

## **ANNEX J (PUBLIC INFORMATION)**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this annex is to provide a broad and general overview of public information procedures in the event of a disaster that will insure reliable, timely and effective information from the onset of an incident through recovery.

### **II. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

The county provides public information and outreach efforts on a county-wide basis and assists the municipal governments and response agencies as requested with the release of public information regarding their response to an event.

A Joint Public Information Center (JPIC) is activated depending on the severity and/or duration of the incident. A JPIC is a central location for all involved agencies and levels of local government to coordinate public information activities and functions in concert with a partially or fully activated Emergency Operations Center (EOC) or the Incident Command Post (ICP). If a JPIC is activated in support of an Incident Command Post, the location should be in an area or facility that is remote from the ICP but affords direct communications and coordination with the ICP. The JPIC will also provide a forum for news media representatives to receive disaster information through regularly scheduled press briefings. The state supports county and local efforts by coordinating the release of information with federal, county, volunteer and private entities.

The PIO will use FAX, email, the County website and newsletters to disseminate information regarding the disaster efforts.

During the recovery phase, all agencies are expected to support continuing operations with equipment and staff.

### **III. RESPONSIBILITIES AND TASKS**

#### **A. County Emergency Management**

##### **Response**

1. Coordinate the release of information to the news media and the public with the Public Information Officer (PIO).
2. Assess the public affairs implications of the incident. Support the County Chairperson/Executive's office as well as local elected

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officials and response agencies with disseminating emergency public information.

3. Assist the affected municipality with the release of public information.
4. Request the assistance of other county mutual aid partners, WEM or State EOC to activate the JPIC as necessary.

### **B. Public Information Officer (PIO)**

#### **Response**

1. Establish and maintain contact with the EOC and/or Incident Command Post.
2. Assist the affected municipality with obtaining information and when authorized by the Incident Commander or the EOC management structure, releasing information to the news media thru the proper channels (e.g., press briefings for national, regional and local media, Emergency Alert System (EAS), newspapers and available social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter.)
3. Brief and consult with the County Chairperson/Executive, local elected officials, County EM Director and the EOC about information received and disseminated.
4. Coordinate and prepare official emergency information statements with other participating agencies as needed.
5. Disseminate instructions to the public regarding protective action recommendations and other pertinent information.
6. Establish and maintain a joint public information center to ensure coordinated public information during an emergency as well as recovery operations.
7. Provide maps, charts, status boards, schematics or other displays that clearly depict the disaster situation in support of news conferences and/or briefings.
8. Monitor all forms of media, both traditional and social, for rumors and address any rumors as quickly as possible preferably at the next press briefing and within the defined operational period.

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9. With the approval of ICP and/or EOC command structure, schedule press briefings and participate in news conferences and briefings.
10. Provide consumer protection information to the public.

### **C. Other County and Local Agencies**

#### **Response**

1. Coordinate with the PIO, EOC and County Emergency Management Director regarding the release of information to public sources. Response agencies should not disseminate any information to the public without prior approval of the ICP or EOC management structure.
2. Appoint and send a representative to the EOC or JPIC as requested.

### **D. Volunteer Organizations**

1. Work with all volunteer organizations to coordinate release of the organizations efforts to support response and recovery operations, including damage assessment information, with County Public Information Officer.
2. Seek all possible opportunities to create team-based releases when appropriate.
3. Explore opportunities to coordinate effective public outreach.