the Governor's Press Secretary or assistant, the State Emergency Management Public Information Officer (PIO) directs, coordinates, and supervises the emergency public information functions.
- c. Coordinates with local and federal agencies on the release of emergency information and instructions.

3. Federal

- a. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides for the assignment and establishment of Public Information operations at the Joint State/Federal Disaster Field Office after a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration. All emergency public information will be coordinated with the State PIO and with local PIO's.

VII. References

- A. Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
- B. The National Response Framework- ESF 15 External Affairs
- C. Grays Harbor and Pacific County EAS Plan
- D. Pacific County EOC PIO Activation Guide

VIII. Attachments