



ESF 15: Public Information

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ESF 15 Tasked Agencies

Primary County Agency	Public and Governmental Affairs (PGA)
Supporting Agencies	Clackamas County Disaster Management (CCDM) Clackamas County Communications (C-COM) Clackamas County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) Health, Housing and Human Services (H3S) Transportation and Development (DTD) Water Environment Services (WES)
Community Partners	Washington County Consolidated Communications Agency (WCCCA) Lake Oswego Communications (LOCOM) City, special district, CBO, and utility PIOs Local media (print, television, radio, and electronic) 211info
State Agency	Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM)
Federal Agency	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

1 Introduction



1.1 Purpose

Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 describes how the county will develop public messages and disseminate information to the public and other partners during emergencies (e.g., evacuation/shelter-in-place orders, boil water notices, emergency sheltering information, situational awareness notifications, etc.).

1.2 Scope

Activities encompassed within the scope of ESF 15 include:

- Ensure community members have access to timely and accurate information to make informed life-safety decisions.
- Support County departments and local and tribal partners in the dissemination of timely and accurate information to the public, media, and private sector.
- Lead the development and dissemination of consistent and accurate messaging.
- Serve as the public information point of contact for the County and its elected and appointed officials, including the Board of Commissioners, Sheriff, District Attorney, Assessor, County Clerk, Treasurer, and Justice of the Peace.

2 Situation and Assumptions



2.1 Situation

The county may be impacted by many types of emergencies that necessitate the dissemination of information to the public, organizations, businesses, and more. Disseminating public information during an emergency or disaster is vital for protecting lives, preventing panic, and limiting cascading impacts by enabling preventive actions. However, power outages and damage to telecommunication infrastructure can hinder this effort. Clackamas County uses alert and warning notifications regionally referred to as PublicAlerts, social media, and other electronic systems to send important life-safety warnings and guidance—though all depend on functioning communications networks, which may be compromised during major emergencies. (See ESF 2: Communications for details.)

During emergencies, Public and Government Affairs (PGA) is responsible for the County Public Information Officer (PIO) functions and coordinates with Clackamas County Disaster Management (CCDM), On-scene Incident Command, and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) personnel to provide timely and accurate emergency public information to inform the community, minimize confusion and rumors, and recommend protective actions. PGA may also staff and support the Liaison Officer position in the EOC. EOC Command and the lead PIO jointly identify incident-specific emergency public information objectives. The lead PIO activates the County's Joint Information Center (JIC), as appropriate or as needed, to perform those functions necessary to achieve the designated information objectives.

The County will use all available communication methods to provide timely and consistent information to County officials, employees, community members (including those with disabilities and access and functional needs), cities, and neighboring jurisdictions.

PGA will partner with media outlets to get emergency information to its target audiences via their distribution channels. Media such as television, radio, social media, and news media websites enable rapid public notification of impending threats and recommended protective actions.

2.2 Assumptions

ESF 15 is based on the following planning assumptions:

- During emergencies, the public will seek timely, accurate information and clear guidance on protective actions.

- Even when operating normally, standard alerting and communications systems will not ensure message delivery to everyone.
- The County cannot control how the media chooses to publish, broadcast, or share emergency information but relies on established relationships to facilitate cooperation.
- Communication systems may be damaged or inoperable, limiting the availability of timely and accurate information from the impacted area(s).
- There will be enough trained public information personnel available to support coordination and media relations.
- Major incidents will generate significant interest from national and international media, increasing information demands.
- Rumors and misinformation will spread quickly, especially before verified information is available.
- Information may be delayed, incomplete, or contradictory in the initial stages of a disaster. This uncertainty will lead to confusion and heightened public anxiety.

3 Concept of Operations

3.1 General

In accordance with the Base Plan and this ESF Annex, Public and Government Affairs (PGA) is responsible for coordinating ESF 15-related activities. All ESF 15-related activities will be performed in a manner consistent with the Clackamas County Emergency Communications Plan and guidance contained in the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Public Information Officers (PIOs) conduct public information activities daily, usually in an agency- or jurisdiction-specific role (e.g., representing fire or law enforcement agencies or city officials). PIOs operating in the field report directly to On-scene Incident Command, and the EOC PIO reports directly to EOC Command. Personnel within the public information section of the EOC staff and operate a Joint Information Center (JIC) comprised of PIO representatives from participating and impacted agencies and organizations, with staffing based on the specific needs of the incident response. All incident personnel, including PIOs, must obtain EOC Command approval prior to the release of any incident information.

The PIO is responsible for:

- Collecting, coordinating, and disseminating emergency information.
- Advising On-scene Incident Command and EOC Command on information and media issues.
- Advising County officials on public relations-related items.
- Responding to media and public inquiries.
- Using an established Joint Information System (JIS) structure and procedures to coordinate incident information.
- Staffing the JIC based on incident-specific needs.
- Developing and implementing a media relations plan during the incident.

The PIO may use 211info or a Public Inquiry Center (PIC), if activated, to assist in preventing or correcting misinformation about an incident and to answer public inquiries. The PIO will coordinate with EOC staff to identify a single telephone number for the public to call for emergency information. This line is staffed by call-takers trained to handle public calls and knowledgeable about current incident status. Clackamas County also has cable television and internet web teams that post information on their respective media.

3.2 Alert and Warning

Local, state, and federal authorities may issue alert and warning messages to inform County officials, staff, residents and community members, neighboring jurisdictions, and other stakeholders of emergencies or disasters. In Clackamas County, Clackamas Communications (C-COM) and Disaster Management (CCDM) coordinate to issue these messages. When an On-scene Incident Commander requests an immediate alert, such as an evacuation or shelter-in-place, C-COM may issue the initial message through the County's emergency notification system. CCDM will coordinate and collaborate with C-COM to determine the most effective method to send the initial notification, and CCDM will then assume responsibility to prepare and send additional alert and warning communications for the incident. When CCDM receives warnings of severe weather or other emerging hazards, it notifies appropriate County officials, executive leadership, and public safety partners, including law enforcement, fire agencies, and the on-call Public Information Officer.

3.2.1 Public Notification

Clackamas County issues alert and warning notifications to impacted or at-risk community members when immediate action is required due to a life-threatening hazard. These alerts deliver concise, essential information and may include links or references to additional guidance available on the County's website.

The County's alert and warning system communicates through text messages, email, and voice calls, and is integrated with FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), including Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and the Emergency Alert System (EAS), to enable rapid, wide-reaching public notifications across multiple platforms. Clackamas Communications (C-COM) and Disaster Management (CCDM) are the County's primary alert originators. If these agencies are unable to issue alerts, CCDM may coordinate with trained personnel from neighboring jurisdictions or elevate the request to the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM).

Community members are encouraged to stay informed by monitoring the County's website and digital platforms, as well as traditional sources such as local radio and television stations. NOAA Weather Radio also provides timely alerts for weather-related emergencies.

Clackamas County does not operate a countywide siren warning system. In certain situations, especially when urgent protective actions such as evacuation are recommended, emergency personnel, including law enforcement and fire responders, may conduct door-to-door notifications. These in-person notifications provide life-safety instructions and may also capture assistance requests to support individuals in taking the necessary protective actions.

3.3 Joint Information System

Providing timely and accurate public information during a major emergency or disaster is critical to response efforts. A Joint Information System (JIS) will be implemented in conjunction with the Incident Command System (ICS), and a local and/or regional JIC will be established under EOC Command. During a regional or statewide emergency, the County will ensure that local procedures are coordinated with those implemented by state and regional PIOs.

Depending on the size and nature of an incident, the JIC may be co-located with an existing EOC or command post or could be established as an independent facility. The lead PIO, representing the lead agency of the incident response, will be assigned to the incident and will maintain the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate information sharing with the countywide PIO network.
- Develop and distribute materials to the public and media partners.
- Implement information review and sharing processes set by EOC Command.
- Schedule media briefings in a designated location, away from the EOC, and other incident and emergency operations.

When an incident impacts multiple counties in the Portland metropolitan area, the regional Emergency Public Information Concept of Operations (ConOps) Plan may be activated and a regional JIS and/or JIC activated. The County EOC PIO will participate in the JIS and assign a representative to the regional JIC as needed and as resources allow.

3.4 Working with the Media

3.4.1 Media Briefing Facilities

During a major emergency or disaster, media briefing areas may be established in facilities with sufficient space and communications capabilities to support and facilitate media operations. These media briefings will be led by the PIO with supporting information given by subject matter experts.

3.4.2 Media Access to the Scene

- In cooperation with the EOC, the On-scene Incident Commander and Safety Officer may allow media representatives restricted access to the scene, accompanied by a member of the public information staff. This should be done with consideration for the safety of media personnel, the impact on response, and the concerns and preferences of community members impacted by the disaster.
- If it is not safe or practical to admit all media representatives to the scene, a media “pool” may be created. The pool allows media representatives to select one camera crew to take video footage for all. If controlled access is impractical, a “staged” photo opportunity to tape response vehicles or support activities may satisfy the media’s need for video footage.
- Response personnel must be protected from unwanted media intrusion. Off-shift personnel should be provided with uninterrupted rest. It may be necessary to provide security to facilities where response personnel are housed and disconnect the telephones to ensure privacy.
- Victims and families should be provided with access to public officials without having to face media, as appropriate.

- The media may be allowed access to response personnel, at the discretion of the On-scene Incident Commander, only if such an interview does not interfere with response efforts.
- Response personnel will not comment on the incident without the consent of the Incident Commander. Inquiries should be directed to the designated PIO, with approval of the EOC Command and the department of jurisdiction.

3.5 At-Risk Populations

The PIO coordinates with the appropriate EOC sections to provide relevant information to agencies and organizations serving disability and access and functional needs (DAFN) populations. These community-based organizations (CBOs) assist in disseminating alert and warning and ongoing emergency information to the elderly, hearing or vision impaired, non-English-speaking, homeless, and community members with physical or mental challenges, or homebound or with other access or functional needs.

Clackamas County Communications (C-COM), Lake Oswego Communications (LOCOM), and Washington County Consolidated Communications Agency (WCCCA) have TTY/TDD capability, text to 9-1-1 and access to interpretation services.

The Department of Health, Housing, and Human Services (H3S) serves as the County's primary point of contact for coordinating communication with clients and senior and functional needs facilities and identifying alternative methods for reaching populations with access and functional needs. H3S will also advise and recommend strategies for effectively coordinating communication with these groups during emergencies.

3.6 Coordination with Other ESFs

The following ESFs support ESF 15-related activities:

- **All ESFs:** All functions will provide situation status updates and subject matter expertise to inform development of public messaging as well as disseminate approved messaging.

4 Emergency Coordination



4.1 County

On-scene Incident Command performs emergency public information functions unless a PIO has been designated. Depending on the type of incident, usually the lead fire or law enforcement agency provides the on-scene PIO. The County PIO can provide support to the on-scene PIO, as needed.

During EOC activations, CCDM will request that personnel from PGA serve as the EOC PIO. The EOC PIO reports directly to EOC Command and is responsible for coordinating incident information with all agencies, jurisdictions, and organizations involved in the incident consistent with the Clackamas County Emergency Communications and JIS Plan guidelines.

The EOC PIO will, in consultation with EOC Command, determine the level of EOC JIC staffing required to manage incident-specific emergency public information. Staffing may range from a single information officer on scene to a full activation of the County JIC. Initial configuration of the EOC JIC is normally two shifts, with appropriate staffing, comprising one lead PIO, an Information Center Manager, an Information Center Assistant Manager, a Media and Events Section Manager, a Content Section Manager, a Social Media Specialist, a 211info/Public Inquiry Center Liaison, a Liaison to/from other EOC sections or County departments and offices, Agency Spokesperson, and Press Conference Facilitator. Other positions may include one media monitor, one or more writers and news gatherers, and one web editor and graphics support.

The PIO will ensure that all incident-related information, including media releases, advisories, public service announcements, public education pieces, talking points, and any other information created for public or government consumption, is approved by On-scene or EOC Command before it is released.

4.2 Cities

Cities have primary responsibility for warning impacted or affected community members of local hazards or incidents within their jurisdiction(s). Cities should coordinate emergency public information activities with the County PIO, and the broader communication efforts of the EOC/JIC. Due to the nature of the incident, there may not be time for advanced coordination. City communication personnel should let the EOC Public Information Officer or Joint Information

Center know about the emergency and what information was shared with the public as soon as possible.

Cities are encouraged to be part of the County JIS/JIC system to coordinate emergency public information activities with the County and neighboring cities and jurisdictions.

4.3 Special Districts and Utilities

During incidents impacting their area of responsibility or services, special districts and utility providers may be asked to assign a public information representative to the EOC JIC or participate in the County JIS if not able to send a representative to the County JIC.

4.4 Regional

The Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO) has developed a regional JIS/JIC concept of operations. The Emergency Public Information Concept of Operations (ConOps) Plan may be activated when an incident impacts multiple counties in the Portland metropolitan region. When the plan is activated, a regional JIS and/or JIC may be established. The County EOC PIO will participate in the JIS and assign a representative to the regional JIC as appropriate and as resources allow.

Clackamas County is a participant in the Inter-County Omnibus Mutual Aid Agreement, which provides a framework for Oregon counties to request mutual aid from each other in emergencies.

4.5 State and Federal Assistance

Clackamas County PIOs will coordinate with their counterparts at the state and federal levels, sharing incident information on a regular basis. The County PIO may integrate state and federal emergency public information representatives into the County JIS/JIC or may, alternatively, integrate the County's public information efforts into the state and federal JIS/JIS operations.

The Oregon Resource Coordination Assistance Agreement (ORCAA), which is codified at ORS 402.200, provides a mechanism for local governments to request assistance from other local governments to respond to an emergency or disaster. Any resource (employees, services, equipment, and supplies) may be made available to another local government. To receive reimbursement for resource assistance provided under this statute, participants must agree in writing before resources are dispatched.

5 ESF Annex Development and Maintenance



PGA is responsible for coordinating regular review and maintenance of this annex in collaboration with Disaster Management. Each primary and supporting agency is responsible for developing plans and procedures that address assigned tasks.