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# Emergency Support Function 15

Standard Operating Procedures  
2025



**Homeland  
Security**

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2025



# Homeland Security

## **Preface and Transmittal**

Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 serves as the federal framework for communicating timely and accurate information before, during, and after major incidents. ESF 15 can be activated in response to significant emergencies to include natural disasters, pandemics, terrorist attacks, and other notice and no-notice events requiring a coordinated federal response. The ESF 15 Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) is the primary guiding document for carrying out the external affairs mission.

This 2025 document, an update to the 2019 edition, builds upon policy established in Presidential Policy Directive 8, Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, the National Response Framework, National Incident Management System, and Incident Command System. Using lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and other recent national responses, the SOP offers revised directives, best practices, updated case studies, and operational considerations based on the current communication landscape. The Disaster Operations Division in FEMA's Office of External Affairs serves as ESF 15 subject matter experts and will help guide the implementation of the updated SOP.

Included in this revision are three new annexes: Tribal Affairs, Language Access Services, and Community Engagement. These additions provide guidance on how to effectively communicate across differing populations. Together, they identify strategies for maintaining accessibility in public information, engaging local communities in the response and recovery process, and working with federally recognized Tribal Nations.

The ESF 15 SOP is a comprehensive collection of practices that draw expertise from communicators across the federal family. Similarly, success in implementing its principles is dependent on the same unity of effort. With many departments and agencies working in partnership, the U.S. government will strive to uphold the highest standards of communication for its citizens in their time of need.

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# **Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs**

## **Standard Operating Procedures**

### **Basic Plan**

#### **References:**

- A. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD 5)
- B. National Response Framework (NRF)
- C. National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)
- D. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- E. FEMA Incident Management Handbook

#### **Purpose**

This Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) establishes protocols for Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 External Affairs to support federal domestic incident management during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. ESF 15 integrates the following components under the coordinating auspices of External Affairs:

- Public Affairs and the Joint Information Center (JIC).
- Governmental Affairs (state, local, tribal, and territorial [SLTT] governments, Members of Congress, congressional staff, and congressionally affiliated stakeholders).
- Planning and Products (strategic messaging and interagency coordination).
- Private Sector communications.

#### **Background of ESF 15**

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD 5) created the National Response Plan (NRP) in 2004 to coordinate the federal response to actual or potential incidents. The NRP grouped the capabilities of the federal departments and agencies as well as the American Red Cross into emergency support functions. The full or partial activation of these emergency support functions is how the federal government responds to incidents. An ESF may be selectively activated for incidents requiring a coordinated federal response and may also provide staffing for the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC), Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCC), Unified Coordination Group (UCG), JIC, and Incident Command Posts (ICP) as required by the incident. The 2004 NRP also created ESF 15 to ensure enough federal external affairs resources are assigned during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response to provide accurate, coordinated, and timely information to affected audiences, including governments, media, the private sector, and the local populace.

#### **National Response Framework**

The National Response Framework (NRF) superseded the NRP in January 2008. It presents the guiding principles that enable all responders to prepare for and provide a unified national response to disasters and emergencies from the smallest incident to the largest catastrophe. The NRF only applies to domestic incidents.



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The NRF was revised as a part of the National Preparedness System mandated by Presidential Policy Directive 8: National Preparedness (PPD-8). The National Preparedness System is “aimed at strengthening the security and resilience of the United States through systematic preparation for threats that pose the greatest risk to the security of the Nation.”

The NRF is one of five national frameworks established by Presidential Policy Directive 8: National Preparedness. **They address the mission areas of Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.**

The [National Response Framework](#) (fourth edition) is located online.

### **National Disaster Recovery Framework**

The [National Disaster Recovery Framework](#) (NDRF) is a guide that enables effective recovery support to disaster-impacted SLTT jurisdictions. It provides a flexible structure that enables disaster recovery managers to operate in a unified and collaborative manner. It also focuses on how best to restore, redevelop, and revitalize the health, social, economic, natural, and environmental fabric of the community and build a more resilient nation.

The NDRF outlines six Recovery Support Functions (RSF): Economic, Community Planning and Capacity Building, Infrastructure Systems, Natural and Cultural Resources, Housing, and Health and Social Services.

The NDRF identifies:

- Core recovery principles.
- Roles and responsibilities of recovery coordinators and other stakeholders.
- A coordinating structure that facilitates for pre- and post-disaster recovery planning.
- The overall process by which communities can capitalize on opportunities to rebuild stronger, smarter, and safe.
- ESF 15 as the coordinating structure for the public information core capability during the recovery coordination mission.

The NRFs are intended to provide guidance for the whole community, which includes the private sector; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); the public, including individuals with disabilities and access and functional needs; disability services and organizations; and all levels of government.

Participation of the entire community requires equal access to national preparedness activities and programs without discrimination. All communities should be included and engaged in all aspects of planning. Populations may include:

- People with low literacy.
- People with limited English proficiency.
- People with physical, intellectual, developmental, or cognitive disabilities.

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- Older adults.
  - Children and their parents.
  - People who are economically disadvantaged.
  - People with transportation difficulties.
  - People with chronic medical conditions or have pharmacological dependency.
  - People often underrepresented or excluded.

All communicators should strive to provide accurate, coordinated, and timely information using accessible formats. See the Community Engagement Annex for further information.

### **Mission**

Upon activation of ESF 15 by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Associate Administrator of the Office of External Affairs, or another designated lead agency, federal external affairs resources will be employed to conduct sustained communication operations in support of a Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) or a Lead Federal Official (LFO), and a UCG.<sup>1</sup> ESF 15 activation during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response will facilitate accurate, coordinated, and timely information to affected audiences, including governments, media, the private sector, and the local populace.

### **Objectives**

This SOP will be used to formulate external affairs incident action plans and procedures that will help save lives and protect the health and safety of the public, responders, and recovery workers. It also will be used as a framework to guide messaging to protect property; mitigate damages and impacts to individuals, communities, and the environment; and facilitate recovery information for individuals, families, businesses, governments, and the media.

### **Concept of Operations**

Through coordination with the FCO/LFO, a UCG and affected SLTT partners, the federal government will establish and conduct external affairs activities to support response and recovery operations. These activities and supporting organization will be scalable and flexible with respect to the incident situation. The effort will be fully synchronized and integrated with all participating counterparts, from the determined authority. The ESF 15 team will develop and execute an external affairs strategy to support the incident action plan. The ESF 15 team will utilize this SOP as procedural guidance for activating, establishing, and operating the external affairs operation. A central feature of this concept, consistent with the Incident Command System (ICS), is a unified planning component that brings unity of effort to all strategic communications planning and product development.

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<sup>1</sup> The UCG is comprised of senior level federal and SLTT officials, to include the State Coordinating Officer (SCO), Tribal Coordinating Officer (TCO), FCO or other LFO. Additional information on the UCG can be found in FEMA's Incident Management Handbook.

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## **Department and Agency Responsibilities**

### **Coordinating Agency**

DHS

### **Primary Agency**

FEMA

### **Support Agencies**

Subject to the nature of the incident, all NRF signatory departments, agencies, and organizations may be part of an external affairs operation.

### **External Affairs Leadership Roles and Responsibilities**

ESF 15 unifies federal external affairs support for all external affairs functional areas deployed to support an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. The following positions cover the key roles and responsibilities for ESF 15. Their relationship to incident management ranks is noted where applicable.

Leadership cadre assignments will be made in advance for some potential incidents and to support field leadership and the UCG staffing direction. Positions will be assigned subject to the nature of the incident, external affairs requirements, and coordination with the UCG.

### **ESF 15 Director**

ESF 15 Director is the DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA), or the most senior career communications official of the designated lead agency. This supports continuity of government. (Note: When the President appoints another agency as the lead federal agency in response to an incident, that agency is authorized to designate an ESF 15 Director under their own authority.)

### **ESF 15 Component Directors**

As ESF 15 is structured around a composite team of mutually supporting external affairs activities, this unique coordination scheme must be accommodated within the ICS. Component directors coordinate as necessary with the ESF 15 Director as determined by the lead federal agency.

### **ESF 15 Operations Director**

When DHS is the lead federal agency, the DHS ASPA will designate the ESF 15 Operations Director. During incidents requiring a coordinated federal response, DHS may retain the role. In incidents where FEMA has a lead role, the ESF 15 responsibility is assigned to FEMA. A DHS component agency's communications director may be assigned as the Operations Director if the nature of the incident falls largely within their agency's mission profile. When the President appoints another agency as the lead federal agency, that agency is authorized to designate their own ESF 15 Director who may assign an ESF 15 Operations Director under their own authority as the lead federal agency. (Note: To support SLTT incidents, the FEMA Associate Administrator of External Affairs is authorized to designate ESF 15 External Affairs Officers.)

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Specific duties of the Operations Director include the following:

- Execute the ESF 15 Director's intent and strategic communications plan in conjunction with operational guidance and incident action plans.
- Provide direction, oversight, and coordination to the ESF 15 External Affairs Officer.
- Provide an ESF 15 representative in the NRCC.
- Coordinate with ESF 15 component directors and their staff along with international, interagency, and SLTT counterparts to ensure operational information and tasking are integrated and executed.

**As soon as possible following notification, the Operations Director reports the following information to the ESF 15 Director:**

- The name and contact information for the prospective or designated ESF 15 External Affairs Officer.
- The status of coordination with the affected state(s), territory(ies), or Tribal Nation(s).
- The JIC location.
- The status of ESF 15 resources in the affected area.

### **ESF 15 Spokesperson**

Where possible, and if required, the External Affairs Officer (EAO) may assign a primary spokesperson(s). Consistency in spokespersons can help ensure unity of effort and consistency in messaging and support public confidence through association with a known presence.

Assignment of a spokesperson does not preclude the availability of the FCO/LFO or ESF 15 leadership cadre to conduct external communications activities.

### **FEMA Regional External Affairs Directors**

FEMA Regional External Affairs Directors (EAD) work closely with the ESF 15 Operations Director to appoint the EAO who will manage ESF 15 field operations during a response in his or her region. Regional EADs coordinate with ESF 15 leadership and ESF 15 staff in the field on strategic communications plans, staffing, and reporting requirements. Regional EADs have ongoing relationships with the states, Tribal Nations, and counties in their regions and they provide guidance and support on ESF 15 responses.

### **External Affairs Joint Field Office Leadership**

#### **ESF 15 External Affairs Officer**

The ESF 15 Operations Director recommends the EAO to the ESF 15 Director prior to, or immediately following, an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. Upon approval of the recommendation (or selection of another EAO), the ESF 15 Director will designate the EAO using the template in Appendix 4 to Annex A. Designation and written notification of the EAO should occur as soon as possible, including for National Security Special Events. The EAO serves as the primary External Affairs advisor to the FCO/LFO and the UCG. The EAO has a reporting responsibility to both the ESF 15 Director and the FCO/LFO. Specific duties include coordinating and developing the external affairs and communications strategy in support of the FCO/LFO and the incident action plan. The EAO is responsible for coordinating the external affairs information flow among the ESF 15 Director; FCO/LFO; UCG; other departments and

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agencies; and SLTT counterparts. The EAO also is responsible for coordinating visits by governmental officials, foreign dignitaries, and other very important persons (VIPs). In the event of a no-notice incident requiring a coordinated federal response, an initial EAO may be assigned pending arrival of the permanently assigned officer. The ESF 15 Director will assign the initial EAO in consultation with field leadership.

For a large-scale response requiring additional leadership support, another qualified EAO may be assigned as an Assistant EAO to support the management of ESF 15 operations and staff within the UCG.

### **ESF 15 Assistant External Affairs Officer**

The Assistant External Affairs Officer (Assistant EAO) reports directly to the EAO and is responsible for planning and product development and External Affairs activities through coordination with EA component managers for the timely delivery of information, event/meeting participation, coordination with other program areas, and making organizational adjustments based on mission needs and priorities. The Assistant EAO is a supervisory position and is responsible for approving and certifying time and conducting formal performance evaluations. Performance management includes documentation of performance issues and working with employees on performance planning and improvement. Assistant EAOs will be assigned as needed to manage various External Affairs components (Governmental Affairs, JIC, Planning and Products, and Private Sector).

### **FEMA Incident Management Assistance Team External Affairs Advisor**

External Affairs is represented on National and Regional Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs) through an External Affairs Advisor. This advisor deploys with the IMAT in a notice event prior to the expected incident and provides situational awareness to the ESF 15 Operations Director and the Regional External Affairs Director. During a no-notice event, the time between the deployment of the IMAT, EAO and ESF 15 staff may be similar. In this case, the IMAT EA advisor provides support to the EAO as needed and for as long as the IMAT is activated.

### **External Affairs Joint Field Office (JFO) Components**

#### **Governmental Affairs**

Governmental Affairs coordinates with SLTT governments, Members of Congress and their staff, as well as congressional affiliates to assist field leadership, the EAO, and the UCG with communications procedures to build partnerships with all levels of government. Governmental Affairs address incident-related questions, concerns, and feedback expressed by elected government officials at all levels. This component also facilitates delivery of critical information related to incident management operations, programs, and resources to inform, prepare, protect, and assist impacted families and communities through governmental stakeholders. Certain functions of community engagement and outreach may fall under Governmental Affairs, depending on the needs of the incident and lead federal agency requirements.

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### **Joint Information Center**

Public Affairs activities ensure the coordinated and timely release of incident-related prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation information to the public. ESF 15 provides the interagency coordination mechanisms and resource support for federal JIC activities.

### **Planning and Products**

Develops all external and internal communications strategies and products for the ESF 15 organization and components. This includes specialized communications procedures to cover language and accessible communication needs.

### **Private Sector**

Private Sector staff support communications, information sharing, impact assessments, and problem solving with counterparts in the non-governmental and commercial areas. At the national and regional level, ESF 14 supports the coordination of cross-sector operations, including stabilization of key supply chains and community lifelines, among infrastructure owners and operators, businesses, and their government partners. Upon transition to the field, ESF 14 retains oversight of business continuity efforts while ESF 15 engages in relationship building with private sector partners.

### **ESF 15 Organization, Staffing, and Operations**

Guidance on organization, staffing, and operations is contained in Annex A.

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# **Annex A to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Interagency Organization, Staffing, and**

### **Operations**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)
- C. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- D. FEMA Incident Management Handbook
- E. National Contingency Plan (NCP, 40 CFR 300)

#### **Purpose**

This annex provides guidance on the organizational structure, staffing, and operational employment of Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15.

**NOTE:** In an incident requiring a coordinated federal response, External Affairs is an operational resource that can help save lives and support state, local, tribal, and territorial incident management authorities.

#### **Mission**

Upon activation of ESF 15 by the DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, FEMA Associate Administrator of External Affairs or another lead federal agency, federal external affairs resources will be employed to conduct sustained operations in support of a Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) or a Lead Federal Official (LFO), and a Unified Coordination Group (UCG). ESF 15 activation during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response will facilitate accurate, coordinated, and timely information to affected audiences, including governments, media, the private sector, and the local populace.

#### **General Guidance**

The ESF 15 organization is prescribed within the National Response Framework (NRF). This organization is intended to be scalable and flexible to support incident requirements. The organization may be modified by the FCO/LFO and ESF 15 External Affairs Officer (EAO).

#### **Federal Interagency Participation**

When federal personnel are assigned to the ESF 15 field organization, they will conform to and support this SOP and other policies as directed by the FCO/LFO.

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## **Organizational Structure – Coordinated Federal Response**

Appendix 1 provides a notional organizational chart and process flow for ESF 15 during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response with a FCO/LFO. This organization is for planning purposes and may be modified as necessary to support incident management activities.

### **ESF 15 Component Staffing**

Upon ESF 15 activation, deployment and staffing will be initially coordinated by the ESF 15 Operations Director. Assignments will be based on pre-incident staffing plans and/or determined during communications between the Operations Director, FCO/LFO, Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator, departments and agencies, and component directors.

### **Federal Interagency Staffing**

In accordance with the National Response Framework, all federal departments and agencies support the ESF 15 organization and staff. Interagency personnel are eligible for assignment to all ESF leadership cadre and staff assignments, with the concurrence of the ESF 15 Operations Director, the supporting department and agency, and FCO/LFO.

All federal interagency personnel will conform to the guidance and policies contained within this SOP and as specified by field leadership.
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The ESF 15 Operations Director will coordinate and solicit requests for staffing support with the federal departments and agencies during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. Departments and agencies deploying personnel may be responsible for all travel and per diem costs. (Federal reimbursement will be dependent on legislative actions and authorities concerning an incident.) Housing will be determined based on availability, but agencies should be prepared to be flexible and support member logistics needs.

### **Concept of Operations**

Through coordination with the FCO/LFO, UCG, and affected state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) counterparts, the federal government will establish and conduct supporting external affairs activities. These activities and the supporting organization will be scalable and flexible with respect to the incident situation. The effort will be fully synchronized and integrated with all participating counterparts, from the relevant authority. The ESF 15 team will develop and execute an external affairs strategy to support the incident action plan. The ESF 15 team will utilize this SOP as procedural guidance for activating, establishing, and operating the external affairs operation. A central feature of this concept, consistent with the Incident Command System (ICS), is a unified planning component that brings unity of effort to all strategic communications planning and product development.



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### **Plan Coordination**

This plan will be executed in accordance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD 5), the NRF, the National Incident Management System (NIMS), other supporting federal plans, and in coordination with SLTT emergency response plans.

### **Strategic Direction**

Strategic communications direction will originate from White House Communications, the ESF 15 Director, ESF 15 component directors, the ESF 15 Operations Director, and federal department and agency leadership. Through this strategic direction, the external communications plan will be developed by the ESF 15 EAO to support the FCO/LFO's incident action plan, in close coordination with appropriate authorities and counterparts. The ESF 15 EAO will engage fully with the FCO/LFO, Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator, and the UCG and staff. The ESF 15 EAO is encouraged to provide recommendations to the chain of command and senior external affairs leadership. This ensures that incident-specific issues are integrated with the strategic communications direction. Appendix 1 details the chain of coordination from the national level to the ESF 15 EAO.

### **Message Development and Risk Communications**

Federal and SLTT communicators must ensure messaging reflects both unknown issues and facts as they become acknowledged. In an emergency, many issues will fall within the unknown category, and communicators should acknowledge when or where uncertainty exists and explain the steps being taken to reduce it. Extensive risk communications research data shows that telling the public the truth about a difficult situation, including what remains unknown, strengthens the public's trust in an organization and enhances its public credibility, especially if further uncertainty or bad news is expected. To this end, transparency in the actions and words of authorities is critical to public confidence and national cohesion. Throughout an incident, federal communicators will strive for transparent and consistent messaging across agencies.

### **Intergovernmental Affairs (State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial)**

SLTT communicators and authorities are presumed to lead incident management efforts. To this end, federal external affairs personnel must work closely with state and local communications counterparts from the outset of an incident to fully integrate and synchronize efforts possible. Close coordination between all counterparts is critical in maintaining unity of effort.

### **Incident Leadership and Management**

Execution of this SOP will employ processes and organizations specified in the NRF and National Disaster Recovery Framework to execute federal incident management operations. Partners for execution of ESF 15 operations include the National Operations Center (NOC), FCO/LFO, UCG with National and Regional Response Coordination Centers (NRCC/RRCC).

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## **Activation**

The DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, FEMA's Associate Administrator of the Office of External Affairs, or the designated lead federal agency for an incident, will direct activation of ESF 15 in coordination with the NRCC.

## **ESF 15 External Affairs Officer Designation**

The ESF 15 Operations Director will designate an ESF 15 EAO using the template in Appendix 4 to Annex A. This designation will be coordinated with the FCO/LFO. Guidance within the letter may be modified based on the nature of the incident.

## **DHS Office of Public Affairs**

When DHS is the lead federal agency, the DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs will activate NRF incident communications protocols in conjunction with the ESF 15 activation order. These actions will be closely coordinated and executed with counterpart leadership from federal departments, agencies, and the FCO/LFO. DHS actions will focus on the following operations and components.

## **Execution Checklists**

Activation operations and execution measures for notice and no-notice incidents requiring a coordinated federal response are provided in Appendices 2 and 3 to Annex A. These are notional checklists and may be modified as necessary.

## **National Joint Information Center**

If required to support interagency communications, the DHS National Joint Information Center (NJIC) will serve as the federal incident communications coordination center during incidents requiring a coordinated federal response. It is staffed by incident communications response personnel and can rapidly mobilize and coordinate the federal external communications effort. The federal interagency team and National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL) are controlled at the NJIC. In those incidents when FEMA or another agency has the lead role, the ESF 15 Operations Director may be delegated to lead the federal interagency team and NICCL responsibility. The NJIC coordinates with and supports the Secretary, NOC, Crisis Action Team, NRCC, National Infrastructure Coordination Center (NICC), FCO/LFO, UCG, and federal ESF 15 partners.

## **DHS Component Agencies**

Within DHS, component agency communications directors have a dual report to the DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. Through this chain of coordination, agencies receive strategic direction from the DHS Assistant Secretary and respective agency leadership to conduct incident communications operations in support of the overall federal effort.

## **FEMA Office of External Affairs**

For Stafford Act incidents, FEMA is the lead agency for the ESF 15 response and FEMA's Associate Administrator of External Affairs is the ESF 15 Operations Director. Like the functional

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role of the DHS NJIC, FEMA activates its NJIC during incidents when FEMA has a lead role. During these incidents, the ESF 15 Operations Director is the FEMA Associate Administrator or Deputy Associate Administrator of External Affairs, and the FEMA NJIC serves as the federal incident communications coordination center.

The Office of External Affairs' Disaster Operations Division serves as FEMA's primary lead for ESF 15. The division plays a critical role in ensuring effective internal and external coordination during response and recovery efforts. Disaster Operations staff have extensive knowledge and understanding of the ESF 15 framework. They are available to assist other communication teams across the federal government in relation to ESF 15's value as a guide to achieve a unified federal communication mission.

## **Lead Federal Agency Roles**

### **Incident Operations**

In coordination with the FCO/LFO, the EAO will lead ESF 15 deployment and establishment efforts for the UCG. The nature of the incident must be carefully assessed at this point to determine if special procedures or more restrictive release of information or media access may be required. Lead roles for the incident and emergency support functions, in accordance with the NRF, will be considered during this assessment. Special consideration is also noted for the following:

### **National Special Security Event**

The U.S. Secret Service leads external affairs activities and ESF 15 during a National Special Security Event (NSSE). These events frequently involve highly sensitive security operations where the external affairs strategy and federal visibility must be protected to ensure the success of the operation. An EAO for the NSSE will be assigned from the Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Secret Service. The EAO may modify or adapt procedures and communications operations as necessary. During a NSSE, security is a paramount consideration in determining the type and detail of information released.

### **Terrorism and Law Enforcement**

In accordance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD), "the Attorney General has lead responsibility for criminal investigations of terrorist acts or terrorist threats by individuals or groups inside the United States or directed at U.S. citizens or institutions..." More specifically, and per the NRF, "the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) is the lead agency for criminal investigations of terrorist acts or terrorist threats within the United States." If a Joint Field Office or other facility is established for unified coordination, the FBI will establish a Joint Operations Center (JOC). Close coordination between DHS and the Department of Justice (DOJ)/FBI incident communications counterparts to support this arrangement and investigation must be maintained throughout a terrorist incident to ensure effective activation and employment of ESF 15 communications activities. Procedures for release of information and media access outlined in this

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SOP may be modified because of this incident and investigation. More information about law enforcement procedures is in Annex J.

### **Radiological Incidents**

The nature of a radiological incident may require modification to release information and media access guidelines. In accordance with the NRF, there are numerous coordinating agencies for radiological incidents. Accordingly, the ESF 15 EAO designated for a radiological incident should coordinate closely with the FCO/LFO and lead agency subject to the type of incident. Annex N provides additional information on responsibilities during a radiological incident.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is the federal agency with primary authority for incidents involving nuclear facilities licensed by the NRC.

The Department of Energy (DOE) is the federal agency with primary authority for incidents involving the transportation of radioactive materials shipped by or for DOE.

The Department of Defense (DOD) is the federal agency with primary authority for incidents involving nuclear weapons under DOD control.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is the federal agency with primary authority for incidents involving space vessels carrying nuclear materials.

### **International Incidents**

Incidents that take place outside states and territories may still affect U.S. audiences.

The Department of State (DOS) in conjunction with the White House Office of Communications is the coordinating agency and lead for federal communications during an international incident. DOS also leads communications for U.S. residents living overseas. Even though the NRF and NDRF only apply to domestic incidents, federal communication coordination using the NICCL and State Incident Communications Coordination Line (SICCL) protocols may still be used during those times when overseas incidents affect domestic audiences or when use of these federal communications protocols would benefit communicators responding to U.S. media.

### **Spill of National Significance**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator and Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), under the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, may classify an oil discharge as a Spill of National Significance (SONS).

In a coastal zone the USCG Commandant may name a National Incident Commander (NIC) who will assume the role of the on-scene coordinator in communicating with affected parties and the public and coordinating federal, SLTT, and international resources at the national level. This strategic coordination will involve, as appropriate, a National Response Team (NRT), a Regional Response Team (RRT), the governor(s) of the affected states(s), and mayor(s) or other chief

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executive(s) of local government(s). In an inland zone, the EPA Administrator may name a senior agency official to assist the on-scene coordinator with these functions.

EPA and USCG use the National Incident Management System/Incident Command System (NIMS/ICS) to organize and manage the response to hazardous materials incidents and oil spills. Communicators follow the National Response Team's Joint Information Center (NRT JIC) model to communicate with affected publics. The NRT JIC and ESF 15 are designed to operate either independently or in coordination with one another. In instances where both models are in use, there is a need to integrate NRT JIC operations and ESF 15 to align functions and communication efforts.

Under the NRT JIC model, the SLTT coordination function is delegated to Liaison Officers (LNOs) working outside of the NRT JIC model construct. During a major spill, experienced Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) personnel may be requested to support USCG and EPA LNOs.

The Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund (OSLTF), not the Stafford Act, will likely reimburse the interagency external affairs response for significant spills. Responses executed under the National Continuity Programs (NCP) do not trigger a declaration that results in Stafford Act funding.

Organization and position functions of the NRT JIC are contained in the NRT JIC SOP.

### **Maritime Operational Threat Response**

The USCG uses a Maritime Operational Threat Response (MOTR) plan to coordinate a maritime operational response to terrorism, piracy, and other criminal or unlawful or hostile acts committed by foreign state and non-state actors. Federal departments and agencies that have key operational roles for maritime security are DOD, DHS, DOJ, DOS, DOE, the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC). Federal department and agency operation centers conduct a MOTR conference call to coordinate operational response to maritime security events.

If necessary, DHS Public Affairs will use the NJIC and NRF protocols to coordinate Federal incident communications in response to maritime security events. A NJIC call with federal department and agency communicators may be conducted in conjunction with or prior to MOTR calls based on the specifics of the maritime scenario.

All federal department and agency communicators, whose operations centers are involved in the maritime security response, will be invited to participate in the NICCL calls.

### **ESF 15 Daily Operations (Reports and Meetings)**

#### **ESF 15 Daily Events Schedule**

After establishment of a UCG and determination of a federal and SLTT operations schedule (daily briefings, operational meetings, etc.), the EAO develops a daily external affairs routine. This

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routine is critical to the smooth flow of information and will assist synchronization. Participants must be flexible and work to ensure communications objectives and initiatives are accommodated and timed for optimum delivery. A notional daily routine is contained in Appendix 6. This may be modified as necessary by the EAO.

### **Social Listening Report**

Social listening is conducted to assess public information needs, understand the spread of false or misleading information, and identify operational gaps. These reports provide critical situational awareness that allows federal and SLTT communicators to identify emerging hot issues and adjust their strategic messaging in real-time to meet the needs of the affected community.

The frequency of social listening reports should align with the operational tempo of the NJIC and NRCC, and the overall volume of the online conversation. Social listening reports are further detailed in Annex C.

### **National Incident Communications Coordination Line**

In accordance with the NRF, the NICCL and the SICCL are pre-identified incident communications protocols established and ready for use during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. The NICCL is used for transmission and exchange of critical and timely incident information among federal and affected SLTT authorities. If the nature of the incident is of critical importance and urgency, DHS Public Affairs will maintain a controller on the line continuously to provide and receive updates from departments and agencies. During sustained incident management activity, the NICCL will be used for daily or other incident communications coordination calls. DHS, FEMA, or the lead federal agency will maintain a summary of key NICCL communications and interagency coordination actions. These will be compiled and distributed to participants in a timely manner. NICCL call attendees are reminded that this is an executive call. Information and access should be protected. Attendees should keep comments brief and place their device on mute when not talking. Specific or complex department or agency-specific issues should be addressed off-line with the appropriate parties. The NICCL call agenda will normally follow the below cadence:

- Roll call (by department and agency).
- Opening remarks by White House/lead federal agency.
- Brief operations summary (on-scene reps or operations).
- Summary of major communications plans and events.
- Comments by department and agencies invited.
- Messaging coordination requirements outlined by lead agency.
- Conclusion.

### **State Incident Communications Coordination Line**

The SICCL is a similar dedicated federal-state incident communications coordination line. This standing communications resource can facilitate and ensure the inclusion, transmission, and exchange of incident management information, evacuee coordination, and messaging relating to all

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states and territories. Examples of this information include unclassified public affairs guidance, pending national decisions, and major incidents where updates are beneficial in support of federal-state external affairs situational awareness. Access and use of this line will be managed by DHS Office of Public Affairs.

### **Private Sector Incident Communications Coordination Line**

The Private Sector Incident Communications Coordination Line (PICCL) is a facilitated call with key businesses involved in a specific incident, which could provide timely public information to private sector communicators. This two-way call can be used to support a direct line of communication with internal and external private sector communications professionals to provide information regarding the disaster as well as receive feedback and other information from private sector.

### **USA.gov**

Managed by the Technology Transformation Services at the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), [USA.gov](https://usa.gov) is the official website of the U.S. government and the agreed upon site where relevant incident content is to be aggregated and curated. Its reach and multi-platform capability make it the go-to place for the public. Many federal websites link to USA.gov, which lends authority to its content and improves its findability in search queries. Because USA.gov is not agency-specific, it is in a unique position to aggregate and curate high-value content from across the government and publish it through a variety of channels. This centralized approach to content ensures information consistency through the web, chat, phone, mobile, and social distribution channels. The site is available on mobile.

The use of the USA.gov platform may be directed by the White House Office of Communications, DHS Office Public Affairs, or the ESF 15 Director, working in conjunction with the Digital Experience Council under the Office of the Federal Chief Information Officer (OMB). USA.gov use should occur under conditions outlined below. The GSA staff offer unique resources that can assist the federal government communicate during incidents such as natural or man-made disasters, a public health crisis or acts of terrorism. These incidents may:

- Involve several federal departments, agencies, and states/cities with multiple leads.
- Last for several days.
- Result in national or international media attention.
- Generate questions from the public.

### **USA.Gov en Español**

USA.Gov en Español (<https://usa.gov/es/>) is the Spanish-language sister site of USA.gov. The site follows the same mandate to provide official government information to people with limited English proficiency. The site is also available on mobile.

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## **Content Approvals**

Web content will be based on approved talking points, will not stray from intent of authors, and will be optimized for web page layouts, online consumption, plain language, and search engine optimization. To every extent possible, all content posted on USA.gov will be posted in Spanish on USAGov en Español.

## **Public Experience Contact Center**

Also managed by GSA, the Public Experience Contact Center serves as an information and referral service for the public who seek information on a wide range of government programs, including those administered by the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches. The contact center operation is contracted and supported by two sites outside the National Capital Region. The contact center agents handle calls to the [1-844-USAGOV1](tel:1-844-USAGOV1) line as well as web chats through USA.gov and USA.Gov en Español. When necessary, the center can operate on a 24/7 basis with funding.

**DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Incident Community Coordination Call** The Incident Community Coordination Call (ICCT) is a mechanism for senior U.S. government officials to communicate with communities who may have distinct civil rights and civil liberties concerns in the aftermath of any homeland security incident. The nationwide conference call is the only tool of its kind that allows for rapid two-way communication immediately following an incident of national significance or other emergencies. please see previous comment or other emergencies. The ICCT is activated only in certain circumstances and is chaired by the DHS Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. The goal of the call is to provide timely information from the government to community leaders in the aftermath of a homeland security incident.

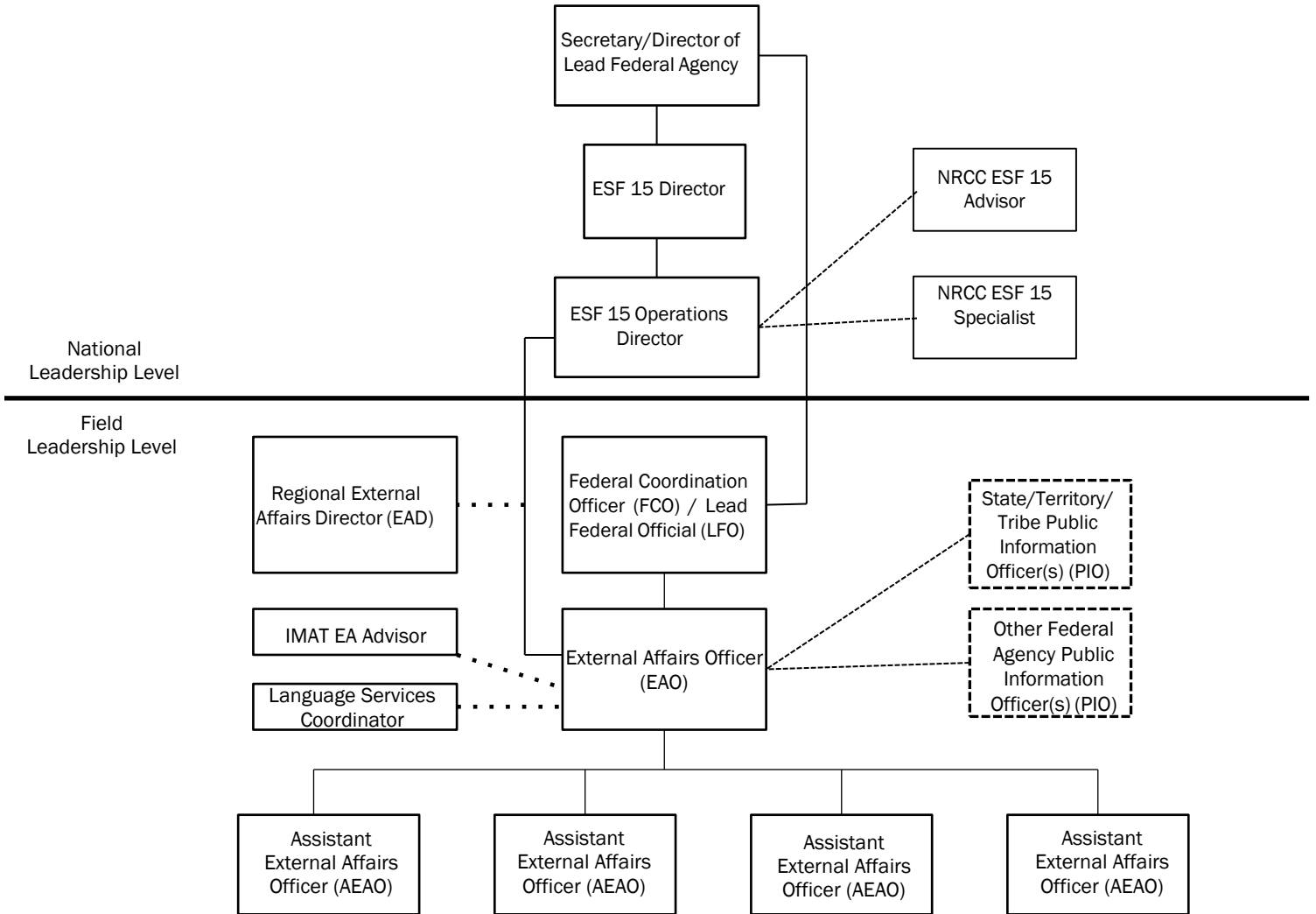
The call also allows the government to receive feedback from communities who may be impacted by: possible civil rights concerns in the aftermath of an incident (e.g., lack of access to information or resources during emergencies, retaliatory hate crimes, etc.); reactions or concerns to policies or actions taken by the government; information about other concerns of these communities in the aftermath of an incident; and how the government might be effective in investigating allegations or concerns. The call comprises key DHS and federal agencies, as well as community leaders and entities who work closely with federal officials nationally and in the affected areas.

## **Appendices**

1. Organizational Chart – Coordinated Federal Response
2. ESF 15 No-Notice Incident Execution Checklist
3. ESF 15 Notice Incident Execution Checklist
4. ESF 15 External Affairs Officer Designation Letter
5. ESF 15 External Affairs Officer Designation Letter – Change in Appointment
6. ESF 15 Daily Events Schedule (Battle Rhythm)
7. ESF 15 Daily Communications Plan – Sample Template



**Appendix 1 to Annex A to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
Organization Chart – Coordination of Federal Response**



**Notes:**

1. The DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, FEMA’s Associate Administrator of External Affairs, or the designated lead federal agency for an incident, will direct activation of ESF 15 in coordination with the National Response Coordination Center, National Operations Center, and FEMA.
2. If a recovery coordination mission has been established [with a Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator appointed and Recovery Support Functions activated], then the EA function will work through the ESF 15 structure established at the Joint Field Office with additional liaisons and ESF 15 staff deployed as needed to support. Once the Federal Coordinating Officer and Lead Federal Official demobilize, ESF 15 staff will support Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator with similar coordination structure as outlined above.

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**Appendix 2 to Annex A to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
ESF 15 No-Notice Incident Execution Checklist**

**References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Prevention Framework
- C. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- D. FEMA Incident Management Handbook
- E. ESF 15 Concept of Operations Notice and No-Notice Events, FEMA B-685

**Purpose**

This checklist provides a guide for major\* actions and responsibilities in the event of a no-notice incident requiring a coordinated federal response.

**Activation and Deployment Execution Checklist: No-Notice Incident**

**Action: National Level Initial Activation**

**\*Note: Many no-notice incidents result in a short-term National Joint Information Center (NJIC) activation and:**

- Require immediate coordination with White House and state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) government communicators.
- Use of the National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL), State Incident Communications Coordination Line (SICCL), and Private Sector Incident Communications Coordination Line (PICCL) as resources.
- May not require a complete ESF 15 activation.
- ESF 15 is activated by the DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ESF 15 Director).
- ESF 15 Director appoints ESF 15 Operations Director. For FEMA, this is the FEMA Associate Administrator of External Affairs. The ESF 15 Operations Director provides the following information to the director:
  - The name and contact information for the prospective or designated External Affairs Officer (EAO).
  - The status of coordination with the affected state, Tribal Nation, or territory.
  - The JIC location.
  - The status of available ESF 15 resources in the affected area.
- DHS or the White House will designate a media spokesperson as required.
- The FEMA ESF 15 Operations Director formally appoints the EAO by letter and contacts the EAO to discuss the status of the incident, identify needs and requirements, and provide support.
- The ESF 15 Operations Director may establish a VIP advance team to assist with requests for visits to the impacted area by Members of Congress, cabinet-level officials, and other senior officials.
  - VIP support is based on operational needs and requirements.

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## Action: Coordination/Communication Outreach

### National:

- Coordination with the FEMA Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) External Affairs Advisor.
- NICCL call as determined by the ESF 15 Operations Director to discuss:
  - Current situation.
  - Lead agency roles.
  - SLTT communications on incident (the state or local PIO may provide incident information and be first on the agenda for the call).
  - Federal strategic plan (initial).
  - ESF 15 activation and deployment needs (including interagency needs through mission assignments or Memoranda of Understanding).
  - JIC establishment.
  - Statements by principals.
  - Working in concert with DHS OPA, a National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) Alert or Bulletin as required.
    - With the mention of NTAS, DHS OPA is a part of the National Coordination/Communication.
- SICCL call as determined by the ESF 15 Operations Director.
  - DHS, FEMA, or a lead federal agency leads this call with affected SLTT counterparts to provide information on the current situation.
- Private Sector Communications
  - ESF 15 or the NJIC may use a PICCL call to coordinate with private sector communicators. This two-way call can be used to support a direct line of communication with internal and external private sector communications professionals to provide information regarding the disaster as well as receive feedback and other information from private sector.
  - During Stafford Act events, FEMA's Office of Business, Industry, and Infrastructure Integration may lead National Business Emergency Operations Center calls to provide two-way operational information with private sector stakeholders. ESF 15 Private Sector staff should join the calls. A readout from these calls should be provided to the NJIC in a timely manner.
- Congressional
  - Briefings for congressional delegations representing the affected areas as well as relevant oversight committees.
    - Note: Initial briefings may be combined with field briefings.
  - Regular congressional advisories to include notifications, fact sheets, and operations reports disseminated or amplified to appropriate stakeholders.
- VIP coordination.

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**Regional:**

- Deploy Regional IMATs, which includes the EA Advisor as needed to supplement National IMATs and other resources.
- Participate in operational calls as required.
- Assist with disaster staffing needs using regional personnel.

**Field:**

- Federal Coordinating Officer/Lead Federal Official (FCO/LFO) and EAO discuss advance communications plans, JIC location, and special logistics requirements.
- EAO meets with EA Component Leads (managers) to convey expectations and guidance that has been provided.
- EAO meets with SLTT lead incident communications team.
- EAO coordinates the ESF 15 team's efforts in preparing the communications plan component to the State Coordinating Officer/FCO/LCO's incident action plan.
- Outreach is made to SLTT and private sector stakeholders through calls and meetings.
- Hold press conferences as appropriate.
- Congressional outreach:
  - Briefings for congressional delegations representing the affected areas as well as relevant oversight committees.
    - Note: Initial briefings may be combined with field briefings.
  - Regular congressional advisories to include notifications, fact sheets, and operations reports disseminated or amplified to appropriate stakeholders.

**Action: Deployments**

- EA staffing is based on the incident action plan and the operational priorities.
- ESF 15 initial staff requirements are assessed and identified.
- Recommended staffing considerations:
  - Governmental Affairs.
  - Program Liaison.
  - Creative Specialists.
  - Media Relations.
  - Visual Imaging.
  - External Affairs Specialists.
  - Digital Communications.
  - Language Services.

**Action: Products**

- Strategic communication plan.
- Initial staffing plan.
- News releases (in English, Spanish, other languages identified, and accessible formats).
- Disaster assistance flyers for distribution to survivors (in needed/identified languages).
- Traditional media monitoring reports.

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- Social listening reports.
  - [Agency].gov page updates.
  - Daily update on federal response activities.
  - Battle Rhythm (daily meeting schedule).
  - Talking points.
  - Advisories, fact sheets, operational reports, briefing materials, and other updates needed for stakeholders.
  - Photos and videos of disaster activities, commodities movements, survivor assistance, etc.
  - Photo release.
  - Staffing grid and organizational chart.

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## Appendix 3 to Annex A to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs ESF 15 Notice Incident Execution Checklist

### References:

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. FEMA Incident Management Handbook
- D. ESF 15 Concept of Operations Notice and No-Notice Events, FEMA B-685

### Purpose

This execution checklist provides a template covering major\* actions and responsibility for a notice incident requiring a coordinated federal response. The planning objective is for full ESF 15 operational capability 24 hours before an incident is projected when known or estimated.

### Situations

Summarized below are examples of potential incidents requiring a coordinated federal response and activation of ESF 15 before an incident occurs:

- Possible or imminent natural disaster (e.g., hurricane, severe tropical storm).
- Credible terrorism threat to a domestic location(s).
- Potential man-made disaster (e.g., spill of national significance, reactor emergency, large HAZMAT release).
- National Security Special Event (NSSE) (subject to threats, etc.).

### Activation and Deployment Execution Checklist: Notice Incident

**Note:** These are notional actions and may be modified according to the specific incident.

#### Action: National Level Initial Activation

**\*Note: Many notice incidents result in a short-term National Joint Information Center (NJIC) activation and:**

- Require immediate coordination with White House and state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) government communicators.
- Use of the National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL), State Incident Communications Coordination Line (SICCL), and Private Sector Incident Communications Coordination Line (PICCL) as resources.
- May not require complete ESF 15 activations.
- Notification and activation due to an imminent incident or threat.
- ESF 15 is activated by the DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ESF 15 Director).
- ESF 15 Director appoints ESF 15 Operations Director. For FEMA, this is the FEMA Associate Administrator of External Affairs. The ESF 15 Operations Director provides the following information to the director:
  - The name and contact information for the prospective or designated External Affairs Officer (EAO).
  - The status of coordination with the affected state, Tribal Nation, or territory.

- The JIC location.
- The status of available ESF 15 resources in the affected area.
- DHS or the White House designate a media spokesperson as required.
- The FEMA ESF 15 Operations Director formally appoints the EAO by letter and contacts the EAO to discuss the status of the incident, identify needs and requirements, and provide support.
- The ESF 15 Operations Director may establish a VIP advance team to assist with requests for visits to the impacted area by Members of Congress, cabinet-level officials, and other senior officials.
  - VIP support based on operational needs and requirements.

### **Action: Coordination/Communication Outreach**

#### **National:**

- Coordination with the FEMA Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) External Affairs Advisor.
- NICCL call as determined by the ESF 15 Operations Director to discuss:
  - Current situation.
  - Lead agency roles.
  - SLTT communications on incident (the state or local PIO may provide incident information and be first on the agenda for the call).
  - Strategic Communications Plan (initial).
  - ESF 15 activation and deployment needs (including interagency needs through mission assignments or Memorandums of Understandings).
  - JIC establishment.
  - National level talking points.
  - Statements by principals/federal interagency news conference.
  - Federal interagency update (news release).
  - Working in concert with DHS OPA, a National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) Alert or Bulletin as required.
    - With the mention of NTAS, DHS OPA is a part of the National Coordination/Communication.
- SICCL call as determined by the ESF 15 Operations Director.
  - FEMA or a lead federal agency leads this call with affected SLTT counterparts to provide information on the current situation.
- Private Sector communications.
  - ESF 15 or the NJIC may use a PICCL call to coordinate with private sector communicators. This two-way call can be used to support a direct line of communication with internal and external private sector communications professionals to provide information regarding the disaster as well as receive feedback and other information from private sector.
  - During Stafford Act events, FEMA's Office of Business, Industry, and Infrastructure Integration may lead National Business Emergency Operations Center calls to

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provide two-way operational information with private sector stakeholders. ESF 15 Private Sector staff should join the calls. A readout from these calls should be provided to the NJIC in a timely manner.

- Congressional
  - Briefings for congressional delegation(s) representing the affected areas.
  - Briefings for congressional caucuses, authorizers, and appropriators.
  - Congressional advisories, fact sheets, and operations reports sent to appropriate stakeholders.
- VIP coordination.

**Regional:**

- Deploy Regional IMAT, which includes the EA Advisor as needed to supplement National IMAT and other resources.
- Participate in operational meetings.
- Assist with disaster staffing needs using regional personnel.

**Field:**

- Federal Coordinating Officer/Lead Federal Official (FCO/LFO) and EAO discuss advance communications plans, JIC location, and special logistics requirements.
- EAO meets with EA component leads (Assistant EAO) to convey expectations and guidance that has been provided.
- EAO meets with SLTT incident communications team.
- EAO coordinates the ESF 15 team's efforts in preparing the communications plan component to the State Coordinating Officer/FCO/LCO's incident action plan.
- Outreach to SLTT and private sector counterparts through calls and meetings.
- Congressional outreach to local offices of the congressional delegations in affected areas.
- Congressional advisories, fact sheets, and operations reports sent to appropriate stakeholders.
- VIP support based on operational needs and requirements.
- News conferences (federal, state, other partners as appropriate).
- Participate in operational meetings and calls as needed.
- Participate in NICCL, SICCL, PICCL, and National Business Emergency Operations Center calls as required.

**Action: Deployments**

- EA staffing is based on the incident action plan and the operational priorities.
- ESF 15 initial staff requirements are assessed and identified.
- Recommended staffing considerations:
  - Governmental Affairs.
  - Program Liaison.
  - Creative Specialists.



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- Media Relations.
  - Visual Imaging.
  - External Affairs Specialists.
  - Digital Communications.
  - Language Services.

#### **Action: Products**

- Strategic communication plan.
- Initial staffing plan.
- News releases (in English, Spanish, other languages identified, and accessible formats).
- Disaster assistance flyers for distribution to survivors (in needed/identified languages).
- Traditional media monitoring reports.
- Social listening reports.
- [Agency].gov page updates.
- Daily update on federal response activities.
- Battle Rhythm (daily meeting schedule).
- Talking points.
- Advisories, fact sheets, operational reports, briefing materials, and other updates needed for stakeholders.
- Photos and videos of disaster activities, commodities movements, survivor assistance, etc.
- Photo release.
- Staffing grid and organizational chart.

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**Appendix 4 to Annex A to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
ESF 15 External Affairs Officer Designation Letter**

MEMORANDUM FOR:     «EAO»  
                          FEMA ESF 15 External Affairs Officer

                          «FCO»  
                          FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer

                          Office of the Regional Administrator,  
                          FEMA Region «Region»

                          Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs,  
                          Department of Homeland Security

                          Office of the Director of Communications,  
                          The White House

FROM:                   «Name»  
                          Associate Administrator/ESF 15 Director  
                          FEMA Office of External Affairs

SUBJECT:               Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 Activation and the  
                          Appointment of an External Affairs Officer for «DREM» in  
                          «StateTerritory\_Tribe»

I am formally activating ESF 15 External Affairs. In doing so, I am instructing External Affairs staff to comply with the current operating procedures outlined in the above referenced documents. This activation is in response to «Reason» that occurred in «StateTerritory\_Tribe» during the period of «Incident\_Period». «major\_disaster\_or\_emergency» was declared on «Date\_of\_Dec».

I am appointing «NewEAO» as the External Affairs Officer (EAO) for the disaster. «Pronoun» will serve as the lead communications advisor to the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), and will coordinate with me, as the ESF 15 Operations Director, as necessary for strategic direction.

As the EAO, «EAO» is authorized to modify the ESF 15 organizational structure in accordance with the FCO and Joint Field Office (JFO) requirements to effectively execute federal external affairs activities.

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The EAO also is authorized to assign ESF 15 leadership and staff personnel in coordination with the FCO, myself, and National ESF 15 Component Directors. The EAO should immediately collocate with the FCO. In addition to qualified staff, EAOs are expected to use trainees where possible and are required to work closely with the FCO to ensure a staffing plan includes the use of coach/evaluators and trainees. The EAO will provide the ESF 15 Operations Director a proposed staffing plan as well as confirm the arrival of External Affairs staff on site until all initial staffing requests are filled.

The EAO is authorized and encouraged to maintain close coordination with federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector counterparts, as determined by the nature of this incident.

The EAO should coordinate all actions and requests through the Regional External Affairs Office and FEMA's Office of External Affairs Disaster Operations Division.

REFERENCES:                      National Response Framework  
   National Disaster Recovery Framework  
   National Incident Management System  
   JFO Standard Operating Procedures  
   ESF 15 Standard Operating Procedures

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**Appendix 5 Annex A to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
ESF 15 External Affairs Officer Designation Letter – Change in Appointment**

MEMORANDUM FOR:     «NewEAO»  
                                  FEMA ESF 15 External Affairs Officer

                                  «FCO\_»  
                                  FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer

                                  Office of the Regional Administrator,  
                                  FEMA Region «Region»

                                  Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs,  
                                  Department of Homeland Security

                                  Office of the Director of Communications,  
                                  The White House

FROM:                     «Name»  
                                  Associate Administrator/ESF 15 Director  
                                  FEMA Office of External Affairs

SUBJECT:                 Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 Activation and the  
                                  Change in Appointment of an External Affairs Officer for «DREM»  
                                  in «StateTerritory\_Tribe»

I am appointing «NewEAO» as the External Affairs Officer (EAO) for the disaster. «NewEAOpronoun» will serve as the lead communications advisor to the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), and also will coordinate with me, as the ESF 15 Operations Director, as necessary for strategic direction.

This appointment represents a change in EAO for this disaster declaration. «NewEAO» is replacing «EAO», who has completed this disaster assignment.

As the EAO, «EAO» is authorized to modify the ESF 15 organizational structure in accordance with the FCO and Joint Field Office requirements to effectively execute federal external affairs activities. In addition to qualified staff, EAOs are expected to use trainees where possible and are required to work closely with the FCO to ensure a staffing plan that includes the use of coach/evaluators and trainees.

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The EAO is authorized and encouraged to maintain close coordination with federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector counterparts as determined by the nature of this incident.

The EAO should continue coordination with the Regional External Affairs Office and FEMA's Office of External Affairs Disaster Operations Division.

REFERENCES:                      National Response Framework  
   National Disaster Recovery Framework  
   National Incident Management System  
   JFO Standard Operating Procedures  
   ESF 15 Standard Operating Procedures

**Appendix 6 to Annex A to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
Daily Event Schedule (Battle Rhythm) Template**

**HAWAII WILDFIRES**

ESF 15-- EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
**NATIONAL JOINT INFORMATION CENTER (NJIC)**  
**BATTLE RHYTHM**  
 FRIDAY, AUGUST 11, 2023

TIME (EASTERN)	MEETING/EVENT	LOGISTICS/INFO	PARTICIPANTS
7:00 AM	NRCC Day Shift Begins	NRCC	ESF 15 EAA, EAS
7:00 AM	Senior Leadership Talking Points		Public Affairs
8:00 AM	NJIC Activated	NRCC NJIC	HQ OEA
8:30 AM	Ops Briefing	FEMA TV 13	FEMA Staff
9:30 AM	HQ Sync Call	Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: Passcode:	HQ EA Leadership
10:00 AM	Daily Fact Sheet	Daily Briefing Points	Public Affairs
10:30 AM	Hawaii Messaging Sync	Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: CLOSED	Public Affairs, Comms, ESF Coordination
1:00 PM	<b>Bloomberg Radio</b>	FEMA Studio A	Agency Spokesperson
2:00 PM	Social Listening Report Distributed	Sent by: <a href="mailto:fema-social-listening@fema.dhs.gov">fema-social-listening@fema.dhs.gov</a>	Social Listening
2:10 PM	<b>The Weather Channel en Español</b>	Studio A Topic: FEMA response to Maui wildfire	Agency Spokesperson
3:00 PM	NICCL Call	Zoom Link Passcode:	HQ leadership, Regional Staff, ESF Coordination
5:00 PM	Sync Call	Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: Passcode:	HQ EA Leadership, Regional EA Staff
7:00 PM	Congressional Briefing	Access Information: Please click <a href="#">here</a> to pre-register	CAD, HQ Leadership
8:00 AM	NRCC Day Shift Ends	NRCC	ESF 15 EAA, EAS

**Appendix 7 to Annex A to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
ESF 15 Daily Communications Plan – Sample Template**

**Hurricane Beryl Daily Communications Plan 7/9/2024**

Public Affairs and Planning Point of Contact: [name@email.com](mailto:name@email.com)

Objectives for July 9:

1. Promote post-storm actions that residents can take to remain safe and mitigate risk.
2. Provide people who live in the storm’s continued path with preparedness messaging that focuses on having a plan, checking on family, and dangers such as flooding.
3. Illustrate FEMA, federal and nonprofit partner support to the state of Texas during initial response phase.
4. If a declaration is granted, encourage residents to apply for disaster assistance and increase awareness of FEMA support for individuals and communities.

**Objective 1:  
Promote post-storm actions that residents can take to remain safe and mitigate risk**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Details</i>
<b>Key elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Urge residents to continue following instructions from local authorities.</li> <li>2. Promote heat messaging (cooling options, etc.).</li> <li>3. Promote safe generator use.</li> <li>4. Promote shelter in place safety for those who did not evacuate.</li> <li>5. Promote flood and power outage safety.</li> <li>6. Promote continued awareness of post-storm hazards.</li> </ol> <p>Promote local and state messaging about how residents can find where to get shelter, food, water and address other immediate needs.</p>
<b>Priority audiences</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Residents.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable and non-English speaking populations; strong focus on multilingual audiences and underserved populations in general.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. National and local media.</li> <li>3. Force multipliers, partner agencies and organizations.</li> </ol> <p>Congressional; state and local; and governmental partners.</p>
<b>Anticipated barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people thinking a heightened risk no longer exists.</li> <li>• High population of non-English speaking residents.</li> </ul>

<i>Category</i>	<i>Details</i>
<b>Tactics</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Issue press release on heat and generator safety (HQ will issue. Region 6 will amplify).</li> <li>2. Use social media and traditional media to remind residents to assess their needs and provide information on resources that are available to them, such as shelter, food, and water distribution, etc.</li> <li>3. Promote information in commonly used languages among affected regions and use ASL interpretation for public messaging.</li> <li>4. Use social listening report to determine messaging needs above and beyond post-storm actions, lifesaving and flood safety messaging.</li> <li>5. Use social media to amplify state and local leaders in critical messaging.</li> </ol>

**Objective 2:**

**Provide people who live in the storm’s continued path with preparedness messaging that focuses on having a plan, checking on family, and dangers such as flooding.**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Details</i>
<b>Key elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Residents in the projected path should make any last-minute preparations.</li> <li>2. Promote listening to local authorities.</li> <li>3. Promote evacuation zone awareness.</li> <li>4. Promote flood safety messaging.</li> <li>5. Promote checking on friends and family.</li> <li>6. Promote the importance of having a plan.</li> <li>7. Promote messaging about staying informed.</li> </ol>
<b>Priority audiences</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Residents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable and non-English speaking populations; strong focus on multilingual audiences and underserved populations in general.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. National and local media.</li> <li>3. Force multipliers, partner agencies and organizations.</li> <li>4. Congressional; state and local; and governmental partners.</li> <li>5. Community leaders who can help amplify the opportunity.</li> </ol>
<b>Anticipated barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public distrust of FEMA and federal response.</li> </ul>
<b>Tactics</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Issue press release in coordination with state of Illinois (Region 5 issuing).</li> <li>2. Amplify state and local guidance on social media.</li> <li>3. Include preparedness messaging in social media posts.</li> </ol>



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**Objective 3:****Illustrate FEMA, federal and nonprofit partner support to the state of Texas and parts of the Midwest during initial response phase.**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Details</i>
<b>Key elements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. FEMA staff are on the ground available to provide support to the state of Texas.</li><li>2. FEMA staff are prepared to assist Regions 5, 6, and 7 that will be impacted.</li></ol>
<b>Priority audiences</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. National and local media.</li><li>2. Force multipliers, partner agencies and organizations.</li><li>3. Congressional and governmental partners.</li></ol>
<b>Anticipated barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public may question FEMA’s ability to respond to multiple disasters efficiently.</li></ul>
<b>Tactics</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Use social listening to leverage and amplify partner actions.</li><li>2. Amplify messaging from partners.</li><li>3. <b>If Occurring:</b> Provide update on potential rescues by urban search and rescue teams.</li></ol>

**Objective 4:****If a declaration is granted, encourage residents to apply for disaster assistance and increase awareness of FEMA support for individuals and communities**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Details</i>
<b>Key elements</b>	Messages only to be used in the case of a declaration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Residents of _____ who have been affected by Hurricane Beryl should register for FEMA assistance.</li><li>• Survivors can register for assistance by visiting <a href="http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov">www.DisasterAssistance.gov</a>, calling 1-800-621-3362 or by using the FEMA App. If you use a relay service, such as video relay (VRS), captioned telephone or other service, give FEMA the number for those services.</li></ul>
<b>Priority audiences</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Survivors and other affected individuals</li><li>2. Community leaders who can help amplify the opportunity.</li></ol>
<b>Anticipated barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public distrust of FEMA and federal response.</li></ul>
<b>Tactics</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Draft a press release encouraging people to apply for disaster assistance, emphasizing the types of assistance available. Use fill-in-the-blanks.</li><li>2. Prepare a partner amplification toolkit on applying for disaster assistance.</li><li>3. Set up the social media cadence for following a declaration.</li><li>4. Identify media we may want to pitch for stories post declaration.</li></ol>

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# **Annex B to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Governmental Affairs (Intergovernmental Affairs and Congressional Affairs)**

#### **Intergovernmental Affairs**

##### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. National Preparedness Goal
- D. National Infrastructure Protection Plan
- E. Tribal Support Annex

##### **Purpose**

This annex describes federal coordination with state, local, and territorial governments and community organizations, as appropriate during an incident requiring a coordinated federal effort across the response and recovery phases to include Stafford and non-Stafford Act notice and no-notice events.

##### **Mission**

The component serves as a liaison to stakeholders within an affected area(s) during an incident or events requiring a coordinated federal response. Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) identifies issues, responds to questions, clarifies or corrects policy and procedure concerns, and links impacted government officials and community leaders, as appropriate, with questions or concerns to those who can assist them.

##### **Tribal Affairs**

Guidance on conducting ESF 15 missions with regard to federally recognized Tribal Nations is contained in Annex D. Tribal Affairs has been removed from this section and expanded to allow for a more extensive explanation on how to serve Tribal Nations.

#### **NRF ESF 15 Quick Summary – Intergovernmental Affairs (State, Local, and Territorial Governments and Community Organizations)**

##### **Supports External Affairs by:**

- Preparing an initial action plan to support the Federal Coordinating Officer/Lead Federal Official, and the Unified Coordination Group (UCG) with incident-specific guidance and objectives, at the beginning and throughout an actual or potential incident.
- Promoting federal interaction with state, local, and territorial governments and community organizations, as appropriate, by serving as primary federal point of contact for elected and appointed officials, both in the field and at coordination facilities.

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- Implementing a system of information sharing with IGA stakeholders. Educating and informing IGA stakeholders by disseminating information about response efforts, protocols, and recovery programs.
  - Building relationships with elected and appointed IGA stakeholders to maintain an on-going dialogue, and serve as a clear, single point of contact for IGA stakeholders during an incident's response and recovery.
  - Advising leadership on current and potential issues and possible resolutions.
  - Coordinating the national effort through DHS or FEMA IGA and the relevant lead agency IGA.

## **Organization**

### **External Affairs Organizational Concept**

It is recognized that an incident requiring a coordinated federal response will have a significant effect on the normal business of our Nation to include societal functions, infrastructure, economy, and population. Accordingly, DHS will employ pre-identified organizational processes to foster information-sharing, deliver constituent services, and serve as a liaison between the federal government and state, local, and territorial governments and community organizations, as appropriate.

### **DHS Office of Intergovernmental Affairs**

DHS IGA serves as the ESF 15 component director in the ESF 15 organization. DHS IGA coordinates communications with elected and appointed public officials of affected state, local, and territorial leadership within the U.S. during notice and no-notice incidents and events requiring a coordinated federal response. DHS IGA also will coordinate as necessary with preparedness and response communities, national associations, and other non-governmental counterparts.

### **National Coordination and Support**

To ensure DHS maintains a fully informed External Affairs capability at the national level during incidents and events requiring a coordinated federal response, IGA maintains close coordination with the White House and National Security Council, DHS senior staff, ESF 15 leadership, federal agency IGA officials and other senior officials.

### **IGA Activities with State, Local, and Territorial Officials and Community Organizations**

Governmental Affairs may conduct many activities including, but not limited to:

- Conduct and facilitate introductory meetings to ensure program requests are streamlined.
- Attend and participate in meetings with governors, state legislators, country commissioners, mayors, faith-based organizations, historically underserved community organizations, and other elected and appointed officials.
- Attend and participate in community led meetings.
- Deliver programmatic briefings.
- Identify and deploy effective communication methods to share information.
- Address and resolve issues and concerns.

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- Identify and analyze trends and potentially volatile issues.
  - Build trusted relationships.
  - Serve as an External Affairs Advisory/Liaison, responsible for ESF 15 outreach and activities if a branch structure exists.

## **Congressional Affairs**

### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. FEMA Incident Management Handbook
- D. National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)

### **Purpose**

This annex provides guidance on Congressional Affairs activities during the response phase of an incident requiring a coordinated federal response.

## **NRF ESF 15 Quick Summary – Congressional Affairs (CA)**

### **Supports External Affairs by:**

- Establishing contact with affected congressional offices, relevant congressional oversight committees, and House and Senate leadership, in coordination with Headquarters and Regional Congressional Affairs (where applicable).
- Maintaining positive and continuous two-way communications with Members of Congress and their offices and/or committee staff to provide accurate, timely information and gather feedback and situational awareness from Members, offices, and committees.
- Leveraging congressional relationships to promote the amplification of true and accurate information in a contested information environment.
- Providing situational awareness to External Affairs leadership on congressional engagements, including hot issues, information trends, and movement within an impacted area.
- Contributing to the initial communications action plan in support of objectives identified by field leadership.
- In coordination with Headquarters Congressional Affairs and state counterparts, establishing contact with congressional offices representing affected areas.
- Coordinating with interagency congressional affairs counterparts to deliver a unified message to all stakeholders. This interagency coordination also should include department-level and White House Office of Legislative Affairs.

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## **Congressional Affairs Primary Function**

Governmental Affairs Specialists with experience working with congressional offices proactively engage and coordinate the exchange of information between federal agencies involved in the response and recovery and Members of Congress and their staff by fostering a positive and continuous dialogue. When applicable, they also coordinate with relevant interagency Congressional Affairs counterparts to provide accurate, timely, consistent, and comprehensive information to Members of Congress and their staff, relevant oversight committees, and House and Senate leadership.

## **Concept of Operations**

The External Affairs Operations Director or Officer will deploy a Governmental Affairs Manager during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. Governmental Managers, and where applicable, their teams, will develop a unified message through the open exchange of information between the interagency and Congressional Affairs counterparts involved in the incident. They will deliver timely and accurate information to Congress in a coordinated effort with other federal, state, and local congressional counterparts. ESF 15 Planning and Products will support the Governmental Affairs team with congressional products, such as advisories, operations report summaries, briefing materials, and fact sheets.

## **Essential Functions**

- Establish and serve as primary point(s) of contact for Congressional stakeholders by fostering and facilitating productive and ongoing two-way communications with all affected Congressional offices. Examples of these communications include:
  - Advisories.
  - Congressional conference calls or briefings.
  - Congressional Member or staff visits or delegation trips.
  - Email or verbal requests for information (inquiries).
  - In-person office briefings.
- Facilitate and coordinate positive engagements with Congress and field leadership, UCG, and other agency response and recovery leadership.
- Provide situational awareness to External Affairs leadership on congressional engagements, including hot issues, information trends, and movement within affected area(s) with active direct or support operations.
- Establish and implement internal coordination protocols and processes for responding to congressional requests (e.g., inquiries, invitations, visits, etc.), development and dissemination of public-facing products including advisories, tracking engagements, and where applicable, agency headquarters, regional, or interagency approvals.
- Determine staffing requirements and establish organizational charts and other situational awareness products to capture congressional operational activities.

## **Congressional Affairs Incident Tasks**

- Work with interagency congressional affairs counterparts to establish advisory and notification procedures for congressional offices in coordination with Headquarters Congressional Affairs.
- Make initial contacts with congressional district offices as soon as possible.

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- Provide one point of contact to congressional district offices.
  - Provide initial incident information.
  - Confirm congressional offices' contact person(s) and contact information.
  - Determine congressional district office needs and specific concerns.

### **Outreach and Communications Activities**

- Coordinate with ESF 15 Planning and Products to provide key messages to congressional offices that can be communicated to the public.
- Initiate conference calls with affected congressional offices 24-48 hours after the event when practicable and throughout the response and recovery operations.
- When possible, schedule congressional office visits to address congressional concerns, needs, and emerging issues.
- Maintain ongoing communications with all impacted congressional district offices and respond to inquiries in a timely manner.
- Document all significant activities and interactions with congressional district offices and key parties. Keep records of congressional inquiries. Provide the EAO and field leadership with summaries on the Members of Congress affected (including expected level of their involvement), impact on their districts and other significant issues, biographical sketches of members (including their affiliation, term in office, major committee assignments, leadership positions, and location of state/district offices).

### **Interagency Coordination**

Establish contact with federal department and agency personnel involved to develop a coordinated interagency congressional affairs strategy. Establish procedural guidelines with congressional liaisons from other federal departments and agencies.

### **Documentation**

Document all significant activities and interactions with congressional district offices and key parties. Keep records of congressional inquiries. Establish a phone log.

### **Congressional Visits**

Congressional delegation (CODEL) or staff delegation (STAFFDEL) visits to operational areas will be handled by Congressional Affairs. Congressional Affairs has primary responsibility for oversight committee CODEL/STAFFDELS or other congressional engagements as determined by ESF 15 Operations Director or Congressional Affairs Manager. In the events that stand up a VIP coordination cell, Congressional Affairs will serve as the VIP coordinator for congressional visits, with support from the VIP coordination cell. CODEL/STAFFDEL visits will utilize a VIP SOP for trip planning and coordination.

### **Governmental Affairs Staff Positions**

#### **Intergovernmental/Congressional Affairs Manager**

Manages the routine day-to-day outreach and activities between Intergovernmental/Congressional Affairs Specialists (ICSP) and state, local, tribal, and territorial

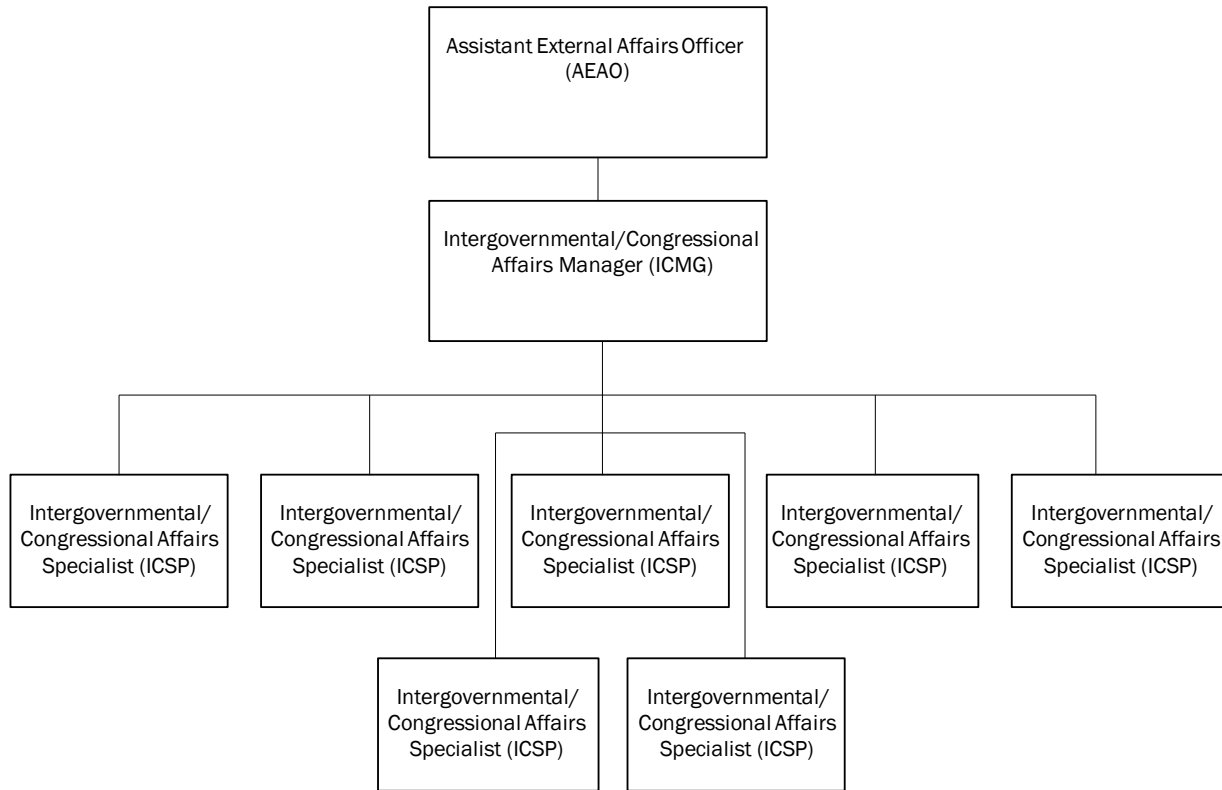
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governments, and/or congressional offices, ensuring the Assistant External Affairs Officer has the resources necessary to support field leadership.

**Intergovernmental/Congressional Affairs Specialist**

Conducts outreach to elected and appointed officials, such as congressional offices, county and parish elected officials, mayors, borough, and city council members within a designated region to inform them of updates in all program areas and to provide each with a single point of contact for ongoing issues and concerns. ICSPs ensure that stakeholder inquiries are processed accurately and in a timely manner, that advisories are sent per disaster protocols, and that all requests are resolved.

**Appendix 1 to Annex B to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
Governmental Affairs Organizational Chart**



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# **Annex C to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Joint Information Center**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. FEMA Incident Management Handbook

#### **Purpose**

The annex specifies guidance for the Federal Joint Information Center(s) (JIC) and Unified Coordination Group (UCG) media affairs operations.

#### **NRF ESF 15 Quick Summary – Joint Information Center**

#### **Supports External Affairs by:**

- Preparing an initial action plan to support the Federal Coordinating Officer/Lead Federal Official (FCO/LFO) and UCG with incident-specific guidance and objectives at the beginning and throughout an actual or potential incident.
- Establishing a JIC or co-locating with an established state, local, tribal, or territorial (SLTT) JIC.
- Overseeing the key function of accessible media relations, visual imaging, and digital communications, ensuring unity of effort among all federal JIC participants.
- Coordinating messages with federal and SLTT governments.
- Providing incident-related lifesaving and life sustaining information through accessible media, web, and social media platforms to individuals, families, businesses, and industries directly or indirectly affected by the incident.
- Conducting news conferences and briefings.
- Gathering information on the incident.
- Using a broad range of resources to disseminate information.
- Monitoring news coverage to ensure accurate information is disseminated.
- Monitoring and analyzing social media conversations to provide situational awareness of public perception issues.
- Answering public inquiries received through digital platforms.
- Directing and coordinating public affairs activities.
- Training federal responders on media release policy.
- Responding to rumors and inaccurate information through the media or official social media accounts and online resources such as a rumor control page on FEMA.gov.



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## **JIC Operating Concepts**

A JIC is a central point for coordination of incident information, media affairs activities, media access to information, and digital communications regarding the latest situational developments.

In the event of an incident requiring a coordinated federal response, JICs are established to synchronize federal, SLTT, and private-sector incident communications with affected populations and the public. Collocation with the SLTT JIC is essential, as it facilitates coordination and cooperation for messaging.

The JIC is the field leadership's resource to communicate incident management response information. The field and ESF 15 leadership are empowered to speak on operations and policy.

Major announcements, daily briefings, and incident updates from the JIC are coordinated with the FCO/LFO and the External Affairs Officer (EAO) before public release and with state and local counterparts as appropriate.

## **JIC Organization**

### **Requirement**

A JIC, or collocation of federal JIC staff with the state and local JIC, must be established during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response.

### **Scalable and Flexible**

The JIC is designed to accommodate the wide range of responses likely to be performed by the ESF 15 team, ranging from a large multi-agency, all-hazards response to a small single agency, single-hazard response. The JIC structure is equally scalable and flexible for use in any incident. The structure can grow or shrink, depending on the unique requirements of a specific response. This adaptability encompasses staffing, the organizational structure, facilities, hours of operation, resource and logistical requirements, and products and services.

### **JIC Information Management**

Consistent with the decentralized organization and execution of external communications, news releases, interviews, news briefings, and statements are authorized for release by the ESF 15 EAO and as delegated. Significant policy statements and potentially sensitive external materials should be coordinated with the FCO/LFO before release. Any potential release issue that poses a concern with national security, law enforcement, nuclear security and safety, and classified information should be coordinated with the FCO/LFO and UCG.

## **Joint Information Center Types**

### **National JIC**

The National JIC (NJIC) may be established by FEMA Office of External Affairs, or at the request of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs or a lead federal agency/department. Federal departments and agencies are requested to provide representatives to support the NJIC. The NJIC can be activated over an extended duration of time (i.e., weeks or months), for incidents requiring a coordinated federal response and/or an incident affecting broad area(s) of

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the country (e.g., coordination for a nationwide pandemic). If necessary, and/or to support federal incident communications continuity of operations (COOP), the NJIC may be established outside Washington, D.C.

### **Area JIC**

Due to the geographic magnitude of a large incident, an area command structure may be employed per the incident command system. If an area structure is employed, it must be assessed whether a supporting area JIC is necessary. In establishing this organization, careful consideration must be given as to where the media will get their primary information, existing state and local JICs, and liaison coordination among participating JICs.

### **Virtual JIC**

As noted in the National Response Framework (NRF), a virtual JIC may be employed. A virtual JIC uses technology and communications to connect participating External Affairs components when physical collocation is not feasible or practical. If a virtual JIC is employed, leadership must ensure that connectivity and inclusion of incident participants is ensured.

### **Incident JIC**

The incident JIC supports the FCO/LFO and UCG. This is the physical location from which External Affairs professionals from organizations involved in the response and recovery work together to provide critical emergency information, media response, and public affairs functions. The JIC serves as a focal point for the coordination and dissemination of federal information to the public and media concerning incident prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. The JIC is established at or virtually connected to the UCG, through the ESF 15 staff. A media center may be established at a central location for all working media to obtain news briefings and press conferences. Collocation or use of one incident media center by the federal and SLTT counterparts may be an option.

### **Satellite JIC**

The satellite JIC is smaller scale than other JICs and is established primarily to support and operate under the control of the incident JIC. Its staff and operations are directed by the ESF 15 EAO. The satellite JIC(s) provides scalable and flexible capability for timely release of information, as the incident situation evolves.

## **JIC Establishment**

### **Activation**

The ESF 15 EAO and ESF 15 Leadership Cadre will work closely with the FCO/LFO during the UCG Scoping Meeting to outline initial and final requirements for the JIC. This is critical as the JIC must be established and communicating as soon as possible. ESF 5 is responsible for ensuring that facilities and equipment for the JIC are provided and operational.

### **JIC Coordination with Government Counterparts**

From the onset of an incident requiring a coordinated federal response, JIC collocation, or coordination is a high-priority decision. If possible, ESF 15 leadership should co-locate

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federal JIC forces with the state and local incident JIC. While this may not always be feasible, the ESF 15 EAO should provide liaisons if collocation is not appropriate or possible. The key element that must be remembered is “unity of effort.” Consistency in communications messaging and support to the public are enhanced by working together as a team. If all communications counterparts decide to co-locate the JIC at the Joint Field Office (JFO), liaisons are requested from SLTT communicators to staff the facility and ensure unity of effort.

### **Configuration and Staffing**

JIC organization and staffing are based on the basic requirements established in Nations Incident Management System (NIMS) and integration capabilities with the state and local authorities. The JIC should reflect the size and nature of the incident and the anticipated needs of the agencies and partners who will staff it.

### **Satellite JICs**

Satellite JICs remain under the direct supervision of the EAO. They will always maintain the closest liaison to the parent JIC.

### **Spokespersons**

The spokesperson(s) will be designated by the ESF 15 Operations Director and the EAO.

### **Logistics Support (See Annex X)**

Through ESF 5, the UCG ensures that logistics support, working space, equipment, and technical support are provided to the JIC in a timely manner. The ESF 15 EAO and resource management support person must prepare and provide detailed requirements as soon as practical to ensure the rapid establishment and support of the JIC.

### **Federal Interagency Staffing (See Annex Q)**

The ESF 15 External Affairs team and representatives from all federal departments and agencies will locate in the JIC or be linked through the Joint Information System (JIS). Federal personnel reporting to work in the ESF 15 JIC will be required to comply with this SOP. The JIC and its operations are a unified federal communications operation.

### **JIC Staff Positions**

#### **Joint Information Center Manager**

Supervises Media Relations, Digital Communications, and Visual Imaging Specialists and manages media relations responsibilities in support of the FCO/LFO and directs hour-to-hour JIC media functions. Works closely with the Planning and Products Manager to coordinate strategic messaging and to inform them of issues that might be developing from a traditional and social media standpoint. Coordinates activities in conjunction with other federal and SLTT counterparts with primary responsibility of overseeing media relations staff in the field as opposed to the UCG. Develops field strategy for reaching all media outlets in a proactive, strategic manner. Responsible for supplying all field staff with the latest produced information and the latest strategic messaging. Gathers and summarizes field reports with an emphasis on developing issues to be used to help develop strategic messaging. Handles events such as news conferences,

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press briefings, and tours for senior officials of affected areas. Works in support of protocol issues as well as organizing and planning of VIP visits.

### **Media Relations Specialist**

Serves as the primary point of contact for the media concerning all federal disaster response, recovery, and mitigation programs. Responsible for providing basic disaster information to the media and for organizing subject matter experts for interviews with the media depending upon the topic. Also maintains all media lists and documents all media contacts.

### **Digital Communications Specialist**

Responsible for conducting social listening, crafting social media content, and managing web content for official websites. Conducts daily monitoring of social media discussion regarding ongoing disaster response, analyzes the online discussion and summarizes key points in a concise report. Reports should follow privacy standards established by DHS. Elevates hot issues identified through social listening to the appropriate agency programs or ESF 15 leadership. Ensures information on the disaster website is accurate, up-to-date, and optimized for visitors. Works with Planning and Products to identify messaging that should be shared on social media, provides recommendations on the appropriate platforms to utilize to reach the target audience and tailors messaging for each platform. Coordinates with official agency social media account administrator on the posting of content to official social media accounts.

### **Visual Imaging Specialists**

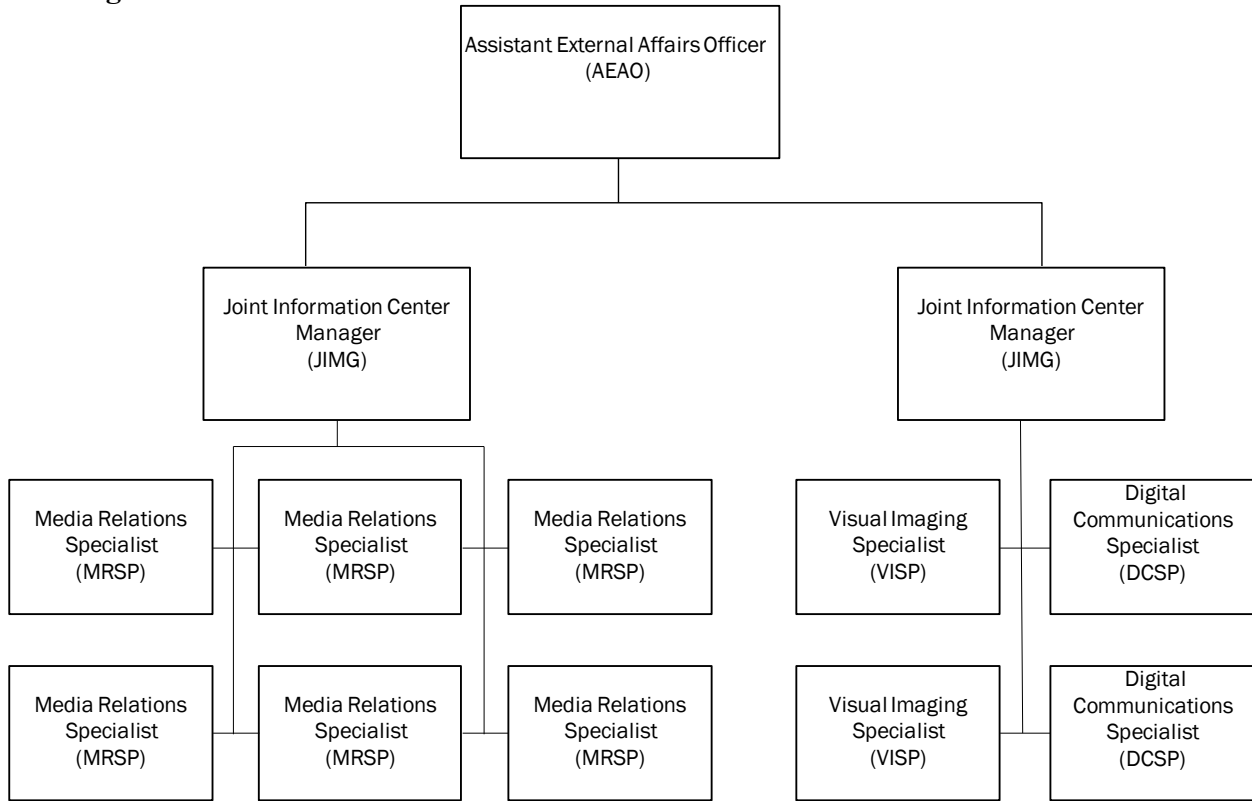
Responsible for capturing, editing, organizing, and saving photo and video documentation of activities in the field, according to the Visual Imaging Strategy. The purpose of these photos and videos is to tell the story of disaster response and recovery efforts. Photo and video coverage require the Visual Imaging Specialist to obtain consent forms and be conscientious of protecting personal identifiable information. They work very closely with Digital Communications Specialists, Creative Specialists, and program liaisons to develop imagery requirements for social media posts, news releases, blogs, websites, public service campaigns, video documentation, special productions, remote live interview feeds, and logistical support of public meetings and presentations.

### **Appendices**

1. JIC Organizational Chart
2. Release of Information and Spokespersons
3. ESF 15 Social Listening Report
4. Photo Release
5. JIC Establishment Checklist

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**Appendix 1 to Annex C to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
JIC Organizational Chart**



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## **Appendix 2 to Annex C to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs Release of Information and Spokespersons**

### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. Interagency Integrated SOP

### **Purpose**

This appendix outlines policy and guidance for release of information by the Unified Coordination Group (UCG) and other federal personnel.

### **Consideration Factors**

#### **National Policy**

In accordance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD 5) and during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response, it is federal policy to maintain public trust by proactively disseminating consistent, timely, accurate and accessible public information and instructions through coordination among federal and state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) communicators. This concept is characterized as “maximum disclosure with minimum delay.”

#### **Factors in Releasing Information**

Many factors are considered in the release of information during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. Normal federal or departmental processes are adjusted to ensure that lifesaving and life-sustaining information is provided as soon as possible. In fact, release of information is a balance between the mandate described above and full consideration of certain limitations or contributing factors described below. It is important that the Federal Coordinating Officer/Lead Federal Official (FCO/LFO), UCG leadership, and ESF 15 Leadership Cadre and senior staff fully understand these factors.

#### **Federal Interagency**

An incident requiring a coordinated federal response, regardless of its nature, presents both coordination and communications challenges to the ESF 15 team. These challenges must be quickly and consistently managed by all levels of the strategic federal communications team. While the FCO/LFO and ESF 15 team will have discretion and authority to release information, they will also ensure that higher authorities are apprised of the forthcoming announcement of major developments. Daily conference calls between the strategic communications team representatives are the best means to support this requirement and ensure consistency of messaging.

#### **Coordination with Government Authorities**

Federal External Affairs personnel must ensure that public communications activities are fully and appropriately coordinated and/or synchronized with SLTT authorities. This recognizes the leadership role of the latter about incident management and as the best source of lifesaving and life-sustaining public guidance and information.

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## **Classified and Law Enforcement Information**

Incidents requiring a coordinated federal response may involve information dealing with national security, classified issues, law enforcement sensitive, and radiological security and safety. Consideration must be afforded to this material where its release could jeopardize operational security and/or interfere with a judicial proceeding or law enforcement official or activity. See Annex J for more information.

## **Privacy**

The actions stated in this SOP should be in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. All DHS personnel are prohibited from maintaining records that describe how a US citizen (USC) or lawful permanent resident exercises his or her First Amendment rights, “unless expressly authorized by statute or by the individual about whom the record is maintained or unless pertinent to and within the scope of an authorized law enforcement activity.”

It is important to note, DHS does not profile, target, or discriminate against any individual for exercising his or her First Amendment rights.

## **Spokespersons**

### **Unified Coordination Group/ESF 15 Headquarters Staff**

The ESF 15 leadership and staff support mission requirements and incident communications operations. Personnel are authorized to speak on behalf of the FCO/LFO, the UCG, and ESF 15. They are authorized to brief the media on all aspects of the federal response, including policy and operations.

### **Authorized Spokespersons**

The following personnel address policy and incident management operations:

- ESF 15 External Affairs Officer (EAO).
- ESF 15 Assistant External Affairs Officer (Assistant EAO).
- Press Secretary.
- All others who can talk about what they do.

### **Field Operations**

Through established policy and when authorized by the FCO/LFO, federal field response personnel are authorized to speak to the media within the scope of their assigned duties and knowledge. This is an important element as it can provide the public a clear perspective of the dedication of federal responders and the scope of the response effort. The guiding principle is “talk about what you do.” Examples include the following:

### **Rescue Helicopter Aircrews**

Discuss rescues, missions, and special training.

### **FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Task Force**

Discuss mission, experience, operations—what they are doing now and where they came from.

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## **Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT)**

Discuss mission, qualifications, experience, and previous incidents.

### **Media Access**

Media access is a critical component of the overall external communications effort and highly encouraged. The above guidelines continue to apply when media are provided access to federal incident management forces. Remember – Talk about what you do.

### **Federal ESF 15 and Joint Information Center Policy**

Through authorized spokespersons, the federal government will proactively respond in a professional and timely manner to all media requests for information, interviews, and visual imagery.

### **Release Authority**

Consistent with the decentralized organization and execution of external communications, news releases, interviews, news briefings, and statements are authorized for release by the ESF 15 EAO, and as delegated. Significant policy statements and potentially sensitive external materials should be coordinated with the FCO/LFO before release. Any potential release issue that poses a concern with national security, law enforcement, radiological security and safety, and classified information should be coordinated with the FCO/LFO and the UCG.

### **Contractors and Release of Information Spokespersons**

During an incident requiring a coordinated federal response, federal contract personnel do not have a standing authorization to conduct media interviews and activities. Senior contractors or those with specific skill sets, such as scientific or technical expertise, may be identified as primary or potential spokespersons. In other cases, contractors may be approached in the field by media, but lack the qualifications or authority to speak in an official capacity. The general guidance below covers contractors participating in a federal response.

Contracted personnel should have language in their national contract or agreement that details the scope and nature of their authority to speak, under certain circumstances, but as standard practice should seek guidance from their corporate headquarters before proceeding. Contractors are not automatically empowered to conduct media activities in the same manner as Federal employees.

The ESF 15 EAO, Assistant EAO, and the senior representative of a federal agency with contract oversight, working within the UCG or ESF 15 staff, should coordinate with contractors, as appropriate, to identify potential spokespersons; conduct training on the release of information procedures; and provide approval for media activities, oversight, and guidance as necessary. Special federal departmental and agency guidance or protocols for contractors will be considered in executing this policy.



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## **Appendix 3 to Annex C to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs Social Listening Report**

Digital Communications Specialists conducting social listening should work with their Joint Information Center (JIC) and EA leadership to establish expectations for reporting related to social listening. Identifying critical information requirements supports the development of actionable reports.

Social listening reports should be timely, objective, credible, and relevant to the response. Social listening should follow a methodology to ensure information is being gathered, verified, and analyzed in a consistent way.

Privacy is a key consideration for social listening reports, and federal staff should familiarize themselves with privacy policies and processes before conducting social listening and creating reports. Social media handles and usernames are generally considered Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and should be protected to the greatest extent practicable. Agencies conducting social listening should consult with their privacy offices to ensure their activities are covered under appropriate privacy policies.

Digital Communications Specialists should continuously work with JIC and EA leadership to identify additional critical information requirements to be included in reports as the incident response continues and progresses.

FEMA social listening reports are organized by information requirement:

1. **FEMA and federal:** Discussion of FEMA and the federal response, including points of confusion or actionable public reaction. Should not include general updates about FEMA operations.
2. **Messaging Considerations:** Actionable insights about public reaction to the overall event. Focus should be on insights that can be incorporated into improving messaging strategy.
3. **False or misleading information:** False information that is being shared widely, either intentionally or unintentionally, and poses a threat to the ongoing response or FEMA's reputation.
4. **Operational Updates:** Operational updates related to lifelines or critical information requirements. This section should not duplicate other existing situational awareness reporting mechanisms. This section will decrease during the recovery period.

Listening reports should include disclaimer language that identifies the target audience for the report and asks that recipients not redistribute the report without express consent.

Below is an abbreviated example of a social listening report that demonstrates the type of information that may be captured in each section of the report.

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# DR-4697-MS MISSISSIPPI SEVERE STORMS AND TORNADOES SOCIAL LISTENING REPORT

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2023, 1200 ET  
ESF 15-- EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

*This report is for official use only. Intended recipients are emergency management officials requiring information about the immediate impact and needs associated with the event. Some insights within this report may reference unverified social media accounts belonging to individuals. Links to these accounts are not included in this report in order to protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Some media broadcast stories may not be publicly available.*

## SUMMARY

- Online mentions around the severe storms in Mississippi continue to decrease in volume, with the conversation since our last report largely focusing on the stories of those affected and recovery efforts from both government and community organizations.
  - Residents in nearby towns and counties continue to express their confusion and frustration that they are not receiving attention and aid despite also experiencing storm damage and power outages.
  - There is ongoing online conversation regarding how these recent storms highlight larger concerns in emergency preparedness, with some calling attention to the lack of quality storm shelters in low-income communities and how residents will need more support navigating federal assistance programs.
- Local media outlets and community organizations are reporting that debris clean up, residential storage and access to water remain top concerns among survivors in impacted areas.
- FEMA mentions in the context of the severe storms in Mississippi continue to decline. Since our last report, they are largely focusing on FEMA's response efforts and how the tax filing and payment deadlines have been extended for survivors in FEMA designated areas.

## FEMA CONVERSATION

- In a social media post, a prominent retired Army lieutenant urged the FEMA administrator to [cover all recovery costs](#) in Mississippi and approve manufactured housing units (MHU) for those displaced by the storm. The post implied that FEMA should be more transparent or faster to respond to the disaster in Mississippi. Most responses were supportive of the demands.
- There is a low volume of online conversation discussing the location of FEMA's emergency response site in Pearl, with some raising questions about its [distance from impacted areas](#) and others adding that supply warehouses are centrally located there.
- Some people who [lost power in other counties](#) are expressing confusion over whether they are able to apply for FEMA assistance on a post from U.S. House representative encouraging people to apply for FEMA aid.

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## PUBLIC PERCEPTION/SENTIMENT

- Residents in Montgomery County and other impacted areas continue to raise concerns that they are not being included in recovery efforts, with some adding that homes and farms have been destroyed and some residents remain without power. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
- Many residents in affected communities were grateful following news that a religious aid organization is looking to help build as many as 500 [storm-resistant mobile homes](#) for displaced survivors in Rolling Fork, Silver City and Amory.
- Some members of online community groups claimed they heard the organization will be building as many as 100 homes in Amory and 250 in Rolling Fork. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
- Public sentiment on local reporting that the president plans to visit affected areas in Mississippi is largely political. Online conversation around a potential visit is minimal. ([example 1](#), [example 2](#))
- A few survivors are asking about available assistance for those who [lost wages](#) due to their workplaces closing after the storm.

## RUMORS/MISINFORMATION

- The Amory Police Department encouraged residents who feel they have been scammed by a contracting company during cleanup and recovery to [report them](#) to the state's Attorney General.
- There is a low volume of people suggesting that government funding for survivors of the severe storms might be misappropriated or stolen due to many of the residents being Black and low income, with some mentioning that disaster relief funding has been abused for previous disasters in the state.

## LIFELINES

### Safety and Security

- The city of Amory [updated their evening curfew](#), which will apply in a smaller geographical area but remain from 2000-0600 CT.
- The Amory Police Department announced there will be a [test of the emergency warning system](#) today at 1200 CT.

### Food, Water, Shelter

- The governor of Mississippi reported that the Department of Health has determined that the water system in Sharkey County is non-operational due to the [destruction of a water tower](#) in Rolling Fork, adding that ten public water systems remain under a boil notice and six others remain operational but with some restrictions.

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## Appendix 4 to Annex C to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs Photo Release

Photo releases that depict staff in the field demonstrating compassion, competence, commitment, and credibility can be used to build confidence in the federal government as a trusted responder. Below is an example of a photo release.

Office of External Affairs  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20472



# FEMA

Aug. 13, 2023  
HQ-23-134  
Contact: FEMA News Desk  
Phone:

# News Release

## Photo Release— FEMA, Federal Response to Hawaii Wildfires Continues

**DVIDS:** [DVIDS— Video— B-Roll of Hawaii Wildfire \(dvidshub.net\)](https://dvidshub.net)  
**YouTube:** <https://youtu.be/xGil3TeuEh8>

WASHINGTON— As federal, state and county emergency responders increase their presence in Hawaii, they join forces with nonprofit partners to begin addressing the immediate needs of survivors affected by the devastating wildfires.

FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell and U.S. Fire Administrator Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell are in Hawaii meeting with state and local officials, as well as first responders and volunteers who have helped save lives since the fires began.

“The firefighters in Maui County are to be commended for their heroic firefighting efforts,” said Dr. Moore-Merrell. “As the fire quickly out-paced suppression efforts, they kept fighting even as many of them have lost their homes. As I talk with them during our station visits, they are extremely passionate about remaining on duty, while being encouraged to take appropriate rest for their own physical and mental well-being.”



WAILUKU, Hawaii-- FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell (left), U.S. Fire Administrator Moore-Merrell (right) and Hawaii Gov. Josh Green tour wildfire damages. (FEMA photo)



WAILUKU, Hawaii-- U.S. Fire Administrator Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell (right) speaks with Wailuku Fire Chief Bradford Ventura concerning the ongoing response to the Hawaii wildfires and working with FEMA and our federal partners. (FEMA photo)



WAILUKU, Hawaii-- FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell (right) and Hawaii Gov. Josh Green (center) tour wildfire damage and discuss the ongoing response to the Hawaii wildfires. (FEMA photo)



WAILUKU, Hawaii-- Hawaii Gov. Josh Green (left) speaks with an emergency response official about the ongoing response to the Hawaii wildfires and partnership with federal agencies. (FEMA photo)



WAILUKU, Hawaii-- American Red Cross officials discuss the ongoing response to the Hawaii wildfires and working with FEMA and federal partners. (FEMA photo)



WAILUKU, Hawaii-- FEMA officials discuss Hawaii wildfires response with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and federal partners. (FEMA photo)



WAILUKU, Hawaii-- The first of 32 generators arrive at the FEMA staging area to support the ongoing response to the Hawaii wildfires. (FEMA photo by John Mills)



WAILUKU, Hawaii— Meals and blankets arrive at the FEMA staging area. More commodities and supplies are arriving via the port to support the ongoing response to the Hawaii wildfires. (FEMA photo by John Mills)

###

*FEMA's mission is helping people before, during and after disasters.  
Follow [FEMA online](#), on X [@FEMA](#) or [@FEMAespanol](#), on FEM's [Facebook page](#) or [Espanol page](#) and at FEM's [YouTube](#) account.  
Also, follow FEMA Administrator activities: [@FEMAAdministrator](#)  
For preparedness information follow the Ready Campaign on X at [@Ready.gov](#), on Instagram [@Ready.gov](#) or on the [Ready Facebook](#) page.*

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## Appendix 5 to Annex C to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs JIC Establishment Checklist

### References:

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. FEMA Incident Management Handbook

### Purpose

This appendix details key actions for establishment of a Joint Information Center (JIC). This list is obviously affected by coordination with other counterparts and pre-incident facilities. It is intended to be a job aid to the public affairs team.

#### JIC Establishment Checklist

**Because of the critical nature of providing emergency information to disaster victims, one of the most pressing needs the External Affairs staff face in a crisis is arranging for necessary workspace, materials, telephones, and staff to properly establish a JIC. The following list will assist in standing up a JIC.**

- Coordinate with Federal Coordinating Officer/Lead Federal Official (FCO/LFO), Unified Coordination Group (UCG), and state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) authorities to identify the optimum and accessible JIC site for all participants.
- Brief JIC staff on concept of joint operations and policy on release of information.
- Identify staffing needs and request inter-agency support from DHS Office of Public Affairs.
- Determine JIC staffing hours (scope of response/level of media interest may require staffing beyond core UCG hours of operations).
- Obtain telephones and phone lines (dedicate one line with multiple phones as news desk number).
- Develop an inquiry tracking system that stores contact information for media outlets, editors, and reporters in the impacted area.
- Obtain Associated Press stylebooks.
- Obtain AM/FM Radio.
- Obtain televisions/monitors.
- Obtain video/voice recorders.
- Obtain pipe and drape (blue curtains).
- Obtain podium, microphone, speakers, and multi-box.
- Obtain media camera riser/platform.
- Obtain sufficient seating for press briefings.



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# **Annex D to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Tribal Affairs**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Prevention Framework
- C. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- D. National Preparedness Goal
- E. National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP)
- F. Tribal Relations Support Annex
- G. FEMA National Tribal Advisor NRCC “Tribal Desk” Job Aid

#### **Purpose**

The annex provides guidance on Tribal Affairs activities during the response and recovery phases of an incident requiring federal coordination with Tribal Nation(s) governments and community organizations.

#### **Mission and Concept of Operations**

Tribal Affairs serves as a liaison to Tribal Nation(s) counterparts within one or more affected area(s) during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. The Tribal Affairs component identifies challenges and unmet needs, responds to questions, clarifies, or corrects policy and procedure concerns, and links impacted Tribal government officials and community leaders who have questions or problems to those who can assist them.

A Tribal (Governmental) Affairs Advisor with experience working with Tribal Nations and their offices will serve as a liaison between the impacted Tribal Nation(s) and a federal agency when assistance is requested. If a Tribal Nation makes a direct request and is approved for a presidential disaster declaration, this function will be expanded. In such cases, the Tribal Nation becomes a grantee and field leadership coordinates directly with the individual the Tribal Nation assigns as the Tribal Coordinating Officer (TCO).

A Tribal Affairs Advisor may speak on behalf of field leadership, make operational decisions, and have the authority to direct program, regional, and other staff to meet the needs of the Tribal Nation. In coordination with Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA), the advisor determines the needs and fulfills requests for Tribal-related products such as advisories, press releases, daily updates, talking points, spot reports and other briefings. The Tribal Affairs Advisor also may have the authority to prioritize incident management functions and help manage federal engagement with the staff of impacted Tribal Nations. If additional Governmental Affairs staff are assigned to support the disaster, they must coordinate closely with the Tribal Affairs Advisor to ensure the TCO’s priorities and messages are clear and coordinated.

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## NRF ESF 15 Quick Summary – Tribal Affairs (Tribal governments)

### Supports External Affairs by:

- Preparing an initial action plan to support field leadership and Unified Coordination Group (UCG) with incident-specific guidance and objectives, at the beginning and throughout an actual or potential incident.
- Promoting federal interaction with Tribal and state governments (e.g., state Indian Affairs offices), as needed, and community organizations, as appropriate, by serving as the primary federal point of contact for elected and appointed officials, both in the field and at coordination facilities.
- Implementing a system of information sharing with Tribal Nation(s) leaders and Tribal emergency management staff. Informing Tribal counterparts by disseminating information about response efforts, protocols, and recovery programs.
- Building relationships with elected and appointed Tribal Nation(s) leaders and Tribal emergency management staff to maintain an on-going dialogue, and serve as a clear, single point of contact for Tribal counterparts during an incident.
- Advising Tribal leadership and Tribal emergency management staff on current and potential issues and possible resolutions.
- Coordinating the national effort through the relevant interagency (e.g., Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Transportation, White House IGA, etc.) and non-governmental partners (e.g., American Red Cross).

### Organization

It is recognized that an incident requiring a coordinated federal response will have a significant impact on the normal business of Tribal Nations to include community, cultural, and religious functions; infrastructure; socioeconomic; and population. Accordingly, Tribal Affairs will employ pre-identified organizational processes to foster information-sharing, deliver constituent services, and serve as a liaison between the federal government and Tribal Nation(s) governments, Tribal emergency management staff, and community organizations, as appropriate.

### National Tribal Coordination and Support

Tribal Affairs coordinates communications with elected and appointed Tribal officials and Tribal emergency management staff of affected federally recognized Tribal Nations within the U.S. during incidents requiring a coordinated federal response. Tribal Affairs also will coordinate as necessary with federal interagency partners, preparedness and response communities, national or regional Tribal associations, and other non-governmental counterparts.

To ensure Tribal Affairs maintains a fully informed External Affairs capability at the national level during incidents requiring a coordinated federal response, Tribal Affairs maintains close coordination with the White House (IGA and Tribal Affairs), agency senior staff, ESF 15 leadership, federal agency IGA officials and other officials, and other federal Tribal Affairs staff.

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### **Activities with Tribal Officials and Organizations**

Tribal Affairs may conduct many activities including, but not limited to:

- Manage and facilitate introductory meetings to ensure program requests are streamlined.
- Attend and participate in meetings with tribal councils, tribal associations, tribal emergency management staff, governors, mayors, federal interagency personnel, and other tribal, state, local, and federal officials.
- Attend and participate in community meetings.
- Deliver programmatic briefings and develop media products for dissemination.
- Identify effective methods to share information.
- Address and resolve issues and problems.
- Identify and analyze trends and potentially volatile issues.
- Build relationships.

### **Stafford Act Case Study: 2023 Tropical Storm Hilary: An Unprecedented Event**

- Hilary was the first tropical storm to hit Southern California in more than 80 years and was predicted to affect as many as 60 different Tribal Nations across California, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah.
- FEMA was designated as the ESF 15 lead for Tropical Storm Hilary and was responsible for coordinating external affairs for the federal response.
- Prior to making landfall, Tribal Affairs and its regional counterpart offices began reaching out to Tribal Nations in the projected impact zone(s) to ensure lines of communication were open between FEMA and Tribal leadership.
- The FEMA Administrator sent a letter directly to more than 60 Tribal leaders in the quad-state area providing important information about Hilary and reiterating the agency's commitment to provide support and available resources as needed.
- After landfall Tribal Affairs continued coordination efforts with FEMA regional offices, fellow federal agencies, and state, local, and tribal officials in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah to ensure there were no unmet needs and community lifelines were stable.
- Regional FEMA Tribal Affairs staff conducted joint preliminary damage assessments in areas requested by two Tribal Nations in California.
- It was determined that the disaster was of such severity and magnitude that effective response was beyond the capabilities of the requesting Tribal Nations and, in turn, on September 27, 2023, the President declared that a major disaster existed for the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians and authorized federal funding to be made available.
- On October 18, 2023, the President also declared that a major disaster existed for the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and authorized federal funding to be made available.

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### Stafford Act Case Study: 2021 Hurricane Ida State Recognized Tribal Support

- FEMA was designated as the ESF 15 lead for Hurricane Ida and was responsible for coordinating external affairs for the federal response.
- FEMA provides support and disaster assistance to federally recognized tribal governments as defined under the [Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994](#), 25 U.S.C. 4791, which does not include state recognized tribal governments.
- However, FEMA can work with state and local governments to ensure state recognized tribes are receiving disaster assistance.
- After Hurricane Ida made landfall, Tribal Affairs received information that state recognized Tribes in Louisiana were seeking direct FEMA support and assistance related to the response.
- FEMA's Tribal Affairs closely coordinated with their Region 6 Tribal Affairs, Indian Health Service (IHS), and American Red Cross counterparts to gather situational information on the unmet needs and challenges of requesting state recognized Tribes and shared this data with the Director of the State of Louisiana's Office of Indian Affairs.
- The State of Louisiana's Office of Indian Affairs acted on the information and provided and assisted in the coordination of resource delivery to the state recognized tribes.

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# **Annex E to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Language Access Services**

#### **References:**

- A. DHS Language Access Policy
- B. FEMA Language Access Plan
- C. Safe Harbor provision of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- D. Executive Order 13166, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- E. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 1998
- F. Section 689e of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006
- G. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

#### **Purpose**

This annex outlines guidance on communication activities and considerations for language access during the response and recovery phases of an incident requiring a federally coordinated response. Language support is essential for communicating critical emergency messaging and information to people with language barriers. These groups may have limited ability to access and understand information in the language that is most natural for them, which could be lifesaving and life-sustaining in emergency scenarios. Providing meaningful communication can be achieved through access to information and messages using different language translation and interpretation methods, including spoken, written and/or sign language interpretation. This is the primary way to ensure that communities can obtain resources and assistance in ways that are timely and effective.

Language access also goes beyond translation. To ensure effective communication with survivors across all communities, it is important to develop communication content specific to groups within those communities, considering factors such as their challenges, customs, and historical characteristics. For example, messaging for urban audiences may assume the availability of infrastructure and accessibility common to city environments, while messaging for rural communities must account for longer distances, limited accessibility, and reliance on local networks. These differences showcase the principle that communication must meet people where they are, empowering audiences to not only understand the information but to know how to act on it effectively.

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## National Response Framework ESF 15 Quick Summary Language Access Services

### Supports External Affairs by:

- Language/demographic data assessment of language groups through use of U.S. Census Data/American Community Survey data and other sources.
- Use of Disability Integration Dashboard to search for U.S. Census Bureau/American Community Survey data to determine average hearing loss population in state and county.
- Provide guidance and recommendations to the External Affairs Officer (EAO) and External Affairs staff on opportunities and considerations for engaging with groups with language barriers.
- Deploy and serve as Language Services Manager/Specialist for the event. Coordinates all language requests, including written translations, interpretation requests, language vendor coordination, tracking deliverables, and ensuring the proper use and distribution of products and services.
- Deployment of Communications Access Specialist(s) to provide American Sign Language (ASL) and sign language interpretation support to Deaf/Hard of Hearing individuals. The Communications Access Specialist also coordinates all sign language requests for the event.
- Language Specialists and Communications Access Specialists provide guidance to EAO and other federal staff on accessing available services and how to maximize their use, including close coordination with Joint Information Center (JIC) and recovery centers.
- Contract procurement support to prepare required documentation to initiate process/route approvals for contracting all categories of language services. Acquisitions Business Specialist may deploy to support procurement requirement on the ground.

### Activation and Deployment Actions

- **Language Assessments:** Conduct initial language assessments of most common limited English proficiency languages and Deaf/Hard of Hearing population within event area. These assessments determine scope and category of services required. Additional considerations: 1) Baseline for determining in-language needs is 1,000 individuals or 5% of the population, whichever is fewer; 2) Assessments utilize U.S. Census data, historical information from previous events, disability resources, input from state and local partners, and findings from deployed field staff.
- **Contract procurement:** Acquisitions Business Specialist prepares all required documentation required for procurement of language services contracts and monitors the procurement process. Actions include performing as Contracting Officers Representative for language services contracts, routing documentation for approvals and signatures, technical evaluations, contract award and subsequent actions.

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## **Outreach and Communications Activities**

- Corroborate assessments by visiting Disaster Recovery Centers, engaging with EAOs who can assess language needs with local officials and by engaging with Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams.
- Engage with limited English proficiency groups within the affected area via digital media platforms, community, and faith-based groups, etc.
- Communications Access Services Specialist may assist with Speakers Bureau events – coordinating ASL interpretation and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services, or directly providing ASL interpretation when possible.
- Provide guidance to External Affairs and other disaster staff on accessing services and maximizing their use, including promoting Language Services availability at the Joint Field Office and Disaster Recovery Centers.
- Work closely with JIC including Digital Communications staff to implement multilingual disaster webpage strategies.
- The Language Services Coordinator/Specialist or point of contact monitors and tasks translation requests/deliveries to the vendor.
- For the ASL/CART/video production contract, a point of contact at the disaster level receives/processes requests and coordinates with the vendor.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Establish mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of language access services effectiveness, including feedback from survivors and event response staff.
- Conduct periodic reviews to assess the adequacy of language services provided and identify areas for improvement.
- Utilize data analytics and metrics to track the utilization and impact of language services during event response and recovery efforts.

## **Continuity of Operations**

- Develop contingency plans to ensure the continuity of language access services during emergencies or disruptions to regular operations.
- Establish protocols for rapid deployment of language services in new disaster areas or during surge periods of demand.
- Maintain partnerships with language service providers and community organizations to facilitate rapid response and resource mobilization during emergencies.

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## **Documentation and Reporting**

- Prepare a Language Services Functional Plan to expand language offerings by implementing targeted goals and actions with EAO and other relevant event leadership. It must include a field strategy for language services that prioritizes rapid and effective communication with affected communities, including those with limited English proficiency and Deaf/Hard of Hearing communities.
- Maintain comprehensive records of language assistance activities, including translation and interpretation services provided, languages spoken, and demographics of service recipients.
- Prepare regular reports documenting the impact of language access efforts, compliance with regulatory requirements, and recommendations for enhancing service delivery.
- Document and share best practices and lessons learned with other agencies to inform future planning and improvement initiatives.
- Provide a detailed account of actions performed during the deployment, actions in course and initiatives that will continue throughout the duration of the event operations.

## **Community Engagement**

- Develop strategies for actively engaging members of an impacted community to foster trust, build rapport, and facilitate effective communication during event response and recovery efforts.
- Collaborate with community leaders, local organizations, and cultural brokers to bridge communication gaps and ensure that language access services meet the specific needs of each community.
- Incorporate community and faith-based leaders in the distribution of in-language outreach material.
- See Annex S for more information on Community Engagement.



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**Appendix 1 to Annex E to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
Language Services Functional Plan – Sample Template**

**Language Services Functional Plan  
DR4782-Kentucky**

During a disaster, a field strategy for language services should prioritize rapid and effective communication with affected communities, including those with limited English proficiency (LEP). This Language Services Functional Plan outlines the strategic approach to providing necessary language support to LEP communities affected by Severe Storms, Straight-line Winds, Tornadoes, Landslides, and Mudslides in Kentucky, ensuring effective communication and access to disaster recovery resources.

**Language Services Primary Objectives**

1. Activate telephonic interpretation services to assist field staff communication to ensure access for individuals who speak other languages.
2. Translate recovery assistance informational materials into commonly spoken languages in the affected communities.
3. Coordinate communications access and sign language requests for the disaster

**Proposed Activities**

1. **Language Services Specialist coordinates all language requests for the disaster, including:**
  - Written translations
  - Interpretation requests
  - Language vendor coordination
  - Tasking and tracking deliverables
  - Performing quality control and review of translation/interpretation services
  - Timely delivery of products and services
  - Ensuring proper use and distribution of products translated for the disaster.

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**2. Field Activities will include visits to or interactions with the sources listed below to obtain specific contacts related to language services or community organizations in Kentucky:**

- Disaster Recovery Centers: Provide overview of language services and resources available.
- Local Community Centers: Community centers often have information about language services available in the area and can provide referrals to relevant organizations or resources for amplification and broader distribution of translated material.
- Nonprofit Organizations: Several nonprofit organizations in Kentucky could assist with outreach for language services in affected counties. These organizations have experience in serving communities with language services needs and can provide valuable support in reaching out to residents who may benefit from language services. Examples include organizations like Kentucky Refugee Ministries, Americana Community Center, Catholic Charities of Louisville, and others.
- Educational Institutions: Universities and colleges in Kentucky may have departments or centers focused on language access, multicultural affairs, or community engagement. They can provide information about language services available in the community.

**Challenges and Anticipated Issues:**

1. Building trust with immigrant and minority communities, some of whom may be wary of government services.
2. Various language-services needs in the affected counties:
  - Fayette County: Significant diversity with LEP individuals speaking African languages, Arabic, Chinese, French, Gujarati, Japanese, other Indic languages, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
  - Jefferson County: High LEP population with speakers of African languages, Arabic, Chinese, French, other Asian languages, other Indic languages, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

**Staffing:**

- Language Services Coordinator- 1
- Language Services Specialist - 1

**Demobilization Plan:**

Demobilization of staff is dependent upon the completion of the objectives. Staff may be able to continue supporting the Language Services function remotely, from HQ.

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# **Annex F to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Private Sector**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Prevention Framework
- C. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- D. FEMA Incident Management Handbook
- E. National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP)

#### **Purpose**

This annex describes how the government may conduct outreach to, and coordinate with, private sector organizations in response to any type of event, incident, or threat. Coordinated communication and collaboration with the private sector supports effective incident management by integrating private sector capabilities and information into response operations. For ESF 15, private sector includes major employers, trade and industry associations representing the impacted economy, state private sector liaisons, public-private partnerships, academia, and other community organizations who are influential in the local economy.

#### **National Response Framework ESF 15 Quick Summary – Private Sector**

Supports External Affairs by:

- **Providing strategic counsel and guidance to response leadership in an actual or potential incident:**
  - Prepares an initial action plan to support field leadership and the Unified Coordination Group (UCG) with incident-specific guidance and objectives.
  - Identifies critical issues related to successful private sector recovery and elevates them to the appropriate UCG component and/or field leadership for awareness and resolution.
  - Shares incident-specific guidance and objectives with state and/or regional private sector liaisons and ESF 14 to ensure consistent messaging across partnership and engagement efforts.
- **Conducting Outreach and Education:**
  - In coordination with any state and regional private sector liaisons, builds targeted local outreach networks of organizations who support the recovery of critical lifelines including but not limited to telecoms, health networks, grocers, fuel providers, public-private partnerships, major employers, relevant trade and industry associations, chambers of commerce, impacted universities, and other influential private sector stakeholders within the area.
  - Expands the reach of disaster assistance messaging through private sector networks and provides information to stakeholders to promote business resiliency and personal safety.
  - Identifies opportunities for UCG leadership and response partners to speak directly to private sector groups, such as at business recovery forums and events.

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- **Promoting operational integration with the impacted private sector to support local economic response and recovery:**

- Establish two-way information sharing in coordination with appropriate ESFs, between the unified Federal response, the state, local, tribal, and territory (SLTT), and the impacted private sector entities.
- Coordinate information shared with the private sector and feedback from the private sector to enable adjustment of government messaging to address private sector concerns.
- Serves as a liaison between the federal government response and recovery operations and the private sector community.
- Coordinates with and supports any state private sector liaison with stakeholder engagement and education during response operations.
- Coordinates with partners within the UCG on matters relating to their specific functions and the private sector, including Emergency Support Functions, Interagency Recovery Coordination, DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Voluntary Agency liaisons, Faith-Based liaisons, Disability liaisons, and others as appropriate.

### **Assumptions**

The following are key assumptions about the private sector in the event of an incident requiring a coordinated federal response:

- The private sector is made up of multiple entities, each with their own needs and agendas.
- The private sector does not operate as a single entity.
- Regardless of the nature of the incident (natural or manmade disaster, ), most disasters impact businesses and the local economy.
- Business recovery is a central and critical component in a community's recovery.
- Non-impacted businesses may be willing to provide services during a recovery period in the form of in-kind donations or services.
- Small- to medium-sized businesses may be most vulnerable to disruptions and are essential to local economic and community recovery.
- The majority of the nation's critical infrastructure are owned and/or operated by private sector entities, they may play a key role in providing goods, services, and technical expertise that can complement effective preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation operations.
- The private sector has preestablished communication channels, which can be a means to distribute information directly to survivors (e.g., employee communications, customer interaction, information exchange with suppliers and partners).
- A Private Sector Specialist on the external affairs team can help speed disaster recovery by fully engaging the vast resources, knowledge, and capability of the private sector in emergency communications and integrating private sector resources into operations where appropriate.

### **Concept of Operations**

ESF 15 private sector liaisons will coordinate closely with other UCG partners that represent and interact with private sector entities such as infrastructure or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as voluntary agencies, faith-based and disability communities. Private sector

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outreach and engagement focus on opening two-way information channels and fostering shared goals for a speedy recovery. Communications to the private sector may include approved public information, situational updates supporting incident-related activities, and information on disaster assistance for private sector employees. Communications may also provide specific guidance on response and recovery processes for private sector organizations serving populations with access and functional needs. Feedback and other information flowing from private sector entities to the government in the field should be consolidated and shared as needed to regional and national levels to support decision making and align messaging.

### **Scalability**

The Private Sector organizational structure within ESF 15 is intended to be flexible, scalable, and adaptable to the size, scope, and requirements of the specific incident.

### **National Structure**

The National Business Emergency Operations Center at the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) will provide event specific information on events that are large scale and have multi-regional impacts. This will be closely coordinated with the National Joint Information Center (NJIC), any regional private sector liaisons and any private sector managers in the field who will provide specific subject matter expertise on impacts and messaging to the private sector, in coordination with any state private sector liaisons.

### **Field Structure**

Private Sector staff can be deployed to assist in ESF 15 operations. This staff would report to the EAO and act as a liaison to the private sector and FEMA components, other federal agencies, and state agencies if needed.

### **Coordination**

The EAO or Assistant EAO and staff will coordinate with a wide range of partners, including but not limited to:

- The Planning and Products Manager, and other ESF 15 section leads to ensure that private sector efforts and plans are fully synchronized and able to support if needed.
- Coordination with key internal and external partners to support a robust flow of communication with local, regional, and national private sector networks.
- Private sector representatives or liaisons in any emergency operation centers.
- Business Emergency Operation Centers as appropriate, whether at the local, regional, or national level.
- Deployed representatives from other federal partners, such as the U.S. Small Business Administration, Internal Revenue Service, and Department of Commerce.
- UCG entities must coordinate with ESF 15 and the NJIC in a timely manner to share information exchanged with the private sector.

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## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **National Joint Information Center**

The NJIC, when activated, leads communications and is responsible for the overall two-way communication with the private sector. Various channels may support this effort, however, any UCG entity communicating with private sector entities must coordinate their efforts with the NJIC and report feedback and other information back to the NJIC for consolidation, coordination, and adjustments in messaging.

### **National Business Emergency Operations Center**

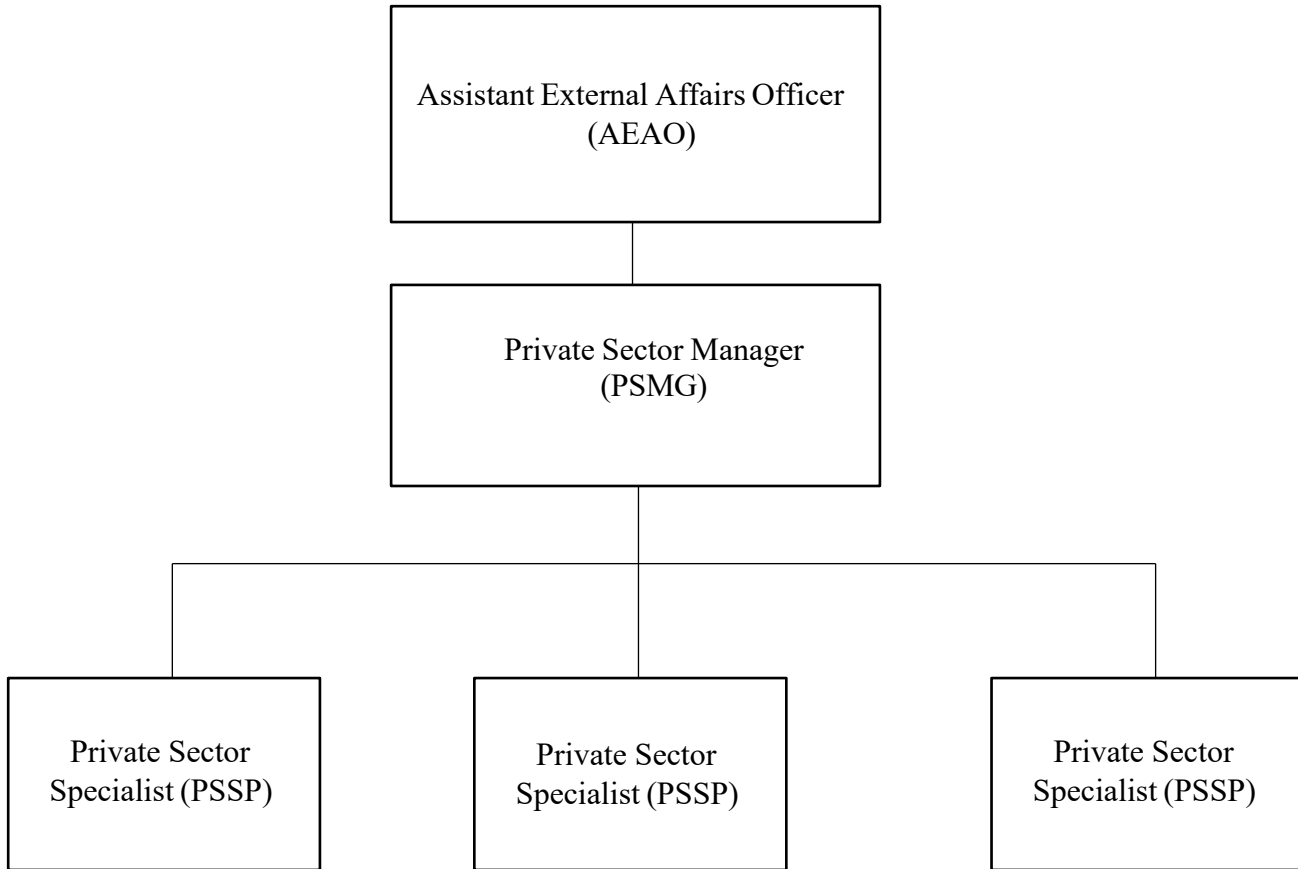
The FEMA National Business Emergency Operations Center (NBEOC) in the Office of Response and Recovery maintains an open channel with private sector entities across the nation. During activation, this channel can be used for two-way information sharing to support operational activities in coordination with the NRCC and ESFs. The NBEOC regularly coordinates with the NJIC to ensure timely and current information flows both from the private sector and to the private sector.

### **DHS Private Sector Office**

The DHS Private Sector Office (PSO) supports efforts by coordinating public information and outreach with national private sector stakeholders, associations, academia, and non-governmental organizations that are not directly involved in the disaster. Private Sector Office works to fulfill the information requirements of the Secretary, coordinating with the NJIC and NBEOC to provide information on impacts to the private sector, and aid the operational components by leveraging its existing relationships with the private sector as necessary.

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**Appendix 1 to Annex F to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
Private Sector Organizational Chart**



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# **Annex G to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Planning and Products**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. FEMA Incident Management Handbook

#### **Purpose**

This annex describes processes for centralized ESF 15 development of messaging under the Planning and Products component.

#### **NRF ESF 15 Quick Summary – Planning and Products (P&P)**

#### **Supports External Affairs by:**

- Preparing External Affairs inputs for the Incident Action Plan and strategic communications plan(s) to support field leadership and the Unified Coordination Group (UCG) with incident-specific guidance and objectives before and during an actual or potential incident.
- In coordination with state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) counterparts, supporting lifesaving and life-sustaining communications by creating timely products to alert and advise the public.
- Through unity of effort, centrally directing and developing all messaging from the UCG.
- Developing all written external products and graphics, and internal communications documents.
- Ensuring all written products and graphics are produced in accessible formats (e.g., 508-compliant, language translations).
- Using a broad range of resources, including the Common Operating Picture, to prepare timely information products.
- Providing inputs for the ESF 15 Daily Communications Summary.
- Serving as the central point for information assimilation from liaisons, ESF 15 components, and SLTT counterparts.
- Centralizing strategic message planning and development.
- Speakers' Bureau coordination.
- Using storytelling to better illustrate disaster field happenings.

#### **Concept of Operations**

Central coordination and unity of effort in development of all communications strategy and materials within ESF 15 and the UCG are critical. Planning and Products is the central point to coordinate and develop all communications plans, strategies and materials and ensure they are



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accessible to the whole community. This central focus provides greater strategic coordination and enhanced messaging efficiency.

### **Release Authorization**

Consistent with the decentralized organization and execution of external communications, routine release of information will be approved by the ESF 15 External Affairs Officer (EAO), or as delegated. Significant policy statements and potentially sensitive external materials should be coordinated with field leadership and the UCG before release.

### **Staff Composition**

As the staff supports the communications requirements of field leadership, the UCG, and all ESF 15 components, the leadership should ensure appropriate planners and skills are assigned. This will be critical if the nature of the incident has a specialized focus (e.g., law enforcement threat; impact on certain ethnic, cultural, or access and functional needs groups; or unique technical and hazard requirements). The ESF 15 Director will support the EAO as needed to obtain necessary resources and staffing.

### **Planning and Products Manager**

Supervises and compiles reports based off the information received from the Creative Specialists and Program Liaisons. Works closely with Intergovernmental/Congressional Affairs Manager(s), Joint Information Center (JIC) Manager(s), and Private Sector Managers(s) to coordinate and schedule events (town hall meetings, specialized group meetings, Facebook Live events, and other gatherings where disaster information is requested and a subject matter expert is needed). Planning and Products Managers also will make sure that all messaging is 508 compliant and accessible to all audiences and languages identified in the disaster area.

### **Program Liaison Specialists**

Planning and Products will identify and provide liaison support to the active components within the UCG, including support for activated ESFs. The liaison serves as a subject matter expert and links ESF 15 to program areas, branches and divisions, and other federal agencies involved in response and recovery activities. Federal agencies responsible for a specific ESF will be required to provide a liaison to ESF 15 to act as a subject matter expert and communication specialist for all matters involving their ESF. The function also coordinates closely with the Disability Integration Advisor to deliver information in other forms to support populations with accessible communications needs. Liaisons will be responsible for gathering information, working with Creative Specialists to develop proactive planning and messaging, and provide information for all activities involving their respective operational element or ESF. The Assistant EAO compiles key information provided by the liaison to develop consolidated reports for internal awareness and coordination.

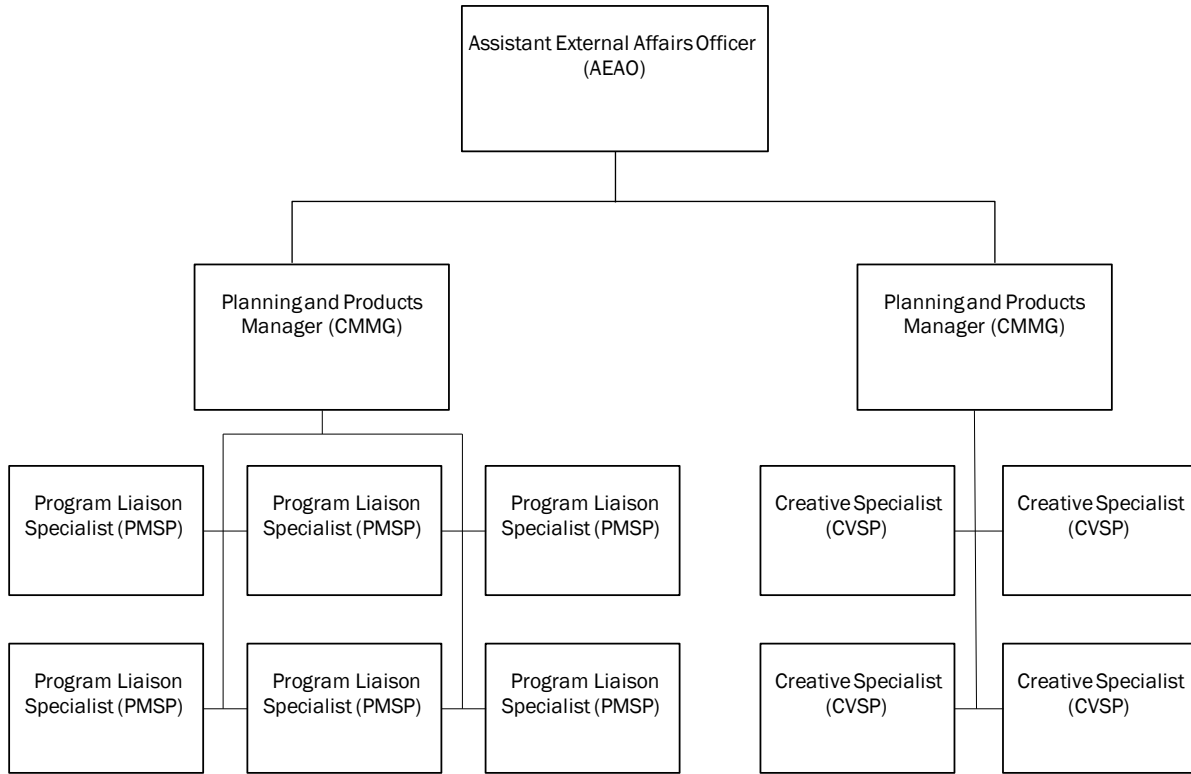
### **Creative Specialists**

Creative Specialists are responsible for researching and developing messaging in accordance with the Strategic Communication Plan and creating and editing clear, concise, and timely messaging products (news releases, briefing materials, flyers, presentation materials, talking points, fact sheets, stakeholder advisories, graphics etc.). This position facilitates the approval

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process for products, often working through Program Liaisons for program area concurrences. Adherence to timelines and deadlines is a vital part of this position.

**Appendix 1 to Annex G to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
Planning and Products Organizational Chart**



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# **Annex H to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Cybersecurity**

#### **References:**

- A. Executive Order 13636
- B. Presidential Policy Directive 21 (PPD-21)
- C. Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8)
- D. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD 5)
- E. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- F. Federal Information Systems Management Act (FISMA)
- G. Executive Order 13618
- H. The Defense Production Act of 1950, as amended
- I. National Security Directive 42
- J. National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP)
- K. National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace

#### **Background**

The interaction and exchange of information with external audiences describe external affairs activities. For DHS cybersecurity, these external audiences can include the public, other federal agencies, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments, Congress, private sector entities, and non-governmental organizations (NGO). Cybersecurity external affairs is a continual process, helping external audiences understand and prepare for cyber threats, and respond to and recover from cyber incidents.

Prior to incidents occurring (steady state), the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Office of External Affairs is responsible for generating public awareness for cyber threats and for building and maintaining relationships with potential incident response partners. These relationships are important in the event of a significant cyber incident that requires increased national coordination. An active external affairs response prior to and during cyber incidents help maintain public confidence and trust. Activities include informing the public about potential threats to cyber, communications, and critical infrastructures, providing timely, accurate and credible information, and recommending actionable steps the public can take to protect themselves.

#### **Purpose**

This annex establishes a strategic framework for organizational roles, responsibilities, and actions for external affairs activities that prepare for, respond to, and recover from a cyber-incident significant enough to warrant activating ESF 15.

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## **Guiding Principles**

Regardless of the lead agency or agencies, government communications and actions must remain open and transparent to maintain public confidence and trust. It is essential that the public, Congress, and the media have access to accurate, concise, and up-to-date information.

To be effective, communications strategies should be based on sound risk communications principles and standardized practices that provide timely and accurate information to appropriate audiences. Speed, coupled with accuracy, is the essence of incident communications. Public statements are critical to building trust and conveying actionable information. Delays in making these statements erode trust, allow misinformation to grow, and decrease the public's chances of being resilient during and after an incident.

To be effective, communications strategies should be based on sound risk communications principles and standardized practices that provide critical information to appropriate audiences before, during, and after a cyber-incident. Effective risk communication practices will be implemented following an incident to guide the response of the public, the news media, and other groups, while prioritizing public safety measures.

## **Key Stakeholder Outreach and Coordination**

CISA oversees and manages communications with identified stakeholders as it pertains to cyber, telecommunications and critical infrastructure activities. These outreach efforts will be part of CISA's day-to-day operations and will serve to strengthen stakeholder relationships. CISA will also work to build and maintain solid working relationships with potential incident response partners, such as federal, SLTT, and private sector organizations. In the event of a significant cyber incident, CISA will follow ESF 15 guidance in communicating with the following audiences:

### **Public/Community**

Public affairs around a cyber-incident should focus on actionable messaging. In developing communications products for the public, authors, and subject matter experts (SMEs) need to put themselves in the place of the public and answer the question: "What am I supposed to do?" Message coordination occurs at CISA and is relayed to the National Joint Information Center (NJIC) for public dissemination.

### **Federal, State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Partners**

DHS departmental staff with support from CISA will coordinate and disseminate information to appropriate government partners in all jurisdictions.

### **Private Sector**

Private sector communications should be flexible and scalable to the scope of the situation. If needed, the ESF 15 Director will appoint an assistant to provide a communications liaison for the private sector.

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### **Congressional Members and/or Staff**

Communication with congressional members and their staff should focus on building and maintaining relationships through open and consistent dialogue, in both steady-state and incident response. DHS Office of Legislative Affairs will coordinate and disseminate information about an incident as appropriate.

### **Non-Governmental Organizations**

Communications to NGOs should be coordinated with CISA as NGOs may be called upon to help develop and implement sustainable strategies for effectively mitigating and addressing the consequences of a cyber-incident.

### **Media**

Communications with media should be open and transparent, with DHS Office of Public Affairs (OPA) and CISA External Affairs providing the latest, most accurate information available. The NJIC and CISA External Affairs will monitor and analyze media outputs, correcting misinformation when identified.

### **Organizations' Roles and Responsibilities**

During a significant cyber incident in which ESF 15 is activated, communications will be closely coordinated by DHS OPA, CISA External Affairs, the NJIC, and other organizations as necessary. These organizations may include the White House Office of Communications, federal departments and agencies' public affairs offices, private sector, or nongovernmental entities' public affairs teams, and affected state public information officials.

### **White House Office of Communications**

The White House Office of Communications will establish the strategic direction for communications in consultation with the National Security Advisor, Cybersecurity Coordinator, the ESF 15 Director, the CISA Director and/or the CISA Deputy Director, the Cyber Unified Coordination Group (UCG), and other agencies as appropriate.

### **Department of Homeland Security**

The DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs is the Director of ESF 15. The Director will formulate the domestic communication strategy in coordination with the White House and other public affairs directors and will designate the Operations Director and External Affairs Officer for a cyber-incident. During a cyber-incident DHS OPA may retain the role of Operations Director. The CISA Director of External Affairs will serve as the External Affairs Officer (EAO) during a cyber-incident. The EAO will be the principal point for coordination with CISA leadership and staff throughout the incident. Additionally, the EAO will coordinate with DHS OPA and the NJIC to develop a cyber-specific National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) Alert or Bulletin, when appropriate.

### **Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency**

CISA maintains a 24/7 integrated cybersecurity and communications operations center. It serves as a centralized location where the operational elements involved in cyber response activities are physically and virtually co-located. The center is staffed and structured to be an always-ready,

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multiagency incident response center. During steady-state operations, CISA will utilize its co-located elements and outreach mechanisms to bring together all appropriate information to form a common operational picture and to support a coordinated incident response. CISA is responsible for coordinating and integrating information to provide cross-domain situational awareness and fostering collaboration and a shared situational awareness among collaborating cybersecurity centers.

### **National Joint Information Center**

The NJIC serves as the federal incident communications coordination center during incidents requiring a coordinated federal response. The NJIC may locate at a CISA facility during a significant cyber incident.

Regardless of the location, CISA will provide cyber SMEs to the NJIC to assist in answering technical questions about cybersecurity and to provide technical insight to the reports.

### **Federal Bureau of Investigation**

In the event the NJIC is activated, and the cyber incident is determined to be an act of terrorism, the Department of Justice will recommend to the ESF 15 Director that a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Public Affairs officer will serve as the EAO. In this circumstance, the CISA Deputy Director of External Affairs will directly report to and support the FBI.

### **State and Local External Affairs/Private Sector**

Federal external affairs organizations encourage SLTT and private sector participation in their communications activities. CISA External Affairs will ensure that communications are established with key SLTT (i.e., governors, mayors, and homeland security advisors), in full cooperation with Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA). Communications with other personnel will be established on an event-specific basis.

CISA will ensure that communications are established under the National Infrastructure Protection Plan framework with relevant key private sector leaders, in cooperation with the Private Sector Office (PSO). Communications with other personnel will be established on an event-specific basis.

CISA will work with Sector Coordinating Councils (SCC) and Information Sharing and Analysis Centers (ISAC).

### **Cyber Unified Coordination Group**

The Cyber UCG is an interagency and inter-organizational coordination body that incorporates public and private sector officials. It works during steady state to ensure unity of CISA coordination and preparedness efforts and to facilitate the rapid response in the case of a Significant Cyber Incident. The Cyber UCG consists of a pool of individuals working to ensure centralized coordination and execution can take place effectively. The Cyber UCG is composed of senior officials and staff, all of whom were pre-selected by the leadership of their department, agency, or organization.

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## **External Affairs Response During a Cyber-incident**

During cyber incidents requiring a coordinated federal response, the EAO will assume operational control of external affairs personnel in other CISA divisions. When applicable, this officer is also authorized to coordinate with interagency personnel in the areas of public affairs; international affairs; private sector outreach; and SLTT outreach. This ability to surge external affairs personnel strength will ensure senior leadership receives the appropriate level of external affairs support during an incident.

## **Communications Themes/Key Messages**

The following communications themes and messages can be used as guidance for cyber incident response. All external affairs communications should go through the proper approval channels. All messaging to the public should be disseminated through the NJIC. DHS serves as the federal agency in charge of cybersecurity and the federal government's cyber incident response. We have taken the lead in assessing the situation in coordinating with [state/local/private sector/international] partners.

- DHS is aware of a potential cyber incident affecting [INSERT]. DHS is leading a coordinated effort through the CISA to provide a common operating picture for cyber and communications across the federal, state, and local governments, intelligence and law enforcement communities and the private sector. We are coordinating with our [interagency/state/local/private sector] partners to assess the incident and determine the next steps in mitigating or responding. We will provide you with details as they become available.
- DHS learned about the incident through [INSERT DETAILS]. However, to protect the [privacy/confidential information/proprietary information] of the entities affected, as well as protect the integrity of a potential law enforcement investigation of this incident, we cannot provide further details. More information will be provided as it becomes releasable.
- The complexity and sophistication of cyber intrusions, combined with the anonymity of the Internet, can make it difficult to determine the nature or scope of any potential incident, as in this case. But we don't need to wait to know the origins of an incident to coordinate with our partners and take steps to mitigate it.

Note: Additional key messages and frequently asked questions are located in the 2025 Domestic Communication Strategy, Annex 10b "Questions & Answers - Cyber Response."

## **Roles and Responsibilities Messaging**

### **Department of Homeland Security**

During a cybersecurity incident, DHS leads the coordinated effort between affected federal, state, and local agencies, as well as critical infrastructure sectors, private sector organizations, and international partners, to identify the cause of the incident, mitigate its effects, and prevent further disruption.

CISA closely monitors and analyzes federal networks and systems for malicious cyber activity. Through its 24/7 monitoring, CISA shares alerts and warnings to minimize and prevent disruptions to computer systems. CISA also provides technical assistance to information systems operators.

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CISA works closely to monitor and analyze threats to industrial control systems and respond to incidents affecting industrial control systems. Industrial control systems are prevalent in several industries, including electrical, water, gas, and oil. These systems monitor and control critical infrastructure equipment.

CISA monitors national and international incidents and events that may impact emergency communications. With much of the Nation's cyber infrastructure tied into communications, CISA is a vital partner to the national cybersecurity effort and monitors and resolves issues impacting cyber and communications during an emergency. CISA leads emergency communications response and recovery efforts under ESF 2.

### **Department of Defense**

The Department of Defense (DOD) is responsible for the security of DOD information networks and all websites ending in .mil. DOD, through U.S. Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM), works closely with DHS in during steady state by monitoring and analyzing cyber threats. As the sector specific agency for the Defense Industrial Base (DIB), DOD also works closely with DIB companies on cybersecurity issues. During a cyber-incident response, DHS works with DOD as needed.

### **Federal Bureau of Investigation**

The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) investigates cybercrimes in the United States and works closely with DHS to coordinate their cybercrime investigation with DHS' mitigation. During steady state, the FBI shares information with DHS on cyber threats and criminals and provides information to help DHS maintain a comprehensive awareness of the national cybersecurity landscape.



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# **Annex I to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

## **Military Support**

### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. Joint Publication 3-61, Public Affairs

### **Purpose**

This annex provides a framework for military public affairs activity provided by the Department of Defense (DOD) and its components when working with other agencies to inform the public in response to an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of DOD in providing support to ESF 15.

U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) has been designated as the synchronizer for all DOD efforts in Defense Support of Civil Authorities situations in the Continental United States, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. They will synchronize the public communication efforts of the services, the National Guard Bureau, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Defense Logistics Agency and other DOD elements.

U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) has been designated as the synchronizer for all DOD efforts in Defense Support of Civil Authorities situations for Hawaii and the U.S. territories in the Pacific. They will synchronize the public communication efforts of the services, the National Guard Bureau, USACE, the Defense Logistics Agency and other DOD elements.

The USACE while part of DOD, has specific statutory authorities and responsibilities where it often operates autonomously from the rest to DOD in accomplishing tasks under ESF 3.

The U.S. Coast Guard is a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces operated under DHS during peace time, and is not covered in this annex.

### **Mission**

The mission of DOD is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country. While maintaining its primary mission, the DOD is also a key partner in the “whole of government” approach to domestic incidents, and military support is fully coordinated through the mechanisms of the National Response Framework (NRF).

### **Concept of Operations**

Active duty and reserve military forces may take part in a larger “whole of government” response as described in the NRF. Federal military support may be called to respond: (1) at the direction of the President; (2) at the request of another federal agency under the Economy Act, or (3) in

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response to a request from DHS's FEMA under the Stafford Act. The second and third mechanisms require a request for assistance and approval of the Secretary of Defense.

### **State/Local Response**

National Guard forces, under the command and control of the Governor and State Adjutant General, will usually be the first military force to respond to an event (a Nuclear Weapons Accident/Incident as described in Annex N will be a notable exception). The National Guard, in state status, may also provide support to a neighboring state, through Emergency Management Assistant Compact (EMAC). In most instances this will be the only military involvement. When an incident is close to or within a federal military installation, active duty and reserve commanders have the authority to provide immediately response capabilities to save lives, prevent human suffering, and mitigate great property damage.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs (OATSD/PA)**

Provides the overarching public communications policy within DOD. DOD Public Affairs guidance is normally coordinated within the department with the Joint Staff, U.S. Northern Command in the continental United States (including Alaska and territories in the Caribbean area), U.S. Pacific Command in Hawaii and the Pacific Territories, U.S. Strategic Command, and the National Guard Bureau, and with DHS and FEMA Public Affairs, to ensure unity of effort.

#### **U.S. Northern Command Public Affairs (USNORTHCOM PA)**

Provides public communications guidance within USNORTHCOM Unified Combatant Command area of responsibility (North America including continental United States, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands) and assigned forces, in coordination with DOD Public Affairs, Joint Staff, DHS and FEMA. Also serves as the synchronizer and lead for top-line messages on Federal (Title 10) military support in USNORTHCOM area of responsibility.

#### **North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD PA)**

Provides public communications guidance for NORAD operations including Operation Noble Eagle, enforcement of temporary flight restriction areas, and identification and escort of unknown or unresponsive aircraft in the United States and Canada, and support to National Special Security Events (NSSE).

#### **U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Public Affairs (USINDOPACOM PA)**

Provides communications guidance within USINDOPACOM Unified Combatant Command area of responsibility (primarily Hawaii and the Pacific Territories) and assigned forces, in coordination with DOD Public Affairs, Joint Staff, DHS and FEMA. Also serves as the lead for top-line messages on Federal (Title 10) military support in USINDOPACOM area of responsibility.

#### **U.S. Strategic Command Public Affairs (USSTRATCOM PA)**

In coordination with other unified commands, provides communications guidance for global strike, integrated missile defense, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and combating weapons of mass destruction.

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## **Non-Stafford Act Case Study: 2018 DOD support to DHS CBP**

- In 2018, the U.S. faced a surge of immigrants and caravans heading to the southern border.
- DOD was asked to provide support to DHS Customs and Border Protection (CBP).
- Extensive coordination was necessary to determine appropriate roles and missions for DOD that would allow CBP to deploy more agents on the border.
- In the initial phases of the effort, National Incident Communications Coordination Line like calls were conducted among DOD and DHS organizations to synchronize messaging.
- Public communication plans and guidance were developed, responsibilities delineated, and successful engagements were conducted.

### **National Guard Bureau Public Affairs (NGB PA)**

Provides public affairs advice and support to the Chief, National Guard Bureau (CNGB) and the 54 Adjutants Generals throughout U.S. states, territories and the District of Columbia. Also serves as the lead for top-line messages about overall support being provided by the National Guard under State Control.

### **State National Guard Public Affairs Officer**

Provide public affairs advice and support to their respective Governor and Adjutant General. Also serves as the lead for top-line messages about specific support provided by their (State) National Guard forces, in coordination with NGB Public Affairs and the State Emergency Operations Centers, supporting the lead state or local agency.

### **Unit Level Public Affairs**

Generally, the military will deploy public affairs support with military units supporting civil authorities. Public affairs support will typically remain with their units to provide tactical level public affairs support to the respective commanders.

### **Coordination**

#### **Senior-Level Communications Coordination**

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs will coordinate DOD External Affairs activities with the White House, National Security Council, and other Cabinet level agencies to ensure “unity of effort.”

#### **National Incident Communications Coordination Line**

The National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL) is the primary means to coordinate a federal-military response. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Joint Staff Public Affairs, Unified Combatant Commands (USNORTHCOM or USINDOPACOM) and the National Guard Bureau Public Affairs offices will normally participate in these calls. The responsible geographic Combatant Command (COCOM) will normally conduct a follow-on call with military organizations involved in the event.

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## **National Joint Information Center**

DOD may provide public affairs support to the National Joint Information Center (NJIC) when military support is anticipated or as requested by the primary agency. (Note: The DOD public affairs representative will normally come from OASD/PA or the respective combatant command.)

## **Incident Joint Information Center(s)**

A military public affairs officer will normally join a local JIC when there is a significant military presence. (Note: The primary agency may request a mission assignment for additional military public affairs support.)

## **State/Local & Installation-Level Coordination**

The State National Guard Public Affairs Officer (PAO) typically works closely with state emergency management counterparts in their state, and in their governor's office, and coordinates public affairs activity with the National Guard Bureau Public Affairs. Installation public affairs offices actively coordinate public affairs activities with their counterparts in local community and Unified Command. In anticipation of providing support, the National Guard Bureau and Unified Command(s) posture resources and offer communications guidance and talking points to assist State National Guard and Installation level PAOs.

## **Communications**

### **Spokespersons**

USNORTHCOM leadership has been directed by the Joint Staff to synchronize communication efforts within the USNORTHCOM Area of Responsibility.

### **Objective**

The overall communication objective is to inform the public, provide transparency, and promote confidence in the military's role, capabilities, and authorities in support of the "Whole of Government" response to a domestic incident.

### **Key Themes**

- DOD, its people, and its supporting elements; DOD is an integrated part of the "whole of government" response.
- DOD response supports state and local authorities.
- DOD is trained, equipped and ready to perform their missions.
- DOD can provide needed capabilities during times of crisis.
- DOD anticipates requests, actions, and requirements to support developing situations.

### **Appendices**

1. DOD, Public Affairs Policy on Interaction with the Media
2. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense
3. U.S. Northern Command
4. North American Aerospace Defense Command
5. National Guard Bureau
6. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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## **Appendix 1 to Annex I to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs Department of Defense (DOD) Public Affairs Policy on Interaction with Media**

### **References:**

- A. Joint Publication 3-61, Public Affairs
- B. DOD Directive 5122.05, "Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs," Sept 5, 2008

### **DOD Directive 5122.05**

The DOD's public affairs policy is outlined in DOD Directive 5122.05, "Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs" and applies to the full continuum of day-to-day activities and operations. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs is the sole release authority for official DOD information to news media in the District of Columbia, and that all media activities must be coordinated through appropriate public affairs channels.

### **DOD Principles of Information**

It is the policy of DOD to make available timely and accurate information so that the public, Congress, and the news media may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy. Requests for information from organizations and private citizens shall be answered in a timely manner. In carrying out the policy, the following principles of information will apply:

- Information will be made fully and readily available, consistent with the statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by current and valid security classification.
- The provisions of the Freedom of Information Act will be supported in both letter and spirit.
- A free flow of general and military information will be made available, without censorship or propaganda, to the men and women of the armed forces and their dependents.
- Information will not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the government from criticism or embarrassment.
- Information will be withheld only when disclosure would adversely affect national security, threaten the safety or privacy of the men and women of the armed forces, or if otherwise authorized by statute or regulation.
- DOD's obligation to provide the public with information on its major programs may require detailed public affairs planning and coordination within DOD and with the other government agencies.
- The sole purpose of such activity is to expedite the flow of information to the public; propaganda has no place in DOD public affairs programs.

### **Statement of DOD Principles for News Media Coverage of DOD Operations**

- Open and independent reporting shall be the principal means of coverage of U.S. military operations.
- Journalists shall be provided access to all major military units, unless access impacts operations; special operations restrictions may limit access in some cases.
- Military Public Affairs officers act as liaisons but should not interfere with the reporting process.

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- Under conditions of open coverage, field commanders should be instructed to permit journalists to ride on military vehicles and aircraft when possible.

## **Appendix 2 to Annex I to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs**

### **Purpose**

This appendix outlines the activities of Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (OATSD/PA), also known as DOD Public Affairs, when working with other agencies to inform the public in response to an incident requiring a coordinated federal response.

### **NRF ESF 15 Quick Summary – Department of Defense**

**Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs supports External Affairs by:**  
Coordination, Policy and Public Affairs Guidance

- Reports directly to the Secretary of Defense.
- Provides Senior-Level Communications Coordination with White House, National Security Council (NSC), and other Cabinet-level agencies.
- Provides overarching communications policy and public affairs guidance within DOD.
- Participates in the National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL) Calls.
- Serves as the focal point, for top-line messages about overall support being provided by the military, as part of the “whole of government” response.
- Coordinates and exchanges information with other Office of the Secretary of Defense officials, the Heads of the DOD Components, and federal agencies having collateral or related responsibilities and functions.
- Coordinates messages concerning policy, proper authority, and scope of military support.
- Communicates information through chain of command, Defense Media Activity and DOD website.
- Engages national and international media via Pentagon Press Corps, Defense Media Activity and DOD website.
- Supports situational awareness by reaching internal and external audiences with coordinated preparedness and response and recovery messages.

### **Mission**

The Assistant to the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs (ATSD/PA) is the principal staff advisor and assistant to the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense for public information, internal information, community relations, information training, and audiovisual matters. The ATSD/PA follows the Secretary's Principles of Information in providing defense department information to the public, Congress, and the media (see Appendix 1).

### **Concept of Operations**

In anticipation and in response to an incident requiring a coordinated federal response, the OATSD/PA will coordinate DOD External Affairs with the White House, NSC, DHS, FEMA, and

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other Cabinet level agencies, and with the Joint Staff, Unified Commands, and the National Guard Bureau, to ensure unity of effort.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs**

The ATSD/PA actively coordinates External Affairs activities with senior-level counterparts at the White House, National Security Council, DHS, FEMA, and other Cabinet level agencies to ensure “unity of effort”. The OATSD/PA disseminates overarching communications guidance and strategy to senior defense officials and offices within the department.

### **The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Press Secretary/Pentagon Spokesperson**

Serves as the focal point for the Pentagon Press Corps, national and international media, for top-line messages about the overall support being provided by the military and conducts press briefings to engage media and promote situational awareness, with coordinated preparedness, response, and recovery messages.

### **The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Defense Press Operations**

Disseminates overarching Public Affairs guidance. Coordinates updated talking points concerning policy, proper authority, and scope of military support with Unified Commands, National Guard Bureau and inter-agency partners. Issues press releases, provides “response to query”, and prepares senior defense officials for media interviews concerning policy, proper authority, and scope of military support being provided by the military. Participates in NICCL calls.

### **Defense Media Activity**

Provides a broad range of high-quality multimedia products and services to inform and educate DOD audiences around the world about support being provided by the military.

## **Coordination**

### **Senior Communications Coordination Call**

The OATSD/PA actively participates in strategic level communications coordination with the White House, NSC, and other Cabinet level agencies to insure unity of effort.

### **National Incident Communications Conference Line**

The OATSD/PA actively participates in NICCL calls and serves as lead for other DOD agencies participating in the call.

### **National Joint Information Center**

The OASD/PA may approve military support to NJIC if requested by the primary agency.

### **Contact Information**

Commercial Phone: OASD Public Affairs (703) 697-5131

Website: <http://www.defense.gov>

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## Appendix 3 to Annex I to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs U.S. Northern Command

### NRF ESF 15 Quick Summary – U.S. Northern Command

#### USNORTHCOM Public Affairs supports External Affairs by: Strategic-Level Communications

- Serves as lead for communications guidance within U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) Unified Combatant Command area of responsibility (North America including continental United States, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands) and assigned forces, in coordination with DOD Public Affairs, Joint Staff, DHS, and FEMA.
- Responsible for synchronization of DOD public communication and messaging for all of DOD during Defense Security Cooperation Agency operations.
- Participates in the development of Public Affairs Guidance for military operations within the respective area of responsibility.
- Provides top-line messages on federal military support within the Unified Combatant Command area of responsibility, as part of the integrated military response effort.
- Provides top-line messages on military support provided under Dual Status Command.
- Supports situational awareness by engaging internal and external audiences with coordinated preparedness, response, and recovery messages.
- Communicates information through chain of command and via Unified Command website.
- Participates in National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL) calls.
- Requests and deploys public affairs assets (personnel and equipment) as requested and approved through the Mission Assignment process or as needed to conduct military operations.

#### **Purpose**

This appendix outlines the activities of USNORTHCOM public affairs and its components when working with other agencies to inform the public in response to an incident requiring a coordinated federal response.

#### **Mission**

The mission of USNORTHCOM is to deter, detect, and defeat threats to the United States, conduct security cooperation activities with allies and partners, and support civil authorities.

#### **Concept of Operations**

USNORTHCOM and its service components (U.S. Army North, U.S. Air Forces Northern, Marine Forces North, and Naval Forces North) are poised to coordinate the military support to events requiring a federal response.

In USNORTHCOM, “military” public affairs officers may include enlisted, officer, and/or government civilian personnel. Military Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) have extensive training and experience in public affairs, media relations, and crisis communications. Many are equipped to operate in austere or challenging environments. USNORTHCOM PAOs have completed all National Incident Management System related ESF 15 trainings.



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USNORTHCOM has Defense Coordinating Officers (DCO) and their supporting Defense Coordinating Elements (DCE) co-located with FEMA Regions. When an incident happens in a region the initial federal military support comes from the Defense Coordinating Officers/Defense Coordinating Elements. While there is not a military PAO assigned to the DCE, one can quickly deploy from U.S. Army North to provide support to the DCO.

Generally, military units will deploy with “organic” public affairs assets. Those public affairs assets will typically remain with their units and will be focused on providing tactical level public affairs support to the respective commanders.

USNORTHCOM may deploy additional public affairs elements to provide additional capability including Joint Information Center (JIC) representatives, as part of a Joint Task Force (JTF) Headquarters or with a large military force. These additional PAOs are to provide support to the military. Other agencies may use the Mission Assignment process to request DOD PAO support (usually under the Stafford Act or the Economy Act).

The military has developed several pre-scripted mission assignments (not pre-approved) to streamline the Mission Assignment process. Currently, there is a pre-scripted mission assignment for “Public Affairs Broadcast Transmission Support.” This pre-scripted mission assignment is to provide a rapidly deployable satellite terminal that is capable of feeding broadcast quality video to the media. Normally, this system is operated in conjunction with the Defense Video & Imagery Distribution System.

### **Coordination**

**DOD synchronizer:** Serves as the DOD lead for synchronizing the public communications efforts of all DOD organizations including, but not limited to the services, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Guard Bureau for Defense Security Cooperation Agency events in the USNORTHCOM area of responsibility.

### **National Incident Communications Coordination Line**

The NICCL is the primary means to coordinate a federal military response. USNORTHCOM Public Affairs will normally participate in these calls and in some cases initiate a NICCL.

### **National Joint Information Center**

USNORTHCOM may provide public affairs support to the NJIC when military support is anticipated or as requested by the primary agency and approved by OASD/PA.

### **Incident Joint Information Center(s)**

A military public affairs officer will normally join the JIC during a major incident when there is a significant military presence. The primary agency may submit a mission assignment to request military public affairs support when USNORTHCOM does not provide that support.

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## **Dual Status Command Arrangement**

When National Guard and federal military assets are deployed together in response to an incident, the Dual Status Command is the customary arrangement for command and control of the assets. USNORTHCOM will typically deploy a PAO to assist the National Guard PAO.

## **State/Local Response**

Military installation commanders have the authority to provide military assistance for up to three days to save lives and mitigate property damage as long as that does not interfere with their mission. Additionally, many municipalities have standing mutual aid agreements with nearby military installations. The PAOs at these installations may work closely with local and state responders.

## **Communications**

### **Spokespersons**

The commander of USNORTHCOM serves as the “face” of the overall DOD response. USNORTHCOM also may designate other senior defense officials and military leaders as spokespersons. Public Affairs personnel may be appointed as spokespersons at all levels for “response to query.”

### **Objective**

The overall communication objective is to inform the public, provide transparency, and promote confidence in the military’s role, capabilities, and authorities in support of the “whole community” response to a domestic incident.

### **Key Themes**

- USNORTHCOM works closely with FEMA and other agencies daily.
- USNORTHCOM response supports state and local authorities.
- USNORTHCOM can provide unique capabilities during times of crisis.
- USNORTHCOM anticipate requests, actions, and requirements to support developing situations.

### **Contact Information**

Commercial Phone: USNORTHCOM Public Affairs (719) 554-6889

Website: <http://www.northcom.mil>

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## Appendix 4 to Annex I to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD)

### NRF ESF 15 Quick Summary – North American Aerospace Defense Command

#### NORAD Public Affairs supports External Affairs by:

Communicating actions of the bi-national (U.S. and Canada) North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) activities to provide aerospace defense, aerospace warning, and maritime warning for North America

- Serves as lead for communications guidance regarding NORAD activities to include enforcement of temporary flight restrictions.
- Develops Public Affairs Guidance for NORAD operations within the continental United States, Alaska, and Canada
- Coordinates communication activities with other agencies including Federal Aviation Administration, Transportation Security Administration, and law enforcement agencies.
- Participates in National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL) calls.
- Provides information regarding aerospace threats to North America including foreign missile launches.
- Provides information regarding intercepts of tracks of interest in the approaches to and within the continental United States, Alaska, and Canada.

#### **Purpose**

This appendix outlines the activities of NORAD Public Affairs and its components when working with other agencies to inform the public in response to an incident requiring a coordinated federal response.

#### **Mission**

The mission of NORAD is to conduct aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning in the defense of North America.

#### **Concept of Operations**

NORAD and its regions (Continental NORAD Region, Canadian NORAD Region, and Alaskan NORAD Region) are poised to conduct military operations in support of the NORAD mission. In NORAD “military” public affairs officers may include enlisted, officer, and/or government civilian personnel. Military Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) have extensive training and experience in public affairs, media relations, and crisis communications. Due to the bi-national nature of the command, some NORAD public affairs officers are Canadian military officers.

#### **Coordination**

The NICCL call may serve to coordinate NORAD activities that involve multiple agencies. NORAD Public Affairs will normally monitor NICCL calls. NORAD will often coordinate activities with the DOD and Canadian Department of National Defense as well as directly with other federal agencies in the U.S. and Canada.

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**Spokespersons**

NORAD will provide senior defense officials and military leaders as spokespersons. Public Affairs personnel may be appointed as spokespersons at all levels for “response to query.”

**Objective**

The overall communication objective is to inform the public, provide transparency, and promote confidence in the military’s role, capabilities, and authorities.

**Contact Information**

Commercial Phone: NORAD Public Affairs (719) 554-6889

Website: <http://www.norad.mil>

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## **Appendix 5 to Annex I to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs National Guard Bureau Public Affairs**

### **References:**

- A. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD 5)
- B. National Response Framework (NRF)
- C. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- D. NGB-PA Guidelines
- E. Joint Pub 3-61, Public Affairs, 25 August 2010
- F. AR 360-1, The Army Public Affairs Program, 25 May 2011
- G. AFI 35-101, Public Affairs Policies and Procedures, 18 August 2010
- H. DOD Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support, June 2005
- I. DOD Directive 3025.18, Defense Support of Civil Authorities, 29 December 2010
- J. DOD Homeland Defense and Civil Support Joint Operating Concept 2.0, 1 October 2007

### **NRF ESF 15 Quick Summary – National Guard Bureau Public Affairs**

#### **National Guard Bureau Public Affairs supports External Affairs by:**

##### **Operational-Level Communications (State)**

- Reports to the Chief, National Guard Bureau (CNGB).
- Provides National Guard senior-level communications coordination with Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Public Affairs, Unified Combatant Commands, DHS, and FEMA.
- Serves as lead for PA policy and guidance for the National Guard in states, territories, and the District of Columbia.
- Participates in National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL) calls.
- Serves as the focal point, for top-line messages about overall support being provided by the National Guard in State Status (State Active Duty and Title 32), as part of the coordinated and integrated military-response effort.
- Supports situational awareness by engaging internal and external audiences with coordinated preparedness, response, and recovery messages.
- Communicates information through chain of command and to the public via National Guard website and social media.
- Coordinates messages concerning policy, proper authority, and scope of National Guard support.
- Approves media embed and aviation requests for the Guard.
- Deploys Public Affairs capabilities to support state Public Affairs Officers (PAOs), and NGB Joint Enabling Teams, when requested.

#### **Purpose**

This appendix outlines the activities of National Guard Bureau Public Affairs (NGB-PA) when working with the Officer of the Assistant Secretary of Defense of Public Affairs, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff - Public Affairs, Unified Combatant Commands, DHS, FEMA, and state agencies to inform the public in response to an incident requiring a coordinated federal response.

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## **Mission**

NGB-PA provides public affairs advice and support to the CNGB and the 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia Adjutants General. The National Guard Bureau is a joint activity of DOD, responsible for formulating, developing, and coordinating all policies, programs and plans affecting more than 455,000 Army and Air National Guard personnel.

## **Concept of Operations**

The National Guard is a ready and reliable military force within the 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia. [Referred to hereafter as the “states”.] It is accessible to the states for both state and combined state and federal purposes and to the federal government for federal purposes.

Governors may activate and deploy National Guard forces on state active duty in response to natural disasters and man-made emergencies including terrorist attacks. The Secretary of Defense may provide funds to a Governor to employ National Guard forces under Title 32 for homeland security activities that the Secretary determines to be necessary and appropriate. When in state active duty or Title 32 status, National Guard forces remain under the operational, tactical, and administrative control of the governor and the state government.

## **Responsibilities**

National Guard public affairs practitioners are responsible for communicating information regarding the National Guard response, recovery, and mitigation actions, as well as assisting the dissemination of emergency information to the media and public during a contingency or crisis operation. National Guard PAOs coordinate public affairs activities/programs in an assigned area and advise leadership on public affairs implications of National Guard policies and decisions, which include recommending actions to correct misperceptions and to enhance public understanding. The PAO ensures that all information and materials accurately reflect the policies, views, and program initiatives of the National Guard.

## **National Guard Bureau Public Affairs**

Serves as the CNGB’s official channel for public affairs coordination between the 54 states, territories, and the District of Columbia NGB-PA offices with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense of Public Affairs, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of Public Affairs, Unified Commands, the Army and Air Force, DHS, and FEMA. Provides top-line messages about the overall support provided by the National Guard in state status (SAD and Title 32). Approves media embed and aviation requests for the Guard (See 4.2.1 for aviation policy.) Participates actively in the NICCL call.

## **State National Guard Public Affairs (State PAO)**

The state Public Affairs Officer (state PAO) in each of the 54 states, territories and the District of Columbia supports their governors and Adjutants General and serves as the focal point for top-line messages regarding their respective forces’ role in the response. Actively engages media to explain their role and support in coordination with the lead agency. Also provides public affairs guidance, direction, and contact information to supporting state Public Information Officers (PIOs). (Note: Several state National Guard PAOs also serve in a homeland security communications role for those states whose Adjutant Generals fill a role as the governor’s homeland security advisor.)

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## **Aviation Policy**

The Adjutant General (TAG) is approval authority for in-state media flights, with a copy of event details to NGB-PA at [NGBmediadesk@mail.mil](mailto:NGBmediadesk@mail.mil). For out-of-state activity, media request details should be sent to NGB-PA at the same e-mail address. In the case of emergency actions, state and federal emergency response leaders may accompany TAG during flights for incident evaluation, etc., again with copy of flight details sent to NGB-PA.

## **National Guard Units**

Units are encouraged to support media embeds when approved by NGB-PA and place media on military flights supporting the operation. Commanders are encouraged to identify unit public affairs representatives (UPARs) to provide additional public affairs support.

## **Communications**

### **Spokespersons**

The Director, NGB-PA serves as the focal point for top-line messages concerning overall support provided by the National Guard in state status (SAD and Title 32). NGB PAOs and specialists provide “response to query”. The National Guard Bureau will generally provide senior Guard officials as spokespersons for media interviews. The State PAOs support their governors and TAG and serve as the focal point for top-line messages regarding their respective forces’ role in the response. National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are encouraged to participate in media interviews in coordination with their commanders and their state PAO.

### **Objective**

National Guard themes and messages should emphasize the role of the National Guard as a first military responder and the roles and responsibilities of the National Guard, NGB, and the Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ)-states in Homeland Defense and Defense Support to Civil Authorities. The following paragraph provides an example of an overarching message delineating the roles and responsibilities of HQ NGB and Joint Force Headquarters-states in responding to incidents requiring a coordinated federal response.

### **Overarching Message**

“The National Guard has been defending the homeland since the founding of our Nation. We are frequently requested to support civil authorities, and we always answer the call. The Guard is uniquely suited like no other entity in the Defense Department. No other organization has our combination of size, skills, training and experience, dispersion across the nation, command and communications infrastructure, and the legal flexibility to support civil authorities at a moment’s notice.”

### **Key Messages**

- “Always ready, always there...” The National Guard is typically the first military organization called upon to respond to natural disasters and incidents requiring a coordinated federal response. As a result, the National Guard has developed enhanced capabilities and diversified readiness that will save American lives.

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- “When you call out the Guard you call out America.” The National Guard’s expanded coverage; proximity, agility, and efficiency ensure that we are critical to America’s homeland defense, continuing our tradition since the founding of our Nation.
  - “Neighbors helping neighbors...” National Guard roles and responsibilities in Civil Support means the state National Guard is under the command and control of the state governors and Adjutants General until such time the President federalizes these Soldiers and Airmen.
  - In cases involving terrorism, the following bullet should be used: “We are ready, willing and able to deter, defend against, and defeat terrorist activities.”

**After Action Report (AAR)**

National Guard state PAOs involved in or who deploy in support of the incident/operation should provide an after-action report no later than seven days upon conclusion of Public Affairs activities. Send After Action Report to NGB-PA.

**Contact Information**

Commercial Phone: NGB Public Affairs (703) 607-2584

Website: <http://www.nationalguard.mil>



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## **Appendix 6 to Annex I to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

### **References:**

- A. USACE All Hazards OPLAN 2023-11(updated as required)
- B. ESF 3 Field Guide & Supporting Documents
- C. AR 360-1, The Army Public Affairs Program
- D. FM 3-61, Public Affairs Operations
- E. AR 25-1, Army Information Management
- F. ER 360-1, Public Affairs
- G. ER 500-1-28 w/ errata Sept 2020, National Response Planning Guide

### **Purpose**

This appendix outlines roles and responsibilities of the external affairs function of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in support of the National Response Framework (NRF) and under its own authority PL 84-99 (Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies).

### **Mission**

#### **National Response Framework**

USACE is the primary agency for ESF 3, Public Works and Engineering. Activities within the scope of this function include conducting pre-incident and post-incident assessments of public works and infrastructure; executing emergency contract support for lifesaving and life-sustaining services; providing technical assistance to include engineering expertise, construction management, contracting and real estate services; providing emergency repair of damaged public infrastructure and critical facilities.

#### **Public Law (PL) 84-99**

Public Law (PL) 84-99 (33 U.S.C. 701n) (69 Stat. 186) provides USACE with the authority to plan for all hazards. Under this law, the Chief of Engineers, acting for the Secretary of the Army, is authorized to undertake activities including disaster preparedness, advance measures, emergency operations (Flood Response and Post Flood Response), rehabilitation of flood control works threatened or destroyed by flood, protection or repair of federally authorized shore protective works threatened or damaged by a coastal storm, and provisions of emergency water due to drought or contaminated source.

#### **Concept of Operations**

USACE has a headquarters office and nine divisions with more than 40 districts that cover the United States and its territories, as well as overseas commands in support of military operations. The public affairs offices in each district and division are responsible for coordinating information with local, state, regional and federal agencies. These offices work with FEMA regional external affairs. If ESF 15 is activated, then USACE will provide external affairs support to the Federal Joint Information Center (JIC), the Unified Coordination Group (UCG), and external affairs Planning and Products component. If properly requested, approved, and funded, USACE may provide additional external affairs support to the overall federal response (additional staffing for JIC operations, public information distribution, etc.).

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USACE headquarters public affairs office is responsible for staffing the National Response Coordination Center and National JIC (NJIC) as required.

USACE Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) provide mission public affairs support to Recovery Field Offices (RFOs) and/or FEMA efforts to include publicizing debris removal, temporary emergency power, temporary housing, critical public facility construction, Rights of Entry (ROE) signup points for Blue Roof, and other related information needed by the victim community and other audiences.

USACE public affairs will maintain release authority on all PL 84-99 missions. In FEMA directed missions, USACE will maintain initial release authority prior to UCG establishment. Once FEMA External Affairs operations are established, USACE PAOs and members of the USACE External Affairs Planning and Response Team will coordinate with their FEMA counterparts to determine local procedures for release of information. General guidance is that release authority is at the lowest level to provide accurate and timely information to citizens affected by the emergency. All information should be synchronized and flow through the supported District or Division emergency operations center.

## **Geographical Relationships**

### **State Planning and Response**

The following USACE divisions have the lead for PL-84-99 state planning and response consistent with Civil Works boundaries and authorities: Great Lakes and Ohio River Division (LRD), Mississippi Valley Division (MVD), North Atlantic Division (NAD), Northwestern Division (NWD), Pacific Ocean Division (POD), South Atlantic Division (SAD), South Pacific Division (SPD), and Southwestern Division (SWD).

### **Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief & Emergency Assistance Act Planning & Response**

The following divisions have the lead for Stafford Act planning and response as indicated. (Note: USACE Civil Works boundaries are based on watersheds, not state boundaries. See map.) Due to this, and to reduce confusion, Districts and Divisions have been assigned leads for specific states and FEMA Regions, according to ER 500-1-28:

### **Great Lakes and Ohio River Division – Coordinating lead for FEMA Region 5**

Associated Districts lead the coordination of activities with:

- FEMA Region 3 for the state of West Virginia.
- FEMA Region 4 for the states of Kentucky, and Tennessee.
- FEMA Region 5 for the states of Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio.

### **Mississippi Valley Division**

Associated Districts lead the coordination of activities with:

- FEMA Region 4 for the state of Mississippi.
- FEMA Region 5 for the states of Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.
- FEMA Region 6 for the state of Louisiana.
- FEMA Region 7 for the state of Iowa.

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**North Atlantic Division – Coordinating lead for FEMA Regions 1, 2 (NY and NJ), and 3**

Associated Districts lead the coordination of activities with:

- FEMA Region 1 for the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island.
- FEMA Region 2 for the states of New York and New Jersey.
- FEMA Region 3 for the states of Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

**Northwestern Division – Coordinating lead for FEMA Regions 7, 8, and 10**

Associated Districts lead the coordination of activities with:

- FEMA Region 7 for the states of Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.
- FEMA Region 8 for the states of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming.
- FEMA Region 9 for the states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

**Pacific Ocean Division**

Associated Districts lead the coordination of activities with:

- FEMA Region 9 for the state of Hawaii, territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, and Pacific governments authorized assistance under provisions of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Marshall Islands).
- FEMA Region 10 for the state of Alaska.

**South Atlantic Division – Coordinating lead for FEMA Region 2 (VI and PR), and 4**

Associated Districts lead the coordination of activities with:

- FEMA Region 2 for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.
- FEMA Region 4 for the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

**South Pacific Division – Coordinating lead for FEMA Region 9**

Associated Districts lead the coordination of activities with:

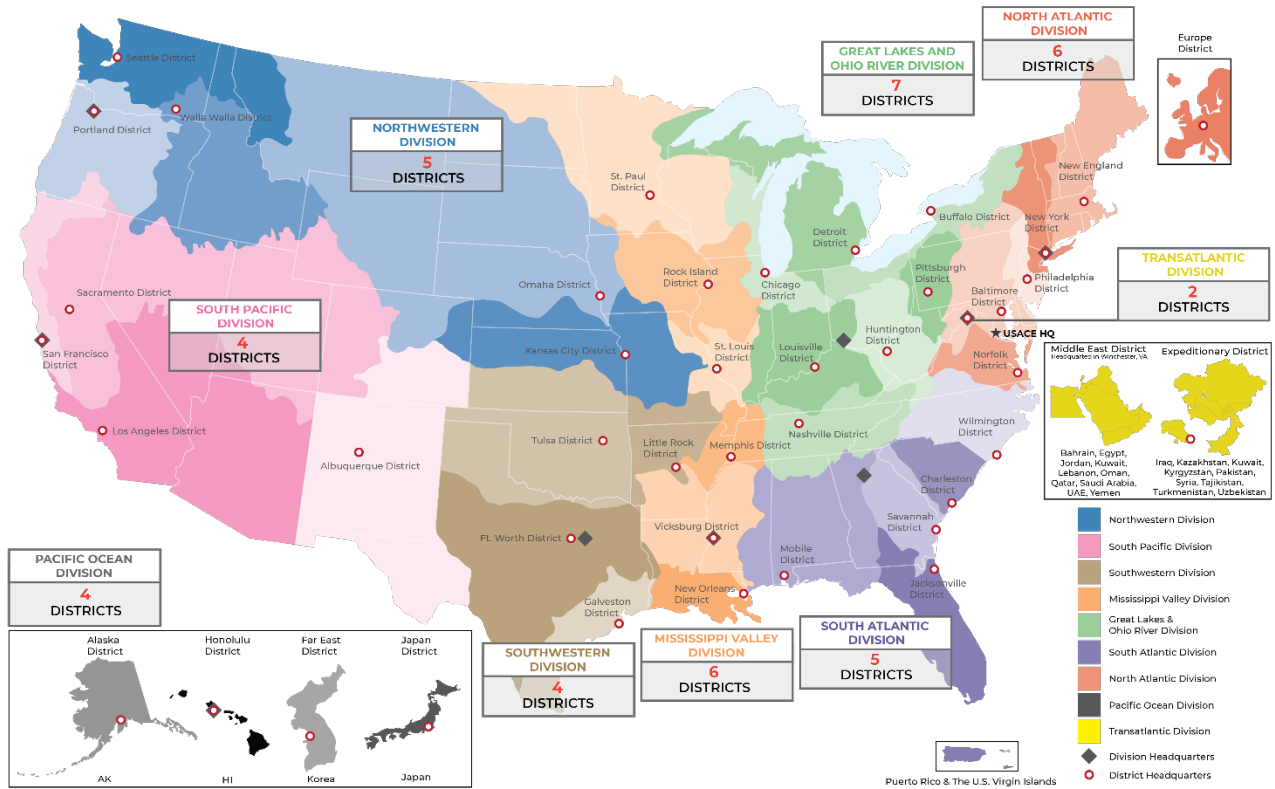
- FEMA Region 6 for the state of New Mexico.
- FEMA Region 8 for the state of Utah.
- FEMA Region 9 for the states of Arizona, California, and Nevada.

**Southwestern Division – Coordinating lead for FEMA Region 6**

Associated Districts lead the coordination of activities with:

- FEMA Region 6 for the states of Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

# USACE Civil Engineer Divisions and Districts



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# **Annex J to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Federal Law Enforcement**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)

#### **Purpose**

This annex provides a framework for the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and its components working with other federal agencies to inform the public of the law enforcement efforts in response to an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. This annex outlines the roles and responsibilities of the public affairs function of DOJ in coordination with its components: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); U.S. Marshals Service (USMS); Bureau of Prisons (BOP); the U.S. Attorneys offices; and other DOJ components as appropriate.

#### **Operating Concepts**

If an incident is deemed to be terrorist-related, the FBI is the lead DOJ component handling the investigation. Coordination of all DOJ components is crucial. As soon as an incident occurs, the DOJ's Office of Public Affairs (OPA) will initiate a conference call with public affairs representatives at the FBI, ATF, DEA, USMS, BOP, and other DOJ components as appropriate, to discuss the incident and coordinate press strategy, including new/digital media. In the event of an ESF 15 activation, an FBI and/or ATF public affairs officer will be designated as an ESF 15 External Affairs Officer (EAO).

#### **Communication Protocols**

This annex will be used in addition to the existing communications processes already established, which include:

- Communications strategy developed and coordinated with White House Communications and DHS.
- Participation in the National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL) and the State Incident Communications Coordination Line (SICCL) calls.
- DOJ's OPA will initiate a conference call with public affairs representatives at the FBI, ATF, and other DOJ components as appropriate before each NICCL call to discuss law enforcement operations and coordinate law enforcement messages.
- DOJ's OPA will coordinate with affected U.S. Attorney's Offices to ensure coordinated law enforcement messaging, including the use of social media.
- U.S. Attorney's Offices public information officer(s) should be included in follow-on NICCL and SICCL calls communication and should coordinate with field law enforcement components as appropriate.
- Coordination with other government agencies as appropriate, including the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Director of National Intelligence.
- Activation of a National Joint Information Center (NJIC).

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## **Objectives**

During a terrorist-related incident, DOJ will:

- Coordinate with its components, federal government agencies, and state and local law enforcement as appropriate to inform the public and the media of law enforcement and investigative efforts.
- Provide information that will help ensure the public's safety.
- Ensure that information disseminated is accurate and provided in a timely manner.
- Monitor major social/new media networks to assess ongoing public reaction and provide analysis for consideration of message development.

## **Policies**

- DOJ's OPA coordinating with its component public affairs offices leads public affairs efforts for law enforcement.
- The Attorney General and the Director of the FBI will participate in any law enforcement announcement. Depending on the nature of the incident, other DOJ components may participate in a law enforcement announcement.
- Any written or oral statement regarding law enforcement will be approved by DOJ's OPA in consultation with FBI and other appropriate DOJ components.
- No statement should be made that could possibly compromise DOJ's investigation of the incident or any future prosecution.
- DOJ is the only authorized agency to declare an incident an "act of terrorism" and will be the first agency to confirm if an incident has occurred because of terrorism. No other agency may confirm publicly that an incident is the result of "terrorism" or involves "terrorists" without DOJ's consent.

## **Statements to the public and media may address:**

- Law enforcement and investigative efforts.
- Federal, state, and local coordination.
- Public safety.
- Legal issues.
- Public and media assistance to help track down those responsible for the crime through tip lines, photos, and other means.

## **Message/Themes:**

"The DOJ is using all available law enforcement resources working with all [international] federal, state, and local enforcement agencies to track down and hold accountable those responsible for the incident. Law enforcement is organized and focused on these efforts. Our mission is clear – we are united in our efforts across (international) federal, state, and local lines to bring those responsible for this incident to justice. We are steadfast and resolute in our resolve to prevent further incidents against the United States. We ask the American people to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity to the FBI [or the DOJ component with primary jurisdiction]. We will continue to keep the public informed of our law enforcement efforts."

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## **Message Development**

DOJ is the lead on law enforcement messages. Any mention of a law enforcement activity by any federal agency official, in any press release, statement by any federal agency, or web posting, must be approved by the DOJ's OPA. The DOJ's OPA will coordinate with its components and approve any message about law enforcement or investigative efforts. Federal, state, and local law enforcement must work together to ensure that law enforcement messages are coordinated, accurate, and presented to the media and the public in a timely manner. They should correct misinformation promptly.

## **Message Dissemination**

DOJ will utilize a variety of ways to provide critical law enforcement information in a timely manner to the media, public, government, and non-government agencies.

DOJ's OPA will provide critical law enforcement information to the media and public in a timely manner through various means:

- Conduct news conferences with the media (with agency and/or appropriate law enforcement officials).
- Press conference location sites may include Main DOJ, FBI Headquarters, and National JIC.
- Conduct conference calls with the media.
- Issue press releases, social media alerts, press statements, and fact sheets.
- Issue media advisories.
- Organize and participate in media briefings (on the record and on background).
- Organize and participate in television and radio interviews.
- Provide information on the DOJ website as well as other DOJ components' websites as appropriate.
- Send e-mail alerts, including social media alerts/updates to subscribers/e-mail lists.
- Provide updates to community partners through conference calls.
- Provide photos of fugitives (for law enforcement purposes).
- Conduct outreach to a list of DOJ beat reporters (which includes national and international media outlets: news wires, newspapers, television, magazines, and the Internet).

The DOJ's OPA will coordinate law enforcement messages with its various components' public affairs offices that will then provide information to their staff. For example, DOJ's OPA will coordinate with the FBI and ATF Public Affairs Offices who will then communicate the law enforcement message to their Special Agents in Charge (SACs) across the country.

Provide Q&As, talking points, public affairs guidance, and other information (and resources) to field office media coordinators (U.S. Attorneys offices, FBI, and ATF SACs) to ensure law enforcement message is accurate and coordinated. The DOJ and its components will draft talking points and speeches for senior officials. The DOJ's Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys will coordinate information to the 94 U.S. Attorneys' offices around the country.

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## **Office of Public Affairs Incident Communications Plan**

In the event of an incident, the DOJ's OPA will coordinate its operations with its components. DOJ's OPA will relocate and conduct operations with the FBI's OPA with representatives from ATF and DOJ's other components. The offices will conduct operations and have representatives in several locations, which may include the FBI's Special Incident Operations Center (SIOC), the DOJ's Command Center, the NJIC, and other undisclosed locations.

DOJ's OPA Crisis Management Team, which includes the Director, Deputy Directors, senior Public Affairs Specialists, and Press Assistants, will report to various locations to perform its public affairs responsibilities. DOJ's OPA staff will work in shifts to ensure that during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response, the OPA areas of responsibilities will be addressed 24 hours a day as necessary. The OPA Director, Deputy Directors, senior Public Affairs Specialists, and New Media Specialists, will provide information to the media and answer press inquiries.

OPA staff responsibilities include:

- Director or designee (Deputy Director) responsible for overall law enforcement message, answers press inquiries and provides information to the media. Director or designee also accompanies the Attorney General to a relocation site.
- Deputy Directors/Public Affairs Specialists coordinate efforts with the White House, DHS, and other federal agencies. These representatives will participate in NICCL and the NJIC. They will answer media inquiries and coordinate the OPA's staff directives.
- The chief Digital Communications Officer will coordinate with the OPA Director and Deputies and other law enforcement and agency digital officers to ensure accurate and reliable social media alerts and updates.
- Speechwriters and Public Affairs Specialists will draft press releases, statements, and law enforcement messages. Public Affairs Specialists will provide information to the media and answer press inquiries.
- Public Affairs Specialists will provide information and coordinate with U.S. Attorneys Offices and DOJ components.
- Designated Public Affairs Specialists will participate in a federal agency deployment team as appropriate.
- Press Assistants will disseminate press releases, media advisories, and other public statements and logistical information to the media by telephone, e-mail, and fax. Press Assistants will also post press releases and press statements to the DOJ's website in coordination with the Department's Justice Management Division (JMD).



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# **Annex K to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Energy**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)

#### **Purpose**

This annex outlines the responsibilities and activities of the public affairs function of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in response to energy emergencies including activations under the Stafford Act pursuant to the National Response Framework (NRF) events, as well as non-Stafford Act events, including cyber incidents impacting the energy sector.

#### **Mission**

DOE is the designated sector-specific agency for energy security and the coordinating agency for ESF 12 under the NRF. Within DOE, these efforts are led by the Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response (CESER), which works to secure the U.S. energy infrastructure against all-hazards, reduce the impact of disruptive events, and respond to and facilitate recovery from energy disruptions, in collaboration with federal, state, and local governments as well as industry partners. The CESER also works to mitigate the risk of energy disruption from cyber incidents and other emerging threats within the energy sector.

The CESER's Response and Restoration (R&R) division leads DOE's response to energy emergencies, supported by offices across the Department. Communications are a critical part of the Department's overall response. The goal in any emergency response is to have a unity of message and effort.

#### **Concept of Operations**

In preparation for, and in response to an energy emergency, DOE's communications and external affairs activities will support the NRF under ESF 15 and will work in tandem with the Department's efforts under the NRF and ESF 12 – Energy.

#### **Key Stakeholders**

During its emergency communications response, the Department will engage and coordinate with several key stakeholders including:

- DOE leadership team.
- The federal community.
- Industry partners.
- The private sector.
- The media.
- \*State and local leaders.
- \*\*Congressional members and staffers.

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\*Much of the communication with state and local leaders will be handled as part of the CESER's stakeholder outreach efforts. However, during an energy emergency, the Department will ensure that the messaging among those groups is consistent.

\*\*In the same way, DOE and the CESER's Public Affairs will work closely with DOE Congressional and Intergovernmental and FEMA External Affairs to see that members and staffers stay fully informed.

### **Communications Activities**

During the response, DOE will engage in several essential activities including:

- Issuing Situation Reports.
- Working with departmental offices to keep key stakeholders informed.
- Conducting regular updates with industry partners, including coordination calls.
- Coordinating messages with key stakeholders.
- Sharing information and updates with FEMA and federal partners and amplifying their key messages.
- Answering media inquiries.
- Addressing misconceptions and misunderstandings using such tools as FEMA rumor control.
- Amplifying situation reports and messaging on social media channels such as X, Facebook, and others.

### **Key Messages**

While it may send out several messages during a response, DOE communications will largely be focused on three themes:

- Informing key stakeholders of the situation including:
  - Providing stakeholders with broad-spectrum awareness of the energy situation.
  - Answering inquiries.
  - Addressing misconceptions and misunderstandings.
  - Amplifying messages from key stakeholders.
- Assuring that efforts are being made to resolve the situation.
- Advancing response, restoration, and recovery activities.

DOE will wind-down its communications response activities in coordination with its operational activities, and those of its partners. The Department will also engage in exercises with its partners as appropriate to prepare for the next emergency response.

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## **Appendix 1 to Annex K to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs Space Weather Activity Prior to Possible Power Outage**

### **References:**

- A. National Planning Frameworks (NRF)
- B. NOAA Space Weather Scales

### **Purpose**

The appendix captures the roles and responsibilities of a space weather incident leading up to an impending extreme space weather event and the resulting threat of prolonged power outage that impacts critical infrastructure, the private sector, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments, communities, and individuals and families.

### **Space Weather Incidents**

The sun is the main source of space weather. Sudden bursts of plasma and magnetic field structures from the sun's atmosphere called coronal mass ejections (CMEs) together with sudden bursts of radiation, or solar flares, all cause space weather effects on Earth. Space weather can produce electromagnetic fields that induce extreme currents in wires, disrupting power lines, and even causing prolonged, wide-spread blackouts. Severe space weather also produces solar energetic particles, which can damage satellites used for commercial communications, global positioning, intelligence gathering, and weather forecasting.

### **Geomagnetic Storms**

Geomagnetic storms, strong disturbances to Earth's magnetic field, pose problems for many activities, technological systems, and critical infrastructure. The Earth's magnetic field changes during a storm as the near-Earth system attempts to adjust to the jolt of energy from the sun carried in the solar wind, known as CMEs. Their effects can disturb the geomagnetic field for days at a time.

The most visible attribute of a geomagnetic storm is the aurora, which becomes brighter and moves closer to the equator. This heightened aurora signals the vigorous electrodynamic processes at play as they respond to the burst of energy. Geomagnetic storms usually last a few hours to days. The strongest storms may persist for up to a week.

A string of CMEs may cause prolonged disturbed periods related to the additional energy being pumped into Earth's magnetic field. The frequency of geomagnetic storms depends on where Earth is in the solar cycle—with most storms occurring near solar maximum; however, these storms are also common in the declining phase due to high-speed solar wind streams.

Geomagnetic storms induce currents that can have significant impact on electrical transmission equipment. Electric power companies have procedures in place to mitigate the impact of geomagnetic storms.

### **Space Weather Research**

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Moon to Mars Space Weather Analysis Office provides routine experimental research forecasts, notification, space weather

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analysis, and spacecraft anomaly resolution assistance in support of NASA robotic missions and human spaceflight. Data from NASA missions provide initial views of space weather activities from different vantage points, and these observations are cornerstones of NASA space weather research. NASA's Community Coordinated Modeling Center (CCMC) is a multi-agency partnership that tests and evaluates models and provides, to the international research community, access to modern space science simulations. In addition, the CCMC supports the transition of modern space research models to space weather operations.

The Department of Defense (DOD) maintains organic space weather research capabilities in support of DOD-wide and service-specific operational requirements. The Air Force Research Laboratory, the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, the Naval Research Laboratory, the Office of Naval Research, and the Army Research Laboratory coordinate, execute, and promote science and technology programs internally or through schools, universities, government laboratories, and nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

### **Space Weather Prediction**

Space weather prediction services in the United States are provided primarily by [NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center \(SWPC\)](#) and the [U.S. Air Force's \(USAF\) 557th Weather Wing](#) Space Weather Operations Center (SpaceWOC), which work closely together to address the needs of their civilian and military user communities. The SWPC draws on a variety of data sources, both space and ground-based, to provide forecasts, watches, warnings, alerts, and summaries as well as operational space weather products to civilian and commercial users. The USAF's SpaceWOC exploits data openly available to the community as well as military-unique data sources to provide summaries, analyses, forecasts, alerts, warnings, and other products at multiple security classification levels to meet DOD requirements in support of global joint operations.

The Space Radiation Analysis Group (SRAG) at the Johnson Space Center is responsible for ensuring that the radiation exposure received by astronauts remains below established safety limits. To fulfill this responsibility, the group uses a comprehensive crew exposure modeling capability and provides radiation exposure projections for astronauts prior to flight and prior to extra-vehicular activity (EVA).

### **Watch**

A Watch is issued when the risk of a potentially hazardous space weather event has increased significantly, but its occurrence or timing is still uncertain. It is intended to provide enough advanced notice so those who need to set their plans in motion can do so. The purpose of a Watch is to give preliminary notification of possible space weather activity with a lead-time of hours to days. A Watch can be upgraded to a higher-level Watch. An example of this includes:

WATCH: Geomagnetic Storm Category G3 Predicted

Highest Storm Level Predicted by Day: Dec 30: G3 (Strong); Dec 31: G1 (Minor); Jan 01: None (Below G1)

THIS SUPERSEDES ANY/ALL PRIOR WATCHES IN EFFECT

NOAA Space Weather Scale descriptions can be found at:

<http://www.swpc.noaa.gov/noaa-scales-explanation>

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- Potential Impacts: Area of impact primarily poleward of 50 degrees [Geomagnetic Latitude](#).
  - Induced Currents: Power system voltage irregularities possible, false alarms may be triggered on some protection devices.
  - Spacecraft: Systems may experience surface charging; increased drag on low Earth-orbit satellites and orientation problems may occur.
  - Navigation: Intermittent satellite navigation (GPS) problems, including loss-of-lock and increased range error may occur.
  - Radio: HF (high frequency) radio may be intermittent.
  - Aurora: Aurora may be as low as Pennsylvania to Iowa to Oregon.

### **Warning**

A Warning is issued when a significant space weather event is occurring, imminent, or likely. A Warning is a short-term, high confidence prediction of imminent activity. The purpose of a Warning is notification of impending space weather activity with a lead-time of minutes to a few hours. A Warning can be upgraded to a higher Warning if space weather conditions are expected to change sufficiently enough to warrant the upgrade. An example of this includes:

WARNING: Geomagnetic K-index of 7 or greater expected  
Warning Condition: Onset  
NOAA Scale: G3 or greater - Strong to Extreme

NOAA Space Weather Scale descriptions can be found at:  
<https://www.swpc.noaa.gov/noaa-scales-explanation>

- Potential Impacts: Area of impact primarily poleward of 50 degrees [Geomagnetic Latitude](#).
- Induced Currents: Power system voltage irregularities possible, false alarms may be triggered on some protection devices.
- Spacecraft: Systems may experience surface charging; increased drag on low Earth-orbit satellites and orientation problems may occur.
- Navigation: Intermittent satellite navigation (GPS) problems, including loss-of-lock and increased range error may occur.
- Radio: HF (high frequency) radio may be intermittent.
- Aurora: Aurora may be as low as Pennsylvania to Iowa to Oregon.

### **Alert**

Alerts indicate that the observed conditions, highlighted by the warnings, have crossed a preset threshold or that a space weather event has already started. An example of this includes:

ALERT: Geomagnetic K-index of 7  
Active Warning: Yes  
NOAA Scale: G3 - Strong

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NOAA Space Weather Scale descriptions can be found at:  
[www.swpc.noaa.gov/noaa-scales-explanation](http://www.swpc.noaa.gov/noaa-scales-explanation)

- Potential Impacts: Area of impact primarily poleward of 50 degrees [Geomagnetic Latitude](#).
- Induced Currents: Power system voltage irregularities possible, false alarms may be triggered on some protection devices.
- Spacecraft: Systems may experience surface charging; increased drag on low Earth-orbit satellites and orientation problems may occur.
- Navigation: Intermittent satellite navigation (GPS) problems, including loss-of-lock and increased range error may occur.
- Radio: HF (high frequency) radio may be intermittent.
- Aurora: Aurora may be as low as Pennsylvania to Iowa to Oregon.

### **Space Weather Scales**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Space Weather Scales communicate current and future space weather conditions, and their possible effects on people and systems. NOAA space weather scales correlate space weather events with their likely effects on technological systems. The scales have numbered levels, analogous to hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes, that convey severity.

# NOAA Space Weather Scales

## Geomagnetic Storms

Physical measure – Kp values\* determined every 3 hours

Average Frequency – Number of storm events when Kp level was met; (number of storm days)

Category: Scale	Category: Descriptor	Effect Duration of event will influence severity of effects	Physical measure	Average Frequency (1 cycle = 11 years)
G5	Extreme	<u>Power systems</u> : widespread voltage control problems and protective system problems can occur, some grid systems may experience complete collapse or blackouts. Transformers may experience damage. <u>Spacecraft operations</u> : may experience extensive surface charging, problems with orientation, uplink/downlink and tracking satellites. <u>Other systems</u> : pipeline currents can reach hundreds of amps, HF (high frequency) radio propagation may be impossible in many areas for one to two days, satellite navigation may be degraded for days, low-frequency radio navigation can be out for hours, and aurora has been seen as low as Florida and southern Texas (typically 40° geomagnetic lat.).**	Kp=9	4 per cycle (4 days per cycle)
G4	Severe	<u>Power systems</u> : possible widespread voltage control problems and some protective systems will mistakenly trip out key assets from the grid. <u>Spacecraft operations</u> : may experience surface charging and tracking problems, corrections may be needed for orientation problems. <u>Other systems</u> : induced pipeline currents affect preventive measures, HF radio propagation sporadic, satellite navigation degraded for hours, low-frequency radio navigation disrupted, and aurora has been seen as low as Alabama and northern California (typically 45° geomagnetic lat.).**	Kp=8, including a 9-	100 per cycle (60 days per cycle)
G3	Strong	<u>Power systems</u> : voltage corrections may be required, false alarms triggered on some protection devices. <u>Spacecraft operations</u> : surface charging may occur on satellite components, drag may increase on low-Earth-orbit satellites, and corrections may be needed for orientation problems. <u>Other systems</u> : intermittent satellite navigation and low-frequency radio navigation problems may occur, HF radio may be intermittent, and aurora has been seen as low as Illinois and Oregon (typically 50° geomagnetic lat.).**	Kp=7	200 per cycle (130 days per cycle)
G2	Moderate	<u>Power systems</u> : high-latitude power systems may experience voltage alarms, long-duration storms may cause transformer damage. <u>Spacecraft operations</u> : corrective actions to orientation may be required by ground control; possible changes in drag affect orbit predictions. <u>Other systems</u> : HF radio propagation can fade at higher latitudes, and aurora has been seen as low as New York and Idaho (typically 55° geomagnetic lat.).**	Kp=6	600 per cycle (360 days per cycle)
G1	Minor	<u>Power systems</u> : weak power grid fluctuations can occur. <u>Spacecraft operations</u> : minor impact on satellite operations possible. <u>Other systems</u> : migratory animals are affected at this and higher levels; aurora is commonly visible at high latitudes (northern Michigan and Maine).**	Kp=5	1700 per cycle (900 days per cycle)

\* Based on this measure, but other physical measures are also considered.

\*\* For specific locations around the globe, use geomagnetic latitude to determine likely sightings (see [www.swpc.noaa.gov/Aurora](http://www.swpc.noaa.gov/Aurora))

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## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **NOAA Space Weather Prediction Center**

NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Center (SWPC) continually monitors and forecasts the Earth's space environment. It is also primary federal authority of space weather alerts and warnings for the United States.

### **Space Weather Alerts and Warnings**

Similar to the bulletins put out by the National Weather Service (NWS) local forecast offices, SWPC provides Alerts, Watches, and Warnings to the public at large about what to expect from space weather. These bulletins are levels of severity of the solar activity that can be expected to impact the Earth's environment.

### **NASA**

NASA's Moon to Mars Space Weather Analysis Office addresses the space weather needs of NASA's robotic missions and human spaceflight through routine experimental research forecasts, notification, space weather analysis, and spacecraft anomaly resolution support.

### **DHS/FEMA**

DHS/FEMA tools can support NOAA's SWPC Alerts, Watches and Warnings through its coordination platforms to reach key emergency management communications teams at the federal, SLTT, and private sector level to align communication messages to provide timely public information.

### **National Incident Communications Coordination Line**

The National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL) is used for the transmission and exchange of critical and timely incident information among federal and affected SLTT authorities.

### **State Incident Communications Coordination Line**

The State Incident Communications Coordination Line (SICCL) is a dedicated federal-state-tribal-territorial incident communication conference line that is similar to the NICCL.

### **Private Sector Incident Communications Coordination Line**

The Private Sector Incident Communications Coordination Line (PICCL) is a facilitated call with key businesses involved in a specific incident, which could provide timely public information to private sector communicators. This two-way call can be used to support a direct line of communication with internal and external private sector communications professionals to provide information regarding the disaster as well as receive feedback and other information from private sector.

### **DOD**

The USAF's SpaceWOC is DOD's only operations center, providing 24/7 space environmental monitoring and forecasting at multiple security classification levels in support of global joint operations. It is the primary source of space environment information at classified levels for the



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National Security Council, informing the formulation and implementation of national security policy.

### **Space Weather Product Dissemination**

The SpaceWOC provides summaries, analyses, forecasts, alerts, warnings, and other products through a mixture of subscription service (automatic send) and via the Air Force Weather-Web Services (AFW-WEBS) (individual retrieve) internet capability. Both services are available at multiple security enclaves. The SpaceWOC coordinates specific alerts, warnings, and forecasts with SWPC to ensure horizontal consistency of information being disseminated to the space weather community.

### **Department of Energy**

DOE works with the energy asset owners and operators to advise SLTT authorities and the private sector to develop procedures and products that improve situational awareness to effectively respond to disruptions to the energy sector.

### **Federal Space Weather Resources**

Power Outage Incident Annex: [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema\\_incident-annex\\_power-outage.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_incident-annex_power-outage.pdf)

NASA Research: [http://www.nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/sunearth/index.html](http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/sunearth/index.html)

NOAA SWPC Forecasting: <http://www.swpc.noaa.gov/forecasts>

NOAA SWPC Reporting: <http://www.swpc.noaa.gov/reports>

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# **Annex L to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Public Health and Medical**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)

#### **Purpose**

This annex provides a framework for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), its agencies, and partners working under ESF 8, to educate and inform the public, health care professionals, policy makers, partner organizations, and the media in a timely, accurate, and coordinated manner during the response and recovery phases of an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. This annex outlines the roles and responsibilities of the public affairs function of the HHS as well as its agencies and partners in support of ESF 8 and ESF 15.

#### **Background**

Under the National Response Framework (NRF), HHS is the primary federal agency for coordination of ESF 8 – Public Health and Medical Services and a support agency of ESF 6 – Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services. Given the unique requirements for the External Affairs response during a national public health emergency, the HHS and DHS, as the respective leads for ESF 8 and ESF 15, will team together to coordinate and disseminate critical health information and guidance.

#### **Objectives**

During an incident requiring a coordinated federal response, the HHS will:

- Coordinate public health and medical messages across the federal government to ensure accuracy and consistency and timely information so that affected individuals and communities can make sound decisions about protecting health.
- Coordinate communications activities with state and local public health, medical, and emergency response agency communications staffs, including regional or local communications centers as appropriate.
- Communicate with members of the public, particularly in affected communities, on the real and perceived public health and medical impacts of the emergency.
- Promptly respond to rumors and inaccurate information, social disruption, and stigmatization.
- Coordinate international information exchange and communication strategies.

#### **Operational Communications Assumptions**

- The HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA) will lead the overall federal public health and medical communications response under ESF 15 with support from all relevant HHS agencies and offices.
- DHS will lead communications for non-health effects of an incident (e.g., transportation, commerce, economy, education).

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- The White House Communications will guide overall communications strategy and policy for the U.S. government.
  - Risk communication principles will be incorporated into all public health and medical information activities.
  - Access to communication channels and business destinations may be hindered, so staffs may need to work remotely.
  - Access and inclusion will be at the core of all communications.
  - Traditional communications channels (e.g., telephone, e-mail, Internet) may be unavailable or inaccessible, which will create difficulties for internal communications within departments/agencies and across the U.S. government, resulting in delays or barriers to the timely release of information to the public.

### Utilizing Strategic Partnerships to Implement Initiatives Targeting High-Vulnerability Groups Helped Ensure access to COVID-19 Vaccines and Therapeutics Case Study 2020-2023 COVID-19 Pandemic

- The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the long-standing health inequities and disproportionate burdens faced by racial and ethnic minorities and underserved and underrepresented populations.
- The HHS Coordination Operations and Response Element (H-CORE) within the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) engaged a wide-range of public and private partners in multiple initiatives to prioritize access and utilization of COVID-19 therapeutics, taking into consideration the social, geographic, economic, and environmental challenges faced across a population.
- In addition to working with federal and state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners to preposition COVID-19 therapeutics at provider sites in high-vulnerability zip codes, including at federally qualified health centers (FQHC), ASPR H-CORE implemented the following initiatives.
  - **Test to Treat Program:** Through the Test to Treat program, a person could be tested for COVID-19, see a healthcare provider, receive a prescription for a medication (if you are eligible), and have the prescription filled—all in one location. Many Test to Treat locations had telehealth options, allowing those without transportation or who couldn't be easily transported to a healthcare facility or those that lived in rural area far from a healthcare provider access to a healthcare professional through a virtual appointment.
  - **Federal Retail Pharmacy Therapeutics Program:** This public-private partnership with 21 national pharmacy partners and networks of independent pharmacies represented over 40,000 pharmacy locations nationwide and was managed by a pharmacist-led team that engaged directly with the partners through monthly virtual meetings and ongoing email communication. The program provided a direct channel for the pharmacy partners to share information, receive feedback, and obtain the latest information from the U.S. government on COVID-19 therapeutics. The program also allowed the U.S. government to obtain end-users' perspectives for better policy planning and execution.
  - **Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes):** The Project ECHO COVID-19 Outpatient Therapeutics mini-series provided clinicians with the appropriate knowledge, resources, and tools needed to initiate and scale the administration of

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monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) and reduce strain on the U.S. healthcare system by supporting providers that served vulnerable populations.

- **Special Projects for Equitable and Efficient Distribution (SPEED):** This program provided direct allocation and targeted outreach and engagement to stakeholders with direct access to populations at high risk for hospitalization and severe disease. Stakeholders included long-term care facility partners, dialysis centers, FQHCs, and correctional facilities among others.

### **Strategic Communications Assumptions**

- The first public announcement of a potential public health or medical emergency will be delivered through social media, followed by announcements in traditional news media.
- Members of the public who are affected by the incident will be informed quickly about the measures they can take to protect their health and the health of their families.
- Regardless of the type of incident, people will be concerned about real or perceived health impacts and will raise questions about protecting health.
- There will be incomplete information, misinformation, rumors, and misconceptions among the public.
- Social, geographic, and economic challenges faced across a population must be addressed in communications outreach efforts to reach racial and ethnic minorities and underserved and underrepresented populations.
- There will be an insatiable demand for information from the public and domestic and international media.
- There will be overwhelming public pressure on the government to provide facts quickly.

### **Control**

The public health or medical impacts of an emergency may be confined locally or have a non-specific geographic focus, which may require a very comprehensive and inclusive communications strategy. This plan recognizes that many players, especially non-governmental entities, have and will play a key role in communicating preparedness and lifesaving information rapidly and on a mass scale. The principal elements of communications control and key leadership team include:

### **Strategic Communications**

The White House will direct strategic communications activities and efforts for the overall response.

### **Medical and Public Health Communications**

HHS will coordinate and direct all medical and public health federal communications activities, with support from ESF 8 partners. These efforts will enhance state and local public health and medical communications activities and messaging.

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## Partnering with State and Local Health Officials to Coordinate Messaging about Federal Assistance from the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) Case Study 2020-2023 COVID-19 Pandemic

- The COVID-19 pandemic presented unique communication challenges due to the polarized political environment across the Nation and within local communities.
- State and local officials were also challenged in their communications by community sentiment about the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Often, state and local officials were at odds with healthcare facility leadership on what to communicate when.
- Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response, HHS public affairs staff worked closely with the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response regional representatives to identify any concerns within the community that may affect how they approached and worked with the receiving healthcare facility, the local health department, the governor or other elected officials, and the local media.
- Prior to the National Disaster Medical System arrival within the community, HHS public affairs staff reached out to their counterparts within governor's offices, state/local health departments, and receiving healthcare facilities to coordinate the timing of appropriate messaging. Employing a unified communications approach helped identify concerns early, bridge divides, and ensure consistent messaging between all involved stakeholders.
- The HHS public affairs staff ensured all parties participated in the decision making on what to communicate when.
  - The HHS public affairs staff provided state/local partners with talking points about National Disaster Medical System medical teams, including the size, composition, and expertise of team members and what services they would provide the community for how long. The staff explained team members hailed from throughout the country and served as short-term intermittent employees, who when not deployed, often worked in hospitals just like the one they were helping.
  - The HHS public affairs staff provided partners links to press releases, social media, websites, and media articles/broadcasts that highlighted the work of the National Disaster Medical System at other facilities receiving assistance during the pandemic.
  - The HHS deployed public affairs officers to capture stories of our teams in action, working alongside healthcare facility staff to save lives. They assisted hospitals with coordinating media interviews and media embeds and helped ensure the appropriate state/local officials had the opportunity to participate in media activities.

### **Incident Communications**

DHS will coordinate and, with HHS, direct appropriate elements of the federal incident communications activities.

### **Coordination**

The HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (OASPA) is the central authority within the Department that will manage and coordinate the public health and medical communications for incidents requiring a coordinated federal response. The Assistant Secretary

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for Public Affairs will work closely with HHS agencies including the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the Administration for Community Living (ACL), and Indian Health Services (HIS). Certain functions may be delegated to agency personnel at the discretion of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs.

### **HHS Virtual Emergency Communications Center**

When the Plan is activated, the HHS communications efforts will be orchestrated using a virtual Emergency Communications Center with the capability of originating or accessing social media posts; video feeds; coordinating news conferences with in-house and other federal studio/broadcast staff; posting mass electronic mailings; responding to media calls; clearing and vetting messaging among HHS divisions, other federal agencies, and state and local agencies. Primary methods of coordination include conference call and e-mail. The Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, the ASPR, CDC, SAMHSA, FDA, other HHS divisions involved in the response, and ESF 8 partners will each assign an agency public affairs staff member as a liaison.

### **HHS Emergency Communications Working Group Conference Line**

Central to the HHS communications coordinating effort will be a conference line to allow telephone connectivity for public affairs staff supporting ESF 8. This conference line will allow the HHS public affairs personnel to work from dispersed sites during the crisis yet be able to receive guidance or direction or to provide information to those needing it. This line also will be used to coordinate messaging between public affairs, social media, and web content managers from HHS agencies and other public health and medical federal partners.

### **National Incident Communications Coordination Line**

The DHS NICCL will be used for transmission and exchange of critical and timely [e.g., “breaking”] incident information among federal authorities. DHS will turn over control of the NICCL conference calls to the HHS, when needed, to coordinate communications information related to the public health and medical aspects of a response, particularly in a public health specific emergency such as a pandemic.

### **Non-Stafford Act Case Study: 2009 H1N1 Flu Outbreak**

- H1N1 NICCL calls were the first that combined all North America with European communicators.
- Between April 24 and May 11 there were 16 NICCL calls with an average of 28 Departments and Agencies’ public affairs representatives and communicators from Mexico, Canada (and later) the United Kingdom, Germany, the World Health Organization, and the European Union.
- H1N1 State Incident Communications Coordination Line (SICCL) calls were the first to combine emergency management with public health public information officers.
- Between April 24 and May 8 there were 15 SICCL calls combining hundreds of attendees ranging from 10 to 38 states’ public health, emergency management public information officers and homeland security communicators.

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## **State and Local Public Information Officers**

HHS will leverage a network of state and local health public health communicators to exchange information and increase the likelihood of consistent messaging and communication activities between federal and state or local governments regarding the emergency and its impact on health.

## **ESF 15 – External Affairs**

HHS will support the activation and management of ESF 15 and within HHS, this support will be led by the HHS OASPA. For emergency responses in which HHS is designated as the lead federal agency, ESF 15 will be coordinated and led by the HHS OASPA. This function could involve a Washington, D.C. area and/or deployed site to support a unified coordination in a state, U.S. territory, the District of Columbia, or outside the continental United States.

## **HHS Secretary’s Operations Center**

The Secretary’s Operations Center (SOC) is the primary emergency operations center for HHS. Its missions are to protect the health, safety, and security of the Nation by serving as the 24/7/365 focal point for public health and medical information collection, sharing, and analysis, as well as facilitating the coordination of HHS preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation operational resource requirements. The SOC reports disaster events to DHS key officials, DHS regions, and ESF and NRF signatory agencies. An HHS public affairs staff member occupies a seat in the Secretary’s Operations Center during emergencies and serves as the point of contact (POC) and liaison to virtual emergency communications center the OASPA headquarters office and other HHS division public affairs offices.

## **HHS Incident Management Team**

HHS may stand up an Incident Management Team (IMT) within hours following the identification of a public health emergency. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response regional staff will establish situational awareness on the ground and work in collaboration with the Federal Health Coordinating Official (FHCO) to assess the short-term and potential long-term requirements for the HHS response. The HHS public affairs and health communications staff member(s) may deploy with the IMT to provide public affairs and health communications support to the FHCO, the IMT staff, and any deployed public health or medical teams to represent the HHS interests in the field. The deployed public affairs and health communications staff coordinate with state counterparts, report into the virtual emergency communications centers for situational awareness and rely on the OASPA for final approval and clearance of public affairs or health communications activities and materials.

## **Communication**

### **Spokespersons**

Based on the information need, the HHS will provide three types of spokespersons: public affairs officers, technical/subject-matter experts, and senior officials. When an information request is received by any HHS agency, the OASPA will assess the request and determine which spokesperson is needed to address the request. The information request will be forwarded to the most appropriate available spokesperson. The FHCO or a designee serves as the spokesperson for deployed public health and medical assets. In addition, each public health, behavioral health,

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and medical team must identify a spokesperson to interact with any media that arrive at a public health or medical deployment site such as a Federal Medical Station (FMS). The designated HHS public affairs officer will coordinate media interviews with the FHCO and deployable teams.

### **Public Affairs Officers**

The HHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs will act as the lead departmental public affairs officer. The virtual emergency communications center will act as the clearinghouse for information requests, triaging them as to priority and directing them to the proper spokesperson for a timely response. The OASPA will track the number and type of requests and the follow-up responses. This information will be used to compile lists of frequently asked questions and to develop consistent communication messages that can be provided to HHS spokespersons and partners as appropriate.

### **Technical/Subject-Matter Experts (SME)**

HHS's technical/subject-matter experts comprise a broad array of very specific public health and medical experts throughout the Department. These individuals will provide responses for information requests that cannot be addressed by HHS public affairs officers. They also may be requested to participate in media interviews by HHS public affairs staff.

### **HHS Senior Leaders**

Individuals serving in the following senior HHS leadership positions have been identified as primary spokespersons for public health and medical emergencies. This list will be supplemented by additional staff-level subject-matter experts relevant to the specific nature of the emergency:

- Secretary.
- Deputy Secretary.
- Assistant Secretary for Health.
- Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response.
- Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response.
- Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs.
- Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs for Public Health.
- Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Director, National Institutes of Health.
- Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health.
- Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration.
- Administrator, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



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# **Annex M to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Environmental**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Response Framework ESF 10 and ESF 15
- C. National Contingency Plan
- D. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- E. EPA's National Approach to Response
- F. EPA Memorandum, "Integrating Environmental Justice Into Emergency Response Preparedness and Management", Nov 3, 2022

#### **Purpose**

This annex outlines the roles and responsibilities of the public affairs function of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in support of Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15. EPA support will be coordinated by the headquarters Office of Public Affairs and the ten regional offices of Public Affairs as outlined in the EPA's National Approach to Response Crisis Communications Plan.

#### **Guiding Principles**

- Use the web to share meaningful, understandable, and actionable data and information with the media and the public in a timely manner.
- Communicate all data and information in a simple, easily understandable format.
- Work with partner agencies at the federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) levels, as well as private sector and non-governmental organizations, to identify key audience groups, develop general and tailored risk communication messages, and communicate actionable environmental and public health information for the media, general public, and specific audience groups.
- Ensure that these messages are conveyed to the media and the public quickly and consistently; and as required by the incident, ensure all information dissemination is coordinated with the DHS ESF 15 External Affairs Officer (EAO) and the Joint Information Center (JIC).

#### **Mission**

##### **EPA Support of the Inter-Agency Federal Public Affairs Effort**

EPA is a support agency for many ESFs under the National Response Framework (NRF). EPA will support the inter-agency public affairs effort, including JIC staffing, to ensure coordination with DHS and other agencies' communications and outreach efforts. Public affairs personnel may be deployed from EPA headquarters, the affected region(s), or other regions. (See Appendix 1 for a map showing the EPA's regional organization).

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## **ESF 10 – Oil and Hazardous Materials**

### **Incidents in Inland Zones**

EPA is the lead agency for ESF 10 – Oil and Hazardous Materials Response Annex for incidents in inland zones. Inland zones are the environment inland of the coast zones excluding the Great Lakes and specified ports and harbors along inland rivers. ESF 10 provides the appropriate response and recovery actions to prepare for, prevent, minimize, or mitigate a threat to health, welfare, or the environment caused by actual or potential oil and hazardous materials incidents.

### **Incidents in Coastal Zones**

The U.S. Coast Guard is the lead agency for ESF 10 incidents in coastal zones. For incidents affecting both inland and coastal zones, EPA is the lead agency and the DHS/U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) serve as the deputy.

### **Lead Agency Responsibilities**

When EPA is the lead agency for ESF 10, EPA public affairs will coordinate with and support the ESF 15 function in establishing and staffing a JIC, including private sector representation, when appropriate. EPA has the dual responsibilities of protecting human health and the environment. The agency public affairs effort at the on-scene, regional, and headquarters levels will pursue active media relations and public information programs during all incidents to quickly and accurately provide the media and the public with accurate and timely information about the extent of and risk from the incident.

### **Concept of Operations**

#### **EPA Public Affairs Deliberate Planning Operations**

In those instances where there is warning of an impending incident, EPA through its headquarters and regional public affairs offices will support the inter-agency effort under ESF 15 by providing the media and the public with information on EPA's preparations for responding to the event. EPA will deploy public affairs personnel to the JIC(s) or other ESF 15 functions in advance of an incident when requested by the ESF 15 EAO.

#### **Response to a Major Incident**

- EPA will staff public information officers who have risk communications experience in its headquarters Emergency Operations Center and regional Emergency Operations Center(s), as well as continue to support the JIC(s) for the duration of the incident.
- EPA will make every effort to give the media access to agency incident operations so that they can report them fully and accurately to the public.
- EPA will issue press releases, risk messages, and other materials to inform the media and the public of the health and environmental consequences of the incident.
- In coordination with the affected region(s), EPA headquarters public affairs will develop and maintain one website to keep the public informed with up-to-date risk and operational information and data on the incident.

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## Coordination

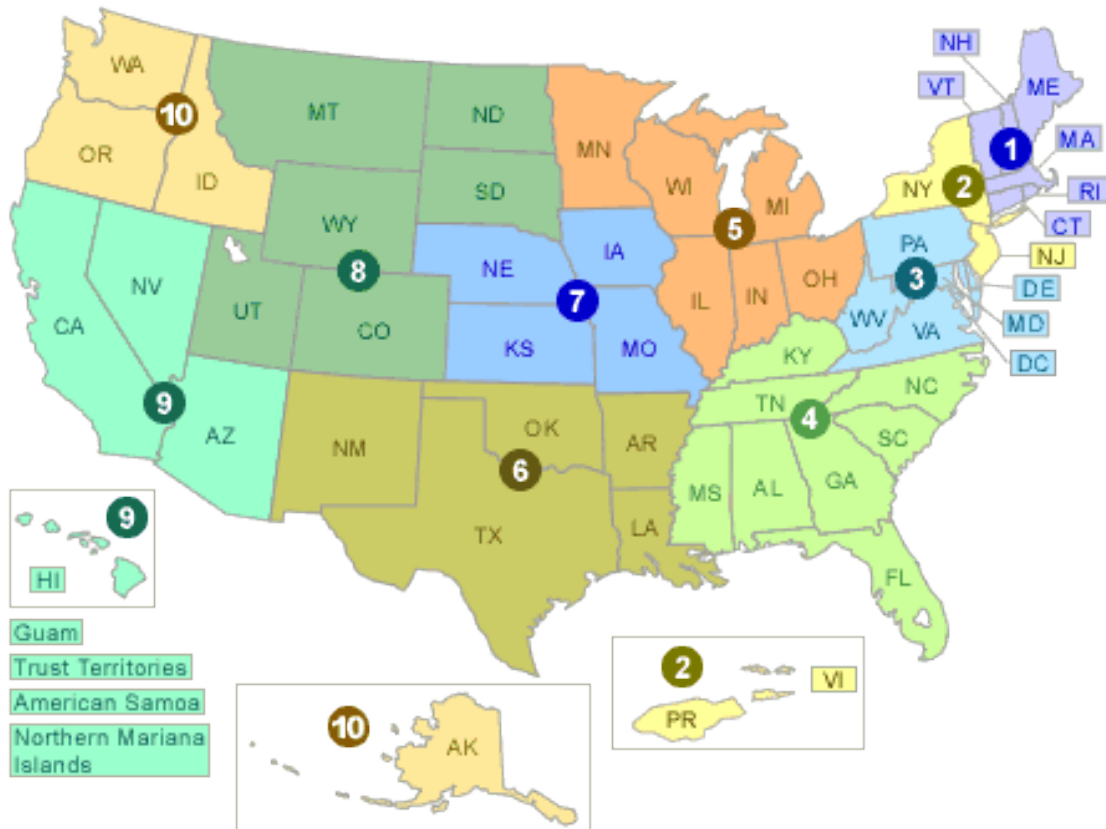
### **EPA Personnel Operational Control**

The Associate Administrator for Public Affairs and/or the Regional Public Affairs Director(s) will coordinate the deployment of EPA public affairs personnel during an incident and the timing, methods, and content of agency information releases. The Associate Administrator for Public Affairs is the final approval authority for the release of incident data-related materials and information.

### **National Incident Communications Coordination Line**

The EPA headquarters Office of Public Affairs will represent the agency on National Incident Communications Coordination Line calls during incidents and will maintain liaison with the ESF 15 function at DHS Public Affairs.

### **Appendix 1 to Annex M to Emergency Support Function 15 EPA Regional Organization**



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# **Annex N to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Radiological**

#### **References:**

- A. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD 5)
- B. National Response Framework (NRF)
- C. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- D. Nuclear/Radiological Incident Annex to the Response and Recovery Federal Interagency Operational Plans (NRIA)
- E. DOD 3150.8-M, Nuclear Weapon Accident Response Procedures (NARP) Manual D

Annex N is a resource toolkit for nuclear and radiological threat information. Use this toolkit to help prepare for such incidents and to communicate with and educate stakeholders.

The toolkit includes:

- Annex N purpose and background.
- Federal department and agency response authorities (table).
- Radiological Dispersal Device (RDD).
- Improvised Nuclear Device (IND).
- Nuclear bomb (Nation-State).
- Case study: Possible Nuclear Attack.
- Federal Response.
- Case studies: International Incident: 2011 Fukushima Nuclear Crisis.
- Responsibilities.
- Federal radiation resource toolkit.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) infographics and web resources.
- Sample nuclear detonation social media messages.

#### **Purpose**

This annex details radiological incident communications strategy, actions, and coordination needed to execute a unified public outreach effort in response to a domestic nuclear/radiological accident, an act of nuclear/radiological terrorism, or a nation-state sponsored nuclear attack.

#### **Background**

DHS is the principal federal official for domestic incident management in accordance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 and the National Response Framework. This includes a federal response to significant radiological incidents. FEMA may be called upon to provide lead or supplemental operational coordination in support of complex and/or large-scale

incidents. For radiological incidents that do not require a coordinated federal response, the agency with jurisdictional authority will serve as federal agency with primary authority.

**Lead Federal Agencies with Primary Authority**

The agency responsible for leading and coordinating all aspects of the federal response is referred to as the lead federal agency (LFA) and is determined by the context and characteristics of a specific incident. When a federal department or agency owns, authorizes, regulates, or is deemed responsible for the facility or activity causing the nuclear/radiological incident and has authority to manage federal actions onsite, that federal department or agency will be designated the LFA.

The table below details which federal department or agency is designated as the LFA based upon the context and characteristics of the nuclear/radiological incident. The LFA is determined by incident type, facilities, and/or materials involved, with specific roles and responsibilities determined by the scope of their authorities over relevant aspects of the incident.

<b>Lead Federal Agency with Primary Authority for Federal Response</b>	
Incident Type, Facilities, or Materials Involved	Primary Authority for Federal Response
<b>Nuclear Facilities that are:</b>	
a) Owned or operated by the Department of Defense (DOD). b) Owned or operated by the Department of Energy (DOE). c) Licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) or an NRC Agreement State. d) Not licensed, owned, or operated by a federal agency, an NRC Agreement state, or currently or formerly licensed facilities for which the owner/operator is not financially viable or is otherwise unable to respond.	a) DOD b) DOE c) NRC d) EPA
<b>Nuclear Weapons and Components that are:</b>	
e) In the custody of DOD. f) In the custody of DOE.	e) DOD f) DOE
<b>Radioactive Materials Owned, Licensed, or Being Transported:</b>	
g) By or for DOD. h) By or for DOE. i) Containing NRC or NRC Agreement State licensed materials. j) Within the coastal zone for materials that are not licensed or owned by a federal agency or an NRC Agreement State. k) All others.	g) DOD h) DOE i) NRC j) USCG k) EPA
<b>Radioactive Materials in Space Vehicles Impacting the United States that are:</b>	
l) Managed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). m) Managed by DOD.	l) NASA m) DOD n) USCG

Incident Type, Facilities, or Materials Involved	Primary Authority for Federal Response
n) Not managed by NASA or DOD, not licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for launch or reentry and impacting the coastal zone. o) All others not licensed, permitted, regulated, or managed by a federal department or agency.	o) EPA
<b>Disused and Unwanted Sealed Sources with no Disposition Pathway</b>	
p) Off-Site Source Recovery.	p) DOE
<b>Unknown or Unlicensed Materials, and Domestic Response to Foreign Materials and International Incidents</b>	
q) Imported contaminated consumer products that are distributed before detection. r) Inadvertently imported radioactive materials that are interdicted at or between U.S. Ports of Entry. s) Within the coastal zone for materials that were not imported. t) All others.	q) EPA r) CBP s) USCG t) EPA
Inadvertent Incidents Involving Lost/Found/Orphaned Radioactive Material	DOE, NNSA
U.S. Assistance to Foreign Governments for Incidents with International Impacts	DOS
All Intentional Incidents Involving Nuclear/Radiological Facilities or Materials (e.g., RDDs, INDs)	DHS, FEMA

**Note: DHS/FEMA may be called upon to lead or provided supplemental operational coordination support for the primary authority during complex incidents.**

Source: [Nuclear/Radiological Incident Annex](#) to the Response and Recovery Federal Interagency Operational Plans

### **Radiological Dispersal Device**

A Radiological Dispersal Device (RDD) is a device that disperses radioactive material over an area. A dirty bomb is a type of RDD that uses a conventional explosion to disperse radioactive material over a targeted area. Most of the radioactive particles dispersed by a dirty bomb would likely fall to the ground within a few city blocks or miles of the explosion. RDDs also include means of dispersal other than an explosion such as using an airplane to disperse powdered or aerosolized forms of radioactive material. Intentionally placing a container of radioactive material in a place where it would expose members of the public to radiation is referred to as a Radiological Exposure Device (RED).

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## Improvised Nuclear Device

An Improvised Nuclear Device (IND) creates an explosion that is thousands to millions of times more powerful than any conventional explosive that might be used in a dirty bomb. An IND is very different from a RDD which simply disperses radiological material using conventional explosives. An IND may be constructed from components of a stolen state-built nuclear weapon or from scratch using nuclear material to produce a nuclear explosion. The radioactive cloud (or plume) from an IND contains fine particles of radioactive dust that can blanket large areas (tens to hundreds of square miles) with fallout. The deadliest radioactive particles decay rapidly. It is critical that people in the downwind area stay inside for 24-48 hours until this decay occurs. To save as many lives as possible, all external and internal messages must contain **“Get inside, Stay inside, Stay tuned”** until advanced situation awareness allows for an informed lifting of shelter and evacuation.

### Possible Nuclear Attack Case Study: 2017 July-August North Korea Threat

- Following a series of North Korea missile launches and public exchanges with the U.S., Hawaii’s Emergency Management Agency published “Get inside, Stay inside, Stay tuned” preparedness guidance on July 2.
- On August 12, Guam’s JIC issued a fact sheet to prepare residents for a possible missile threat.
- Hawaii and Guam leaders conducted numerous public preparedness briefings during this period.

## Nuclear Bomb

A state-sponsored nuclear attack on the continental U.S. or a U.S. territory warrants an immediate communications response. Similar to an IND, all external and internal messages must contain **“Get inside, stay inside, stay tuned”** until advanced situation awareness allows for an informed lifting of shelter and evacuation. If directed by the President, a national message can be delivered by the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). State and local officials may also use their respective Emergency Alert Systems (EAS).

If credible intelligence or media reports determine an attack is likely but not imminent, federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial (SLTT) governments may also decide to provide additional preparedness instructions.

## Get Inside, Stay Inside, Stay Tuned

FEMA, in coordination with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), conducted a nationwide test of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) and Emergency Alert System (EAS) on Oct 3, 2018.

Upon confirmation of an IND or nuclear bomb detonation, all federal and SLTT agencies with appropriate public health and safety missions should disseminate the **“Get inside, stay inside, and stay tuned”** message through all communication channels available. This message is approved for immediate dissemination as timeliness is critical for lifesaving. See section below on the radiological communication toolkit to find preapproved images and messages.

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## **Federal Response**

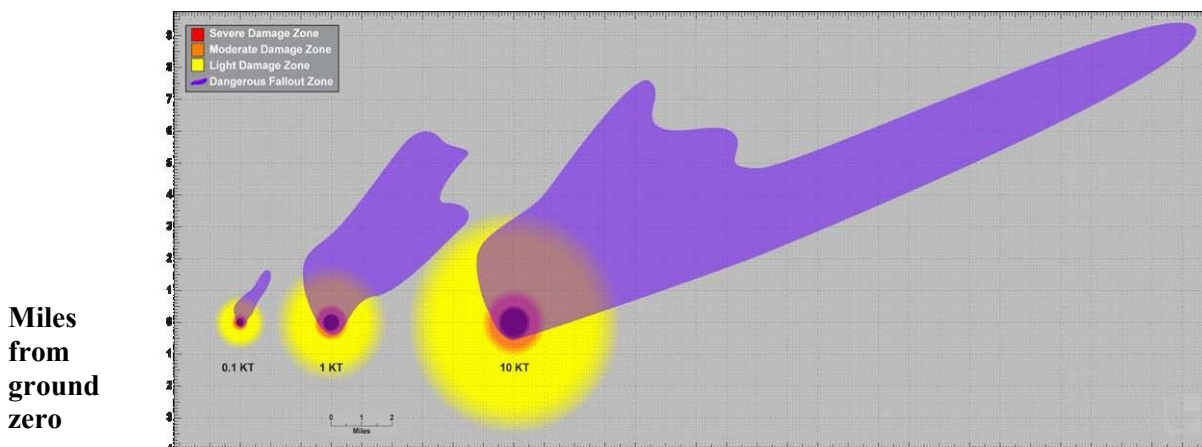
### **Federal Interagency Modeling and Atmospheric Assessment Center**

The Federal Interagency Modeling and Atmospheric Assessment Center (IMAAC) provides a single point for the coordination and dissemination of federal dispersion modeling and hazard prediction products that represent the federal position during actual or potential incidents involving hazardous atmospheric releases. Through plume modeling analysis, the IMAAC provides emergency responders and decision makers with predictions of hazards associated with atmospheric releases to aid in protecting the public and the environment.

Led by FEMA, the IMAAC is a partnership among eight federal agencies, each with supporting capabilities and/or responsibilities for plume modeling. These agencies include DHS/FEMA, DOE, DOD/Defense Threat Reduction Agency, NRC, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The IMAAC products provide actionable information to help inform emergency response decisions. These products show hazard areas, affected populations, potential casualties and/or fatalities, damage estimates, health effects, and recommended protective action guidelines. The IMAAC also provides support for exercises. The IMAAC products are distributed through various mechanisms, to include email and the Homeland Security Information Network.

Any federal or SLTT agency may request activation of the IMAAC for emergencies involving an atmospheric release. The IMAAC assistance can be requested through the DHS/FEMA National Watch Center (NWC).



Representative dangerous fallout (DF) zones for 0.1KT, 1.0KT and 10 KT IND in which an early and direct threat from fallout radioactivity exists. A radiation exposure rate of 10 R/h is used to bound this zone. The DF zone will begin to shrink immediately and decrease relatively quickly over time.



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## Public Plume Maps

Plume and deposition maps are visual representations of the projected path of hazardous materials in the air or deposited on the ground, respectively. During a radiological incident, timely dissemination of plume maps through multiple communication channels will:

- Support the Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD 5) requirement for the Secretary who “ensures that, as appropriate, information related to domestic incidents is gathered and provided to the public”.
- Increase public awareness of the location of the hazardous material.
- Increase public understanding of protective action decisions.

Emergency response personnel, including public affairs responders, need to be aware of the value and limitations of plume maps. A misunderstanding of these products can lead to ineffective, inappropriate, or even detrimental actions during an incident. Any map provided to the public should include a title, relevant date/time stamp, and simple description of what that product means to the public. Upon request by SLTT governments, it is the federal government’s responsibility to provide guidance and support to the affected jurisdiction about how to communicate this technical information to the public.

### International Incident Case Study: 2011 Fukushima Nuclear Crisis

“During the first day following the tsunami and the deteriorating conditions at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, thousands of residents in the town of Namie evacuated north to Tsushima to avoid the radioactive plume. In the absence of publicly available forecasts and radioactive plume predictions from the government of Tokyo, town officials in Namie advised residents to evacuate to Tsushima based on seasonal expectations that the winter winds would be blowing south. Town officials would learn 2 months later that the winds had actually been blowing directly toward Tsushima, making it one of the areas of highest radioactive contamination.”

- Center of Biosecurity of UPMC - After Fukushima: Managing the Consequences of a Radiological Release – Final Report March 2012

## Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center

The Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center (FRMAC) is an interagency organization with representatives from various federal, state, and local radiological response organizations. The purpose of the FRMAC is to assist the SLTT governments in their mission to protect the health and well-being of their citizens by coordinating all federal environmental radiological monitoring efforts and providing:

- Verified radiation measurements.
- Interpretations of radiation distributions based on EPA, FDA, or local protective action guidelines.
- Characterization of overall radiological conditions.

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## International Incident Case Study: 2011 Fukushima Nuclear Crisis (2 cont.)

Meanwhile, there was criticism from the media, local officials, and the public over the System for Prediction of Environmental Emergency Dose Information (SPEEDI). SPEEDI is a system that helps authorities model the dispersion of radioactive materials. In the early stages of the disaster, data generated by SPEEDI were not disclosed to local governments or the public. This appears to have been due to a combination of factors, ranging from differing assessments of the data's reliability to breakdowns in interagency communication. The net result was that potentially valuable dispersion information was not available to inform the evacuation process. According to both Japanese and international reports, this resulted in some people evacuating from less contaminated areas to areas that were in the path of radioactive releases. In several reports reviewing the management of the accident, Japanese officials were candid in recognizing the seriousness of the communication problems:

“Especially immediately after this accident, actions were not sufficiently taken to provide local residents with information or easily understood explanations about radiation, radioactive materials, or information on future outlooks on risk factors.” In addition, “although the results generated by SPEEDI are now being disclosed, disclosure should have been conducted from the initial stage.”

- Becker SM (2012). Risk communication and information in disasters and emergencies. In: Local Planning for Terror and Disaster: From Bioterrorism to Earthquakes, L. Cole and N. Connell, eds., Wiley.

### **Protective Action Recommendations**

SLTT governments are responsible for issuing and communicating protective actions to the public as they deem appropriate. EPA publishes the Protective Action Guide (PAG) manual that contains dose guidelines that would trigger public safety measures, such as evacuation or staying indoors, to minimize or prevent radiation exposure during an emergency. It also includes advice on use of pharmaceutical countermeasures, such as potassium iodide (KI), and long-term measures, such as restriction of food, temporary relocation, or permanent resettlement, to avoid or minimize exposure to residual radiation or exposure through the ingestion pathway. The Advisory Team for Environment, Food and Health (Advisory Team) is the federal interagency group of radiation experts whose mission is to provide radiation safety recommendations to decision-makers at all levels of government following a radioactive release (not directly to the public). The Advisory Team is comprised of radiation expert representatives from the FDA, CDC, EPA, and USDA.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **DHS/FEMA**

DHS and FEMA will coordinate the overall federal incident management response for nuclear incidents. Immediate action to coordinate with other federal, state, and local authorities is necessary to communicate health and safety information.

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### **National Incident Communications Coordination Line**

The National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL) is the primary interagency protocol for all departments and agencies involved in the coordinated Federal response to an IDD, an RDD, or other radiological incidents. The DOE, National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), DOD, DHS, FEMA, EPA, NASA, NORTHCOM, and other federal External Affairs personnel represent their agency on the NICCL to maintain liaison with the ESF 15 functions based on the nature of the radiological incident.

### **DHS Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office**

Established by the Secretary of Homeland Security in December 2017, the Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office (CWMD) consolidated the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office and most of the Office of Health Affairs, as well as other DHS elements.

The CWMD integrates interagency efforts to develop nuclear detection capabilities, measures detector system performance, ensures effective response to detection alarms, advances and integrates nuclear forensics efforts, and conducts transformational research and development for advanced detection and forensics technologies. As part of the national effort to protect the Nation from radiological and nuclear threats, the national office is staffed by representatives from several federal government agencies and works closely with state and local organizations.

The CWMD retains expertise in nuclear detection and forensics operations and response, technical capabilities, and intelligence analysis. DHS Office of Public Affairs, working in coordination with Department of Justice (DOJ) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are responsible for determining what detection information is released to the media. The CWMD supports DHS Office of Public Affairs, as needed, by providing publicly releasable information regarding nuclear detection and related issues.

The CWMD is responsible for coordinating the Nation's National Technical Nuclear Forensics (NTNF) program, including planning and execution of pre-incident communications. In the immediate aftermath of a nuclear detonation, the National Technical Nuclear Forensics Ground Collections Task Force (GCTF), comprised of members of the Department of Justice (DOJ)/Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the NTNF Ground Collections Task Force leader, DOE, and DOD, would play a crucial role by collecting vital information and evidence at the incident site. Nuclear forensic analysis and evaluation of the collected materials would support attribution efforts, along with intelligence and law enforcement information. The CWMD would support DHS Office of Public Affairs, as needed, by providing publicly releasable information on the nuclear forensics program, including the GCTF. Such information would pertain to the general aspects of the program rather than information about the investigation itself, the release of which would be under the purview of the FBI as the lead agency for the investigation.

### **DOE and National Nuclear Security Administration**

DOE and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) facilitate the immediate and follow-on data management support for state and local decision making and public messaging efforts. The National Atmospheric Release Advisory Center (NARAC), the DOE component of the Interagency Modeling and Atmospheric Assessment Center, maps the initial spread of contamination so emergency managers can decide if protective actions are necessary. As a

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follow-on to the initial NARAC projections, the NNSA manages the FRMAC. to monitor environmental radiation and provide maps for protection of the public (see Appendix 2 for more information on the National Atmospheric Release Advisory Center and Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center). DOE and the NNSA public affairs may also be involved in preparing a Senior Response Official (SRO) and/or a Senior Energy Official (SEO) for a press conference along with the Secretary of Homeland Security following an IND or RDD.

**DOJ/FBI**

Under HSPD 5, the Attorney General, generally acting through the FBI, has lead responsibility for criminal investigations of terrorist acts or terrorist threats, and for coordinating activities of other members of the law enforcement community to detect, prevent, preempt, investigate, and disrupt terrorist attacks against the United States. A radiological terrorist incident may affect a single location, or multiple locations, each of which may require an incident response and a crime scene investigation simultaneously.

## Federal Radiation Resource Toolkit

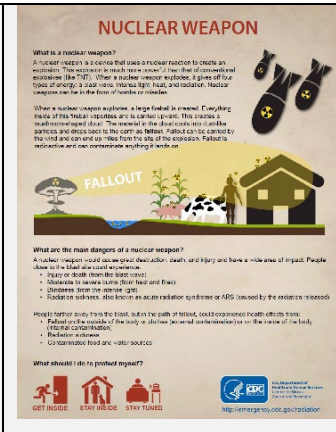
### Nuclear Weapon Infographic

#### Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)

Depending on target location, detonation from a nuclear weapon may be 15 to 30 minutes following a missile launch. IPAWS is designed to deliver an immediate message from the President.

**URL:**

[https://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation/pdf/infographic\\_nuclear\\_weapon.pdf](https://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation/pdf/infographic_nuclear_weapon.pdf)



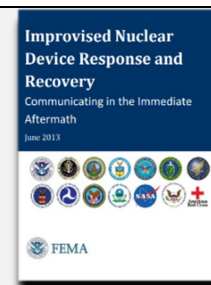
### Improvised Nuclear Device Response and Recovery: Communicating in the Immediate Aftermath

**Incident Type:** Improvised Nuclear Device (many messages applicable to other radiological emergencies)

**Content:** Key messages for affected community and the Nation. Pre-approved answers to anticipated public and media questions. Social media templates for immediate safety actions.

**URL:**

[https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema\\_improvised-nuclear-device\\_communicating-aftermath\\_june-2013.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_improvised-nuclear-device_communicating-aftermath_june-2013.pdf)



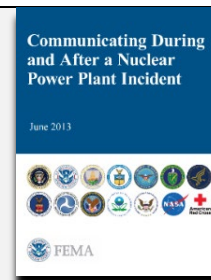
### Communicating During and After a Nuclear Power Plant Incident

**Incident Type:** Nuclear Power Plant

**Content:** Roles and responsibilities for communicating after a nuclear power plant incident. Pre-approved answers to anticipated public and media questions.

**URL:**

[https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema\\_nuclear-power-plant-incident\\_communicating-during-after\\_june-2013.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_nuclear-power-plant-incident_communicating-during-after_june-2013.pdf)

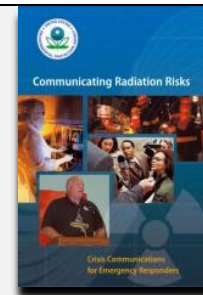


## Communicating Radiation Risks: Crisis Communications for Emergency Responders

**Incident Type:** Radiological Emergency (Transportation and Dirty Bomb)

**Content:** Guidelines for emergency message development. Example questions and answers for transportation and dirty bomb scenarios

**URL:** [https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-02/comm\\_rad\\_riskssept2023\\_online.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-02/comm_rad_riskssept2023_online.pdf)

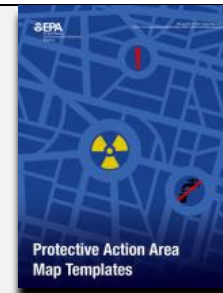


## Protective Action Area Map Templates

**Incident Type:** Any radiological or nuclear emergency

**Content:** Templates for SLTT governments that need to provide evacuation, go inside, food, and/or drinking water guidance quickly to a population in a specific geographical area.

**URL:** [https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-09/documents/protective\\_action\\_area\\_map\\_templates\\_09152017\\_w\\_cover.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-09/documents/protective_action_area_map_templates_09152017_w_cover.pdf)

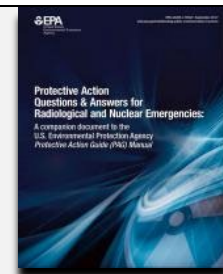


## Protective Action Questions & Answers for Radiological and Nuclear Emergencies

**Incident Type:** Any radiological or nuclear emergency

**Content:** Pre-scripted radiation emergency public safety messages intended to help emergency planners prepare public communications prior to and during a radiological emergency.

**URL:** [https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-06/pags\\_comm\\_tool\\_2023.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-06/pags_comm_tool_2023.pdf)



## CDC Radiation Resources

Radiation Emergency Tool Kits for Public Health Professionals

- **Content:** Guidance, training, and educational materials for professionals. Fact sheets and other content that can be used for public information.
- **URL:** <https://www.cdc.gov/radiation-emergencies/php/toolkit/index.html>

Radiation Basics Made Simple Videos

- **Content:** Eight brief educational videos on protective actions, countermeasures, and health effects, which can be used for public education or b-roll
- **URL:** <http://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation/protectiveactions.asp>

Radiation Communications Research Reports

- **Content:** Formative research reports on radiation-related message testing
- **URL:** <https://www.cdc.gov/radiation-emergencies>

# CDC Radiation Infographics

## Where to go in a Radiation Emergency

### WHERE TO GO IN A RADIATION EMERGENCY

If a radiation emergency happens in your area, you should get inside immediately. No matter where you are, the safest action to take is GET INSIDE, STAY INSIDE, SEAM TUNERS.

- Close outside air intakes or doors.
- Go to the basement or the middle of the building. Radioactive material settles on the outside of buildings.
- If possible, turn off fans, air conditioning, and forced-air heating units that bring air in from outside.
- Close window draperies.
- Bring pets inside.
- Stay tuned for updated instructions from emergency response officials.

Administration for Nuclear Security  
U.S. Department of Energy

## Decontamination

### DECONTAMINATION FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- SHAKE OFF OUTER LAYER OF CLOTHING AND OTHERS**  
If you get caught in clothing or items with radioactive material, you should get out of them as quickly as possible. Shake off your clothes and other items. Do not touch anyone else's clothes or items.
- WASH YOURSELF OFF**  
If you get radioactive material on your skin, wash it off immediately. Use soap and water. Do not use harsh soaps or scrubbers. Do not use solvents. Do not use bleach.
- PUT ON CLEAN CLOTHES**  
If you have clean clothes, put them on. Do not wear the same clothes you were wearing when you were contaminated. Do not wear clothes that have been worn by someone else.
- HELP OTHERS AND PETS**  
If you have clean clothes, help others and pets. Do not let them wear your clothes. Do not let them touch you. Do not let them touch your pets.

## Potassium Iodide: KI

### HOW POTASSIUM IODIDE (KI) WORKS

How does KI work?  
Potassium iodide (KI) blocks the thyroid gland from absorbing radioactive iodine. Radioactive iodine is a gas that can be inhaled or swallowed. It can be absorbed by the thyroid gland. The thyroid gland uses iodine to make hormones. Radioactive iodine can damage the thyroid gland. KI blocks the thyroid gland from absorbing radioactive iodine. This helps prevent the thyroid gland from being damaged.

## Prussian Blue

### HOW PRUSSIAN BLUE WORKS

Prussian blue is a drug that is used in a radiation emergency to help reduce the amount of radioactive cesium-137 and thallium-201 that has been absorbed by the body.

Prussian blue binds to cesium-137 and thallium-201 in the body. It prevents these isotopes from being absorbed by the body. It also prevents these isotopes from being transported to other parts of the body.

Prussian blue is available only by prescription. Public health and medical professionals will determine if Prussian blue is needed.

Prussian blue DOES NOT have the same effect on other radioactive isotopes. It does not have an effect on iodine-131, strontium-90, or cesium-134.

## Contamination vs. Exposure

### RADIATION CONTAMINATION VERSUS EXPOSURE

#### EXTERNAL CONTAMINATION

External contamination occurs when radioactive material is on your skin or clothing. It does not get inside your body. It can be removed by washing or decontamination.

#### INTERNAL CONTAMINATION

Internal contamination occurs when radioactive material gets inside your body. It can be inhaled, swallowed, or absorbed through a wound. It is more dangerous than external contamination.

#### RADIATION EXPOSURE

Radiation exposure occurs when you are near a radioactive source. It does not get inside your body. It can be reduced by staying away from the source and shielding.

## Radiation Exposure And Pregnancy

### RADIATION EMERGENCIES AND PREGNANCY

After a radiation emergency, pregnant women should follow instructions from emergency response officials. They should avoid areas with high levels of radiation. They should avoid eating, drinking, or using products from contaminated areas.

The most important exposure to radiation is from the mother to the fetus. The radiation from the mother can be passed to the fetus. This can cause health problems for the fetus.

A pregnant woman should avoid areas with high levels of radiation. She should avoid eating, drinking, or using products from contaminated areas. She should avoid areas with high levels of radiation for at least 2 weeks after the emergency.

## Improved Nuclear Device

### IMPROVED NUCLEAR DEVICE

An Improved Nuclear Device (IND) is a type of nuclear weapon. It is more powerful than a traditional nuclear weapon. It is also more accurate. It is designed to be used against cities and other targets.

INDs are more powerful than traditional nuclear weapons. They are also more accurate. They are designed to be used against cities and other targets.

#### FALLOUT

INDs create a large amount of fallout. This fallout is more dangerous than the fallout from a traditional nuclear weapon. It is more radioactive. It is also more persistent. It can stay in the air for a longer time.

People should avoid areas with high levels of fallout. They should avoid eating, drinking, or using products from contaminated areas. They should avoid areas with high levels of fallout for at least 2 weeks after the emergency.

## Dirty Bomb

### DIRTY BOMB OR RADIOLOGICAL DISPERSAL DEVICE

A dirty bomb is a type of radiological dispersal device. It is designed to cause fear and panic. It is not designed to kill people. It is designed to spread radioactive material in an area.

A dirty bomb is a type of radiological dispersal device. It is designed to cause fear and panic. It is not designed to kill people. It is designed to spread radioactive material in an area.

#### What are the risks of a dirty bomb?

The main danger from a dirty bomb is the explosion and the fire. The explosion can cause injuries and property damage. The fire can cause injuries and property damage. The radioactive material is not a major hazard.

#### What should I do to protect myself?

Get inside. Stay inside. Stay tuned for updates from emergency response officials.

## Nuclear Power Plant

### NUCLEAR POWER PLANT ACCIDENTS

Nuclear power plants are designed to be safe. They have multiple layers of protection. They are designed to prevent accidents. They are designed to contain any accidents that do occur.

Nuclear power plants are designed to be safe. They have multiple layers of protection. They are designed to prevent accidents. They are designed to contain any accidents that do occur.

#### What are the risks of a nuclear power plant accident?

The main risk of a nuclear power plant accident is the release of radioactive material. This material can be inhaled, swallowed, or absorbed through a wound. It can cause health problems.

#### What should I do to protect myself?

Get inside. Stay inside. Stay tuned for updates from emergency response officials.

## Radiological Exposure Device

### RADIOLOGICAL EXPOSURE DEVICE

A radiological exposure device is a type of radiological dispersal device. It is designed to cause fear and panic. It is not designed to kill people. It is designed to spread radioactive material in an area.

A radiological exposure device is a type of radiological dispersal device. It is designed to cause fear and panic. It is not designed to kill people. It is designed to spread radioactive material in an area.

#### What are the risks of a radiological exposure device?

The main risk of a radiological exposure device is the exposure to radioactive material. This material can be inhaled, swallowed, or absorbed through a wound. It can cause health problems.

#### What should I do to protect myself?

Get inside. Stay inside. Stay tuned for updates from emergency response officials.

## Transportation Accident

### TRANSPORTATION ACCIDENTS

Transportation accidents involving radioactive materials can be dangerous. They can cause the release of radioactive material. They can cause injuries and property damage. They can cause fear and panic.

Transportation accidents involving radioactive materials can be dangerous. They can cause the release of radioactive material. They can cause injuries and property damage. They can cause fear and panic.

#### What are the risks of a transportation accident involving radioactive materials?

The main risk of a transportation accident involving radioactive materials is the release of radioactive material. This material can be inhaled, swallowed, or absorbed through a wound. It can cause health problems.

#### What should I do to protect myself?

Get inside. Stay inside. Stay tuned for updates from emergency response officials.

## Workplace Incidents

### WORKPLACE RADIATION INCIDENTS

Workplace radiation incidents can be dangerous. They can cause the release of radioactive material. They can cause injuries and property damage. They can cause fear and panic.

Workplace radiation incidents can be dangerous. They can cause the release of radioactive material. They can cause injuries and property damage. They can cause fear and panic.

#### What are the risks of a workplace radiation incident?

The main risk of a workplace radiation incident is the release of radioactive material. This material can be inhaled, swallowed, or absorbed through a wound. It can cause health problems.

#### What should I do to protect myself?

Get inside. Stay inside. Stay tuned for updates from emergency response officials.

All CDC Radiation Infographics, including translations, are available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/radiation-emergencies/infographic/index.html>

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## Federal Government Agency Radiation Websites

HHS's Radiation Emergency Medical Management

<https://remm.hhs.gov/>

HHS/CDC

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation/>

NRC

<http://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/emerg-preparedness.html>

EPA

<http://www.epa.gov/radiation>

<https://www.epa.gov/radiation/pag-public-communication-resources>

DOE/NNSA

<http://nnsa.energy.gov/aboutus/ourprograms/emergencyoperationscounterterrorism>

FEMA

<http://www.ready.gov/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Distress Helpline

<http://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>

## Additional Resources

National Alliance for Radiation Readiness

<https://www.radiationready.org/>

Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors

<http://crepd.org/> <https://crepd.org/>

National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurement

<http://ncrponline.org/>

International Commission on Radiological Protection

<http://www.icrp.org/>

Health Physics Society

<http://hps.org/publicinformation/ate/find.cfm>

Rad Responder Network

<http://www.RadResponder.net>



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## Sample Nuclear Detonation/Improvised Nuclear Device Social Media Messages

**BLUE** - Replace with specific text

**YELLOW** - Infographic needed

(###) denotes character count of message. Does not include **text in yellow**

Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Compatible messages fit the 90-character guideline for IPAWS but can be used on other social media platforms if desired.

### Immediate Notification/Nuclear Attack Warnings

**IPAWS Compatible:** People in **LOCATION**: BALLISTIC MISSILE ALERT-Get inside, stay inside, stay tuned for info (88)

If you are near **LOCATION**: get inside a basement or central room of any nearby building, away from windows and doors, stay inside, stay tuned for more information. **CDC WHERE TO GO GRAPHIC** (162)

If you are in a car, seek shelter in the nearest building. If no buildings nearby, pull to the side of the road, under an overpass if possible. (143)

In the event of a bright flash of light, duck down for at least 30 seconds to avoid injury from flying debris. (110)

If you are near **LOCATION**: get inside a basement or central room of any nearby building, stay inside, stay tuned for more information. Do not leave your shelter unless officials provide other instructions, or your shelter is threatened by fire or collapse. **CDC WHERE TO GO GRAPHIC** (254)

### Immediate Safety Messages

**IPAWS Compatible:** Get inside, stay inside, stay tuned. This instruction can save your life. (74)

People in **LOCATION**: a **NUCLEAR EVENT** has occurred. To protect yourself and your family: get inside, stay inside, stay tuned for more information. Follow instructions from officials-this can save your life. **CDC WHERE TO GO GRAPHIC** (206)

If you are near **LOCATION**: get inside a basement or central room of any nearby building, stay inside, stay tuned for more information. Do not leave your shelter unless officials provide other instructions, or your shelter is threatened by fire or collapse. **CDC WHERE TO GO GRAPHIC** (254)

People in **LOCATION**: a **NUCLEAR EVENT** has occurred. Get inside a basement or central room of any nearby building, stay inside, and stay tuned. Check **@HANDLE @HANDLE @HANDLE** for updates. (182)

If you are in a car in **LOCATION**: Quickly drive to the nearest substantial building and get inside. Pull over and seek shelter as soon as possible. (147)

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Do not attempt evacuation UNLESS an official tells you to do so, or your shelter is threatened by fire or collapse. Get inside, stay inside, stay tuned. [CDC WHERE TO GO GRAPHIC](#) (152)

Cover your nose and mouth with a mask or cloth until you get inside. This will reduce your chance of breathing in dangerous materials. (134)

If you are near [LOCATION](#): Stay inside for 24 hours or until local authorities provide other instructions. The highest radiation levels from fallout decrease significantly after 24 hours. (188)

Stay tuned. As conditions change, updates will be provided regularly. Check [@HANDLE](#) [@HANDLE](#) [@HANDLE](#) for updates. (113)

If you are in areas surrounding [LOCATION](#): stay away from [LOCATION](#) to make it easier for emergency responders to get to those in need. (133)

## Decontamination

**IPAWS Compatible:** Remove radioactive material: Gently wash with soap. It's ok to use tap water. (78)

**IPAWS Compatible:** Take off outer clothing and store in bag if possible. If not, brush off dust and redress. (90)

Get Clean. To remove contamination: change clothes or remove an outer layer. Gently wash hair, hands, face, and exposed skin with soap/water or wipes. This can remove up to 90% of contamination. The most hazardous radioactive particles are about the size of fine sand. [CDC DECONTAMINATION GRAPHIC](#) (268)

Simply removing your outer layer of clothing and washing or wiping exposed skin removes up to 90% of radioactive particles. Wash your hands with soap and water regularly to reduce contamination. (188)

Put the clothing you take off in a sealed bag and store it away from you and your family to keep the radioactive material from contaminating anything else. [CDC DECONTAMINATION GRAPHIC](#) (155)

Decontaminate pets: brush their coat to remove radioactive dust, then gently wash with water and soap. [CDC DECONTAMINATION GRAPHIC](#) (102)

Clean eyeglasses: Wash with soap and water to remove radioactive contamination. You can continue to wear your glasses after you wash them. (138)

Clean prosthetics: To remove radioactive contamination, wash the entire prosthesis thoroughly with soap, then dry. (115)

Clean walkers, crutches, non-electric wheelchairs, and canes by thoroughly washing each item to remove radioactive contamination. (129)

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## Water Guidance

Radioactive contamination in tap water is unlikely in the immediate aftermath of a large-scale nuclear event. However, other chemical or biological contamination (from broken infrastructure) could still be a concern. These are all-hazards messages for drinking water.

**IPAWS Compatible:** People in **LOCATION**: Stay hydrated. Bottled/sealed drinks are best. Wash containers first. (78)

**Only use if dehydration concerns are high AND messaging aligns with local guidance:** People in **LOCATION**: Stay hydrated. Bottled water or sealed beverages are best. If that is not available, then tap water can be used to stay hydrated. (143)

You can use tap water or well water to clean yourself and your food. The risk from having radioactive material on your body or consuming radioactive material on your food is significantly reduced by washing. (207)

## Food

Do not eat food from your garden if you are near **LOCATION**. Do not fish or hunt in **LOCATION** until further notice. (112)

Packaged food and drinks are safe to consume but wash or wipe off the packaging first. Food items that were inside a building are also safe to eat – do not consume food or liquid that was outdoors, as it may be contaminated. (226)

Sealed pet food is also free from radioactive contamination and should be fine to give to your pets. (100)

## First Aid/Medical Needs

Treat cuts, bruises, or other minor injuries with standard first aid. Other than washing, these do not need specialized treatment. (131)

Call 911 for a life-threatening emergency. If a call doesn't work, seek help from a neighbor. Go to the hospital only as a last resort. (135)

Do not go to the hospital unless you are in critical need. Hospitals should be kept clear for victims in need of life-saving treatment. (139)

If you evacuated and develop severe nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea and were within # miles of **LOCATION** at the time of the detonation, seek medical attention. If you are told to stay inside, only leave your shelter if medical conditions are immediately life threatening. (267)

Showing some signs and symptoms, like minor nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea does not mean you have radiation sickness, but you should be seen by a doctor when it is safe to do so. (177)

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## Family & Children Concerns

Stay where you are! Going outside to get loved ones could expose you and them to dangerous levels of radiation. (111)

Children and adults in schools, daycares, hospitals, nursing homes, or other places will be instructed to stay inside until emergency responders know that it is safe to evacuate. (179)

Schools, daycares, hospitals, nursing homes, and other places have emergency plans in place to keep people safe at the facility. (128)

Use text messages, email, and social media to reach your loved ones. Phone lines may be damaged or overloaded. (113)

## Potassium Iodide

Never take potassium iodide (KI) unless you have specifically been advised to do so by a public health official. It is only useful in specific situations and could cause harm if you take it without instruction. **CDC POTASSIUM IODIDE GRAPHIC** (211)

Potassium iodide (KI) will not protect you from radiation poisoning. KI only protects your thyroid from radioactive iodine if taken before exposure. Only take it if directed to do so by a public health official. **CDC POTASSIUM IODIDE GRAPHIC** (212)

Do not use common household items and over-the-counter medications containing iodine as a substitute for potassium iodide (KI). They will not protect your thyroid from radiation. (179)

## Air Quality and Safety

If possible, close doors and windows. If dust or smoke is in the air, cover your nose and mouth with a mask or cloth. This will reduce your chance of breathing in dangerous materials. (184)

## Evacuation

If you are in **LOCATION**: Change shelter location immediately in case of fire, threat of building collapse, or any life-threatening hazard. (138)

People in **LOCATION** will be evacuated when official radiation experts confirm it is safe to leave. Stay tuned. (109)

If you are asked to evacuate, stay calm and follow instructions. The instructions are for your safety and will get you to needed services the fastest way. (156)

Radiation testing centers will be set up around **LOCATION**, which will check people for radiation contamination and assist with other services. (141)

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## Plume Maps & Fallout

Weather predictions indicate areas **DIRECTION** of **LOCATION** will have hazardous radioactive fallout. Listen to local officials for safety instructions. (149)

People **DIRECTION** of **LOCATION**: weather predictions indicate fallout may arrive in your area soon. Stay inside unless officials instruct otherwise. (145)

The highest radiation levels from fallout decrease significantly after 24 hours. Stay inside for 24 hours or until local authorities provide other instructions. (188)

Radioactive fallout will settle out of the air onto buildings, cars, and the ground. This fallout can still expose you and your family to radiation--stay inside for at least 24 hours or until an official tells you otherwise. (224)

Maps are being developed to show locations where radioactive material is going. You can view current maps here: **WEBSITE LINK** (124)

### Appendices

1. U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
2. Department of Energy/National Nuclear Security Administration
3. Department of Defense
4. National Aeronautics and Space Administration
5. Environmental Protection Agency

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## **Appendix 1 to Annex N to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)**

### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)

### **Purpose**

This appendix outlines the key elements to be used by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Office of Public Affairs in response to a significant incident that may affect public health and safety and involves a nuclear power plant licensee, or any other facility or organization licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to use radioactive material.

### **Background**

In response to a serious event involving an NRC licensee, NRC activates its Headquarters Operations Center in Rockville, Md., and one or more of its four Regional Incident Response Centers (Region I in King of Prussia, Pa.; Region II in Atlanta, Ga.; Region III in Lisle, Ill.; and Region IV in Arlington, Texas). NRC's highest priority is to provide expert consultation, support, and assistance to the licensee and state and local public safety officials.

A response team assembles in the Headquarters Operations Center to lead the response, to obtain and evaluate event information, and to assess the potential impact of the event. A senior official acts as the Response Director, reporting to the Executive Director for Operations and the Chairman. The NRC scientists and engineers analyze the event and evaluate possible recovery strategies. Meanwhile, other agency experts evaluate the effectiveness of protective actions recommended by the licensee, which may be implemented by state and local officials to minimize the impact on public health and safety and the environment.

If event conditions warrant, the NRC will dispatch a team of technical experts from the Regional Office to the site to assist the licensee and report back to Headquarters. The Headquarters Operations Center provides round-the-clock logistical and technical support throughout the response.

The NRC is the coordinating agency for events occurring at NRC-licensed facilities and for radioactive materials either licensed by NRC or under NRC's Agreement States Program. As coordinating agency, NRC has technical leadership for the federal government's response to the event. If the severity of an event rises to the level of General Emergency (the highest of the NRC incident severity categories), or is terrorist-related, DHS would assume coordination of the overall federal response to the event, while the NRC would retain a technical leadership role.

### **Public Affairs Posture**

The NRC Office of Public Affairs is responsible for keeping the public and the media informed about NRC actions during an event. The Office of Public Affairs' approach depends on the nature of the crisis and the potential impact on the public. Effective communications are achieved by providing accurate, timely, and reliable information through a variety of channels.

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The Director of the Office of Public Affairs (or the Director’s designee) serves as the Public Information Officer (PIO) on the Response Team. The PIO is assisted by Public Affairs staff at Headquarters and the Regional office. Regional Public Affairs Officers may be deployed to the licensee’s Emergency Operations Center.

The Office of Public Affairs disseminates information through direct conversations with media representatives (through news conferences or responding to inquiries), news releases, the NRC website, and social media.

It is intended that these communications should serve to:

- Convey the status of the crisis and our actions to protect people and the environment.
- Reduce uncertainty and dispel rumors to minimize counter-productive behaviors.
- Underscore NRC professionalism and credibility.
- Reassure Congress, the public and stakeholders that the situation is being handled appropriately.

Further, the Office of Public Affairs uses these philosophies to guide its crisis response:

- Timely, accurate information is key to maintaining public trust and reducing possible health or safety consequences.
- Verified information must be released as quickly as possible, even if all the details are not yet known.
- Open and prompt information at the onset of a crisis protects the organization's credibility and creates a positive initial image.
- Erroneous information not corrected immediately can become "common knowledge" and almost impossible to refute later. Monitoring the media and responding rapidly to correct mistakes is vital.
- The concept of "people first" should guide communication actions, including expressing concern for any victims or potential victims of the crisis.
- Incident information must be in simple language and can and should be repetitive. Repeating consistent messages and using multiple media (i.e. print, television, radio, social media, and the NRC website), helps ensure the messages are heard and understood.
- There will be many "voices" in the media from the federal, state, local government, the private sector, academia, etc. during an incident requiring a coordinated federal response. NRC spokespersons must discuss only NRC-related issues with the media.
- If the NRC conveys inaccurate information, the mistake should be acknowledged and corrected.

### **Themes/Key Messages**

Messages should be brief, factual, and avoid speculation. They should accurately convey the status of the situation without sugarcoating. Examples include:

- “The NRC is ensuring appropriate action is being taken to resolve this incident as soon as possible, and working with state and local officials, and our federal partners to protect people and the environment.”
- “The NRC is committed to keeping the public informed of the actions we are taking as this incident unfolds and will provide timely and accurate information primarily through the media and directly on our website at [www.nrc.gov](http://www.nrc.gov).”

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- “We understand this situation may cause worry, but please stay calm and listen to instructions from your local officials.”
  - “We have activated our headquarters’ Operations Center and regional Incident Response Center and have a team of experts enroute or onsite. (Specific NRC actions being taken, as appropriate.)”

### **Media Interest**

Any significant event involving nuclear or radiological material with a possibility of compromising public health and safety will generate significant media attention requiring a coordinated federal response and 24-hour-a-day media relations activities. Media attention will come from local, regional, national, and international news outlets and trade press. It can be anticipated that information on the incident will be disseminated via traditional print and broadcast media, as well as social media.

### **Media Outlets**

The NRC will ensure timely and accurate dissemination of critical information related both to the safety implications of the event and the government’s response.

### **Other Audiences**

The NRC’s Office of Congressional Affairs is responsible for communication with the Congress; other offices are responsible for communication with SLTT responders, the industry, and other stakeholders.

### **Public Affairs Products**

- News releases & media interviews.
- News conferences and teleconferences (alone or with other state, local, and federal officials). These could be at Headquarters, in downtown Washington D.C. or at a licensee Emergency Operations Center.
- Social media content via multiple platforms.
- Fact sheets, backgrounders, and Q&As.
- The website (including activation of the emergency event web page and rumor page). web casts, and streaming video.
- Response to inquiries (e-mail, phone).
- Other tools as appropriate following resolution of the situation, including op-eds, trade press articles, public meetings, etc.

### **NRC Public Affairs Responsibilities and Staffing**

#### **Headquarters Office of Public Affairs Operations Center Team**

The Office of Public Affairs staffs the Operations Center and a regional Incident Response Center in person or virtually as soon as possible following activation of the NRC Incident Response Program. The Office of Public Affairs team assesses the situation, collects information, offers public affairs guidance to the Response Team, initiates news releases and social media content, obtains appropriate approvals before disseminating material, and schedules media briefings, as appropriate. The Office of Public Affairs may also activate the NRC’s Emergency



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Event and Rumor Control webpages if the crisis warrants. A specially trained technical briefer may also support the Office of Public Affairs efforts in the Operations Center.

### **Headquarters Office of Public Affairs News Center Team**

The Office of Public Affairs, with Response Team approval, determines an appropriate location for media personnel at the headquarters location. Activation of the location is recommended if it seems likely that a briefing will be needed and/or that the media are likely to arrive onsite. However, it is more likely that initial press conferences will be held at locations in Washington and supported by other federal agencies, notably DHS, or by the White House. In such a case, the Office of Public Affairs Director or designee would accompany whoever represents the NRC at the off-site press conference.

### **Headquarters Public Affairs Office Team**

Public Affairs officers and administrative staff will continue to operate from the Public Affairs Office or virtually to fulfill necessary emergency event actions to respond to the public and the media. They may be joined by one or more technical briefers and assisted by other pre-identified NRC staff who can augment the Office of Public Affairs professional staff in emergencies. (Note: media monitoring would be done under an existing contractor with increased daily reports if necessary). The Office of Nuclear Security and Incident Response has created a public call center, with staff from various offices within the NRC trained to answer questions from the public. The call center can be activated at the request of Office of Public Affairs and would allow the public affairs team to devote its energy and resources to answering media inquiries and preparing other materials.

### **Regional Public Affairs Staff**

Regional Office of Public Affairs staff members may be initially dispatched to the Emergency Operations Center or to another suitable site near the incident. Other regions' public affairs staff may be dispatched by the Office of Public Affairs Director to appropriate locations, including headquarters, as needed. Regional public affairs staff communicate regularly with headquarters and coordinate release of information as appropriate.

### **Field Operations**

As the focus of the event shifts from headquarters to the field, a primary, high-ranking spokesperson will be designated to serve as the voice of the National Response Center (NRC). This spokesperson could be the Chairman, Director of Public Affairs, Regional Administrator acting as site team Director, or another knowledgeable individual experienced with the media. This individual will operate out of whatever location is most suitable and most accessible to the media. Additional NRC public affairs and administrative back-up from other regions and headquarters will also be dispatched to the field operations, as appropriate. In a significantly large event, NRC staff outside of the Office of Public Affairs may also be sent to the field.

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## **Appendix 2 to Annex N to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs Department of Energy/National Nuclear Security Administration**

### **Purpose:**

This appendix outlines the public affairs roles and responsibilities of the Department of Energy (DOE) and National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) in response to significant radiological incidents.

### **Background**

DOE/NNSA public affairs would coordinate the federal response with DHS following radiological incidents involving materials in DOE custody such as:

- Nuclear/radiological release at a DOE facility or involving DOE materials during the use, storage, and shipment of a variety of radioactive materials.
- The shipment of spent reactor fuel.
- The production, assembly, and shipment of nuclear weapons and special nuclear materials.
- The production and shipment of radioactive sources for space vehicles.
- The storage and shipment of radioactive and mixed waste.

### **Nuclear Weapons Incident Response Program**

In response to an incident involving a nuclear weapon in DOE custody, DOE will be the coordinating agency. However, regardless of custody, DOE and the Department of Defense (DOD) will conduct the response operation as partners. The NNSA Nuclear Weapons Incident Response (NWIR) Program serves as the federal government's primary capability for radiological and nuclear emergency response. The NWIR Program responds to all nuclear emergencies whether DOE is the coordinating agency or not. The NWIR Program provides emergency management, operations, support, and incident response to emergencies requiring DOE/ NNSA expertise and technical assistance. Members of the program work as a team to respond with an effective range of technical and scientific capabilities to mitigate nuclear and radiological incidents worldwide. The NWIR Program provides core competencies in the following areas:

- Knowledge of U.S. nuclear weapons, Radiological Dispersion Devices, and Improvised Nuclear Devices, with specific specialties in spectroscopy, nuclear device modeling, radiography and device diagnostics, and assessment technology.
- Technical operations (explosive ordinance disposal procedures and techniques for device access, disablement, render safe procedures, weapon recovery, stabilization, and packaging for final disposition).
- Technical support requirements (attribution, weapons effects, health and treatment capabilities, and the radiological elements of consequence management).
- Technical support for radiological monitoring and assessment, atmospheric modeling of radiological releases, and the medical effects of radiation exposure.

### **Policy**

DOE/NNSA policy is to provide accurate, candid, and timely information to the public during all emergencies consistent with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act to establish facts and avoid speculation. In situations involving classified information, DOE

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policy is to provide enough unclassified information to explain emergency response and protective actions required for the health and safety of workers and the public. Furthermore, under DOE policy, a DOE/NNSA public information officer will accompany the DOE/NNSA Senior Energy Official (SEO) and/or Senior Response Official to the accident site and be present in the Incident Joint Information Center (JIC).

### **National Nuclear Security Administration Emergency Response Assets**

There are numerous emergency response national assets that may gain the attention of the news media as the assets provide nuclear/radiological assistance in support of state and local agencies. Activation of these assets would occur following a major national or international nuclear or radiological accident or incident. For additional information see <https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/nuclear-emergency-support-team-nest>

### **Radiological Assistance Program**

Maintained since the late 1950s, the Radiological Assistance Program (RAP) is designed to provide first-responder radiological assistance to protect the health and safety of the public and the environment and to assist other federal agencies, as well as SLTT and private sector stakeholders in the detection, identification and analysis, and response to events involving radiological or nuclear material. Deployed RAP teams provide field monitoring and assessment support. To provide a timely response capability, the RAP is implemented on a regional basis. This regional coordination is intended to foster a working relationship between DOE radiological response elements and those of state, local, and other federal agencies. The RAP ensures a 24-hour response capability that can be deployed within two hours of the request for assistance. The response team(s) will be on the site of a radiological emergency within six hours of a request for assistance. The RAP response capability is self-sustained for the initial 24 hours of an emergency or until more permanent support is deployed to the emergency site.

### **National Atmospheric Release Advisory Center**

National Atmospheric Release Advisory Center (NARAC) is the DOE component of the Interagency Modeling and Atmospheric Assessment Center. When a hazardous material is released into the atmosphere, the National Atmospheric Release Advisory can model the probable plume pathway in time for an emergency manager to decide if taking protective actions are necessary. National Atmospheric Release Advisory is located at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL), Livermore, Calif. National Atmospheric Release Advisory provides world-wide centralized emergency response service.

### **Aerial Measuring System**

The Aerial Measuring System (AMS) provides helicopters and fixed wing aircraft to respond to radiological emergencies. Personnel and equipment aboard these aircraft provide aerial radiological detection and aerial radiation surveys. Aircraft are located at Las Vegas, Nev., and the District of Columbia. Additional capabilities are provided at the DOE Savannah River Site (SC) using site security helicopters and U.S. Customs and Border Protection aircraft and by EPA aircraft flown out of the Dallas, Texas area (under a Memorandum of Understanding between NNSA and EPA).

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### **Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site**

Formed in 1976, the Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site (REAC/TS) has provided support to DOE, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the medical management of radiation accidents. REAC/TS operates the only Cytogenetic Biodosimetry Laboratory (CBL) in the U.S. civilian community. The CBL can clinically determine dose levels for potentially exposed victims following a nuclear emergency. REAC/TS Site is a 24-hour emergency response program at the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE). As such, it trains, consults, or assists in the response to all types of radiation accidents or incidents. The Center's specially trained team of physicians, nurses, health physicists, radiobiologists, and emergency coordinators are prepared around-the-clock to provide assistance at the local, national, or international level. Designated a WHO Collaborating Center in 1980, REAC/TS is recognized around the world for its expertise and is called upon to assist the global community in providing medical care to radiation accident victims, directly or indirectly as consultants.

### **Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center**

In the emergency phase of the response, the DOE/NNSA coordinates all federal environmental radiological monitoring activities through the Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center (FRMAC). Early in the event, this coordination is provided by the Consequence Management Home Team (CMHT) via telephone bridge line. The FRMAC is deployed from Las Vegas, Nev., and will be fully functional within 24 hours of the event providing aerial and ground based environmental monitoring and assessment of data. FRMAC is responsible for providing a single source of quality-controlled monitoring and assessment data to the lead federal agency involved in the incident response. Once the immediate emergency is stabilized, DOE transfers responsibility for coordinating FRMAC actions to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to continue long-term monitoring activities.

### **DOE Personnel Operational Control**

During an incident, the DOE Deputy Director of Communications will coordinate the deployment of DOE public affairs personnel to support a National Joint Information Center.

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## **Appendix 3 to Annex N to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs Department of Defense**

### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. Joint Publication 3-61 Public Affairs
- C. DOD Instruction 3150.10 “DOD Response to U.S. Nuclear Weapons Incidents”

### **Purpose**

This appendix outlines the DOD public affairs response to the use of a Radiological Dispersal Device (RDD), Improvised Nuclear Device (IND) or a significant incident that may involve nuclear weapons in DOD custody.

### **Background**

DOD will likely respond to a radiological dispersal device or improvised nuclear device incident but will not be the primary agency. DOD has significant capabilities that can be used in a radiological environment. As with any major DOD response, public affairs personnel will accompany the deploying forces, but will remain outside the hazard area. These personnel will coordinate public information activities specific to the military response and will work closely with an established Joint Information Center (JIC) or ESF 15 entity. DOD will be the primary agency in the response to a DOD nuclear weapons incident. DOD will establish a JIC and encourage all supporting agencies to participate in the JIC.

### **Policy**

The DOD policy for nuclear weapons incidents is contained in Reference c, DOD Instruction 3150.10. Generally, an incident involving a U.S. nuclear weapon could be characterized as a relatively small radiological hazmat incident. However, any incident involving a nuclear weapon will be significant and will generate a substantial DOD response. Joint Publication 3-61 outlines DOD public affairs operations.

Nuclear weapons related events will be treated as an “incident” involving a hostile act – until the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) determines the event to be an accident. This determination will be made in-conjunction with interagency partners but with the responsibility for the decision residing with the FBI Special Agent in Charge. In accordance with Ref c., it is assumed that all U.S. nuclear weapon incidents will be investigated as hostile acts until proven otherwise. An actual or attempted hostile act involving a U.S. nuclear weapon in DOD custody may initially appear as a type of accident. A hostile act adds complexity to incident response operations due to the additional agencies participating in the response effort. It is assumed that eliminating a hostile act as a cause of the incident may take time.

The Attorney General has lead responsibility for criminal investigations of terrorist acts or terrorist threats inside the United States, or directed at U.S. citizens or institutions abroad, where such acts are within the federal criminal jurisdiction of the United States, as well as for related intelligence collection activities within the United States. The Attorney General generally executes this responsibility through the FBI.

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DOD working in conjunction with interagency partners will manage the on-site response for events involving a DOD facility and the overall operational response for nuclear weapons or other radioactive material in DOD custody. If DOD has custody of the nuclear weapon at the time of the accident, DOD becomes the coordinating agency, regardless of custody; however, DOD will manage the response in partnership with DOE and the FBI. Although the DOD incident commander has overall responsibility and authority over activities occurring on property where DOD has exclusive jurisdiction, including establishing a National Defense Area (NDA), the FBI still has overall authority over the federal law enforcement and investigative activities occurring in these areas. The involvement of the FBI as lead agency for criminal investigations of potential hostile acts necessitates incorporation of FBI functions into the overall incident management structure.

In the United States, its territories, or its possessions, DOD policy requires DOD incident communications to confirm the presence of nuclear weapons or radioactive nuclear components in the interest of public safety or to reduce or prevent widespread public alarm. Public authorities must be notified if the public is, or may be, in danger of radiation exposure or other danger posed by the weapon or its components.

### **Responsibilities**

DHS's Office of Public Affairs (DHS OPA) has primary responsibility for coordinating the federal incident communication effort for domestic incidents. Except where DOD is the federal agency with primary authority in a nuclear weapons incident, DOD will be a supporting agency.

The National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL) will serve as the primary coordination mechanism where agency public affairs responsibilities will be outlined. In a nuclear related event, the guidance and policy are expected to come from the highest levels.

DOD organizations responding to a nuclear related incident will limit their public communication efforts to information regarding the military response, immediate public safety, or support of the primary agency messaging. A nuclear weapons incident will likely involve classified information. DOD public affairs will practice "security at the source" to ensure no classified, sensitive, or privacy information is provided to the media or public.

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## **Appendix 4 to Annex N to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs National Aeronautics and Space Administration**

### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. Launch site emergency response planning document
- C. National Aeronautics and Space Administration Headquarters Radiological Contingency Response Plan (by the Office of Protective Services)
- D. NPR 8715.3B National Aeronautics and Space Administration Launch Requirements
- E. NPR 8621.1 NASA Procedural Requirements for Mishap and Close Call Reporting, Investigating, and Recordkeeping

### **Purpose**

This appendix outlines the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) public affairs and communications support of the launch of radioactive materials in quantities requiring development of specific contingency response plans and pre-deployment of resources as described by NASA requirements or specified in applicable interagency agreements.

### **Scope**

NASA will establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) for launches of radioactive materials in quantities requiring development of specific contingency response plans and pre-deployment of resources. The JIC is managed by NASA and supports the timely interagency coordination and distribution of information regarding any launch, ascent, or reentry accident affecting the mission.

### **Policy**

Public information releases on the status and consequences of a launch vehicle accident and/or radiological emergency must be accurate, timely, and easily understood. Information disseminated to the public must be released from official government sources. Information must also be closely coordinated between the federal, state, and local agencies as well as tribal governments involved in emergency responses and be released from official government sources.

The NASA-managed JIC provides the single, unified source of information for the news media and the public about federal radiological response to a declared launch accident or radiological contingency.

A NASA launch is a highly public event scheduled many months or years beforehand. NASA and its core risk communications team will distribute information well in advance about the mission, its need for a radiological power source or payload, and its launch nuclear safety protocol. Information will be available to the public and the media, using a variety of formats, venues, and interactive methods that leverage existing agency outreach programs and personnel.

### **Staffing**

Each participating federal agency and state and county organization will assign a Public Affairs Officer (PAO) or designee to the JIC to act on behalf of their respective organizations as a single point of contact for interagency coordination of information.

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All representatives of participating agencies and organizations will be physically collocated in one general work area (the JIC) for coordination and discussion of any issues prior to the preparation of statements, releases, response, or briefing.

### **Minimum JIC Staffing**

- JIC Manager (NASA Headquarters PAO).
- JIC Support Manager (Kennedy Space Center PAO).
- Risk Communication Coordinator(s) (designated by NASA and DOE).
- JIC social media representative (designated by NASA).
- NASA Office of International and Interagency Relations representative to coordinate with the Department of State.
- DOE public information office representative.
- Launch site state representative(s).
- DHS/FEMA representative.
- Environmental Protection Agency representative.
- DOD/United States Air Force representative.
- Brevard County representative.

### **JIC Operations**

Activation of the NASA JIC will occur as part of the overall radiological contingency implementation. The JIC will continue to operate until released by emergency operations management.

JIC operations will be governed by a coordinated and approved JIC Plan, developed specifically for each mission. This plan will describe in detail the coordination concurrence and approval process for JIC information releases.

### **NASA Public Affairs Launch Commentator**

The designated NASA Public Affairs Launch Commentator has the responsibility for announcing initial public information concerning emergencies. The commentator will be authorized to use pre-coordinated, pre-scripted statements for specific contingency situations as directed by the JIC.

Initial launch commentary releases pertaining to radiological hazards following any declared launch accident or radiological contingency will include initial emergency instructions and advisories to news media, on-site personnel, and visitors to the launch.



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## **Appendix 5 to Annex N to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs Environmental Protection Agency**

### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)/Nuclear/Radiological Incident Annex (NRIA)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. ESF 15 SOP, Annex M
- D. EPA National Approach to Response Crisis Communications Plan

### **Purpose**

This appendix outlines the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) public affairs response to a radiological incident where EPA may be the coordinating agency or support an interagency response.

### **Background**

Under the National Response Framework (NRF) Nuclear/Radiological Incident Annex (NRIA), EPA has roles as both a support agency and as a coordinating agency. EPA is the coordinating agency for emergencies involving a source or facility that is not licensed, owned, or operated by another federal agency and for emergencies involving radiological releases outside the United States. EPA may be called in as a support agency for radiological incidents that involve materials licensed, owned, or operated by another federal agency or an Agreement State.

### **Radiological Emergency Response Overview**

EPA has on-scene coordinators and public affairs staff in the regions, and several special teams that focus on responding to environmental emergencies, including the Radiological Emergency Response Team (RERT) and the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Consequence Management Advisory Team (CMAT). EPA has scientists, engineers, health physicists (radiation experts), communications experts, and laboratory staff whose job it is to support federal and SLTT response efforts during all stages of a radiological response. EPA provides technical advice, monitoring, sampling, data assessment, cleanup assistance, and operates Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology (ASPECT), an aircraft that performs real-time chemical and radiological detection, infrared and photographic imagery. The RERT has Public Information Officers (PIOs) specializing in radiological incident communications.

EPA serves as chair of the interagency Advisory Team for Environment, Food and Health (Advisory Team), which is the federal interagency group of radiation experts whose mission is to provide radiation safety recommendations to decision-makers at all levels of government following a radioactive release (not directly to the public). The Advisory Team is comprised of radiation expert representatives from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), EPA, and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). During a radiological or nuclear emergency, the EPA RERT PIOs have direct contact with members of the Advisory Team to help answer questions about food and water safety and public health.

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**Policy**

During an incident requiring a coordinated federal response, EPA retains full responsibility for incident communication programs and policies related to its activities. EPA will implement an organized, integrated, and coordinated mechanism to ensure the delivery of understandable, timely, accurate, and consistent information to the public during an incident as outlined in the EPA's National Approach to Response Crisis Communications Plan. EPA will contribute to the overall unified message of the response and support External Affairs activities identified in the ESF 15 Annex of the NRF.

**EPA Public Affairs Response****ESF 15 Staffing**

EPA, through its field and regional incident management structures, will support the interagency effort under ESF 15 by providing the media and the public with information on the EPA's response activities. During a radiological incident requiring a coordinated federal response, EPA PIOs working in the National Joint Information Center (NJIC) will help address on all issues raised to the NJIC including those related to environmental or EPA-specific matters.

**Addressing Public Concerns**

In the event of a radiological incident for which EPA is the coordinating agency, EPA will make every effort to provide the media with information on their actions and data so that the media can report them fully and accurately to the public. EPA will issue press releases and other materials to inform the media and the public of the health and environmental consequences of the incident. The EPA's Office of Public Affairs, in coordination with the Office of Mission Support, will develop and maintain one website to keep the public informed of the incident status. All approved content and data will be posted to the website as quickly as possible. Contacts mechanisms (i.e., e-mail, social media, and phone) will be established for two-way communication with the public.

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# **Annex O to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **National Transportation Safety Board**

#### **Transportation Investigations**

##### **References:**

- A. 49 U.S.C. § 1132(a)
- B. 49 U.S.C. § 1113(a)(1)
- C. 49 U.S.C. § 1133
- D. 49 U.S.C. § 1134

##### **Purpose**

This annex outlines the roles and responsibilities of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and public affairs procedures regarding transportation incidents. Under federal law, the NTSB is responsible for investigating and determining the probable cause of every civil aviation accident in the United States (including accidents involving certain public use aircraft, such as those owned by state and municipal governments).

The NTSB also investigates major accidents in the other modes of transportation – rail, highway, marine and pipeline. Historically, the NTSB has been the lead federal investigating agency for such major surface transportation accidents as ship collisions, train derailments, pipeline explosions and bridge collapses, among others.

ESF 15 may or may not be activated following an incident requiring a NTSB investigation. Regardless of ESF 15 activation, the NTSB retains the lead for all public affairs activity involving their investigative role.

##### **Mission**

The NTSB is an independent federal accident investigation agency. Since its creation in 1967, its mission has been to determine the probable cause of transportation accidents to formulate safety recommendations to prevent accidents and improve transportation safety.

##### **Procedures for Major Accidents**

The NTSB will send one or more Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) to accompany an investigative Go-Team to the scene of a major accident to facilitate information dissemination. Usually, one of the five Presidentially appointed NTSB also accompanies the team and serves as the principal on-scene spokesperson. However, a senior career investigator, designated as Investigator-in-Charge (IIC), leads the Go-Team. A command post is established at the crash site, usually in a nearby hotel. On-scene public affairs operations are organized from the command post.

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While the NTSB's investigative team will include representatives from other agencies and organizations (FAA, airline operator, airplane/engine manufacturer, etc.), only the NTSB will release information on the progress of the investigation.

Media briefings are often held at Reagan National Airport at Hangar 6 before the Go-Team's departure and upon the Go-Team's arrival at the accident site. During the on-scene investigation, the NTSB strives to conduct two press briefings a day, one mid- to late-afternoon and the other in the evening following the investigative team's daily progress meeting.

The NTSB's spokespersons discuss only factual, documented information. They do not discuss or provide any analysis, nor speculate as to the significance of any piece of information. The NTSB will not announce the probable cause of an accident while on-scene; indeed, the probable cause may not be determined for 12 to 18 months after the accident.

The NTSB also will not release the identities of victims or survivors of accidents. The transportation company involved, or the local medical authorities generally release such information. If conditions permit, NTSB PAOs will attempt to bring the news media to the accident site (using a pool arrangement if it is a large group), keeping in mind limitations posed by physical and biomedical hazards. The NTSB maintains a public affairs presence at an accident scene for as long as circumstances warrant, usually three to seven days. After that, information is released from the public affairs office in Washington, D.C.

There are occasions when multiple agencies, particularly state and local agencies, are involved in some aspect of the post-accident scene. For example, police are responsible for public safety, state transportation officials are responsible for arranging alternative transportation opportunities, the medical examiner is responsible for victim identification, etc. Each agency has its need to conduct press briefings. Although the NTSB does not conduct joint press briefings once their investigation begins, it is willing to work with all other agencies to arrange press briefings schedules so as not to interfere with each other.

After the team has left the accident scene, the fact-gathering phase of the investigation continues. During this phase, the NTSB may hold a public hearing. At that time, a public docket is open, and a series of detailed factual reports are released, which become the basis for the analysis to come.

The final report of a major accident investigation—containing the NTSB's findings, a probable cause determination, and safety recommendations—is adopted by the NTSB at a public meeting held in Washington, D.C.

### **Federal Bureau of Investigation**

Federal law provides that, "If the Attorney General, in consultation with the Chairman of the Board, determines and notifies the National Transportation Safety Board that circumstances reasonably indicate that the accident may have been caused by an intentional criminal act, the National Transportation Safety Board shall relinquish investigative priority to the Federal Bureau of Investigation." The NTSB then ceases all media activity regarding the accident and operates

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in support of the FBI as requested, and the FBI becomes the lead agency for the release of information relating to the accident. This provision was employed on September 11, 2001.

Until such time that a criminal determination is made, the NTSB retains primacy in every civil aviation accident investigation, and every surface transportation accident investigation in which it has asserted jurisdiction.

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# **Annex P to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Agriculture and Food**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)

#### **Purpose**

This annex outlines the public affairs roles and responsibilities of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)/Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in response to an incident requiring a coordinated federal response involving agriculture and food systems.

#### **Background**

Agriculture and food incidents will require a coordinated external affairs response when public health, animal health, food production, aquaculture, livestock production, plant health, wildlife, soils, rangelands, and agricultural water supplies are affected.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities**

##### **USDA and HHS/FDA**

USDA and HHS/FDA, acting under their own authorities, lead public affairs efforts for agricultural and food incidents that occur due to natural causes.

##### **USDA**

The USDA Office of Communications in coordination with USDA agency public affairs are the lead for handling the following issues:

Safety and defense of **meat, poultry, and processed egg products** through the USDA/Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

**Nutrition assistance**, including determining nutrition assistance needs, obtaining appropriate USDA Foods and infant formula and food, arranging for the transportation and delivery of the USDA Foods and infant formula and food, and authorizing Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) benefits through the USDA/Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

**Animal and plant disease and pest response**, which includes response to an outbreak of a highly contagious or economically devastating animal/zoonotic disease, an outbreak of a highly infective exotic plant disease, or an economically devastating plant pest infestation through the USDA/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

**National forests and domestic rangelands incident response** through the USDA/Forest Service (FS).

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Disaster impacts on the **official inspection and weighing of export grain**, and the promotion of fair-trade practices in the marketing of livestock, meat, and poultry through the USDA/Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA).

**Producer and rancher assistance**, which includes disaster payments for certain livestock and livestock feed related losses and low-interest loans to rebuild the infrastructure and supply seed and start-up livestock, and the conservation reserve program to enable farmers and ranchers to restore buffers, trees, and other natural resources that protect water and wildlife through the USDA/Farm Service Agency (FSA).

In any disaster, any active **crop and livestock insurance** is honored as stated in policies held by customers for natural causes, through the USDA/Risk Management Agency (RMA).

The **safety and well-being of household pets** by coordinating (with DHS/FEMA and other organizations) the provision of rescue, care, shelter, and other essential services to individuals with household pets or service animals through the USDA/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

The **safety and well-being of animals** regulated under the Animal Welfare Act by USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

**Rural utilities and rural housing assistance**, which includes essential public facilities and services as water and sewer, electric and telephone systems, housing, health clinics, emergency service facilities, and economic development throughout rural America through the USDA/Rural Development (RD).

**Support of multi-institutional Agriculture homeland security networks, including the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN)**. Extension Disaster Education Network is a network of personnel and a database of research-based educational materials which deal with all phases of disasters. When one state has a need, Extension Disaster Education Network delegates from other states provide previously developed resources that were proven successful in similar events. Extension Disaster Education Network is led and funded through the USDA/National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Along with FDA, USDA is a designated Sector Specific Agency for the Food and Agriculture Sector. In this capacity, USDA engages with state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners through the Government Coordinating Council (GCC) and the private sector through the Sector Coordinating Council (SCC). These councils provide a mechanism for communication, coordination, and outreach on issues related to national preparedness, including response activities.

#### **HHS/FDA**

The HHS/FDA is responsible for protecting public health by ensuring the safety, efficacy, and defense of our Nation's food (human and pet), animal feed supply, and dietary supplements. The HHS/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in coordination with the states, develops and implements surveillance systems to monitor the health of the human population.

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The HHS/FDA has statutory authority for all domestic and imported food except meat, poultry, and egg products not regulated by the USDA which include dried, frozen, or liquid eggs, with or without added ingredients.

In addition, the FDA is responsible for hard cooked eggs, in-shell pasteurized eggs and shell eggs (except for grading, which is the USDA's responsibility). The FDA also has statutory authority for animal feed and for the approval of animal drugs intended for both therapeutic and non-therapeutic use in food animals as well as household pets and service animals.)

### **Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation**

A terrorist attack on agriculture or food may initially be indistinguishable from a naturally occurring event. Several days could pass before food, medical, or agriculture authorities suspect an attack has taken place. Criminal intent may not be apparent until after illnesses are recognized. Once a public health, food, or agriculture incident occurs (or becomes known) due to a biological, chemical, or radiological agent, or if there are indications that disease may not be the result of natural causes, the Department of Justice (DOJ)/ Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) must be notified. Due to the criminal nature of the attack, the FBI will assume the public affairs lead for the investigation and work closely with the FDA Office of Criminal Investigation.

### **Department of the Interior**

The USDA Forest Service, as the ESF 4 lead, works with the Department of the Interior (DOI) to manage and coordinate wild land firefighting operations. The DOI assumes full responsibility for fighting wildfires burning on lands within its jurisdiction. The USDA and DOI provide firefighting assistance to other federal land management organizations as requested under the terms of existing agreements and the National Response Framework. The USDA and DOI will coordinate public affairs activities with the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, Idaho.

### **Department of State**

A food or animal health incident could take place because of international trade. The Department of State (DOS) will coordinate with the USDA, HHS, and the Department of Commerce public affairs to release information regarding food safety or international trade with another nation as this information could influence the economy.

### **Laboratory Testing**

The news media will likely focus on the results of laboratory testing of contaminated food and infected animals and plants. Depending on the agency responsible for the laboratory testing, the USDA or HHS public affairs would have the lead for dissemination of these results to the media and public. The USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories serves as the national veterinary diagnostic reference and confirmatory laboratory. The networks involved include the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN), the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, the National Plant Diagnostic Network, and the Laboratory Response Network (LRN). The responsible federal agencies (USDA and HHS) oversee operations of networks. Each of these networks is represented on the Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks.



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## **Concept of Operations**

### **USDA Public Affairs Operations**

USDA's Office of Communications (OC) will provide communications policy direction, review, and coordination of all information programs; maintain the flow of information; and lead communications coordination efforts between USDA agencies and mission areas to the mass communication media, state and local governments, and the public.

In the event of an agricultural or animal health emergency that is national in scope, the USDA's OC, with support from USDA agencies, will conduct operations from a USDA Joint Information Center (JIC). And should the incident require a coordinated federal response due to a natural or man-made disaster, the USDA's OC will participate in the designated National Joint Information Center (NJIC) during the emergency.

Under the Incident Command System, the USDA's OC will assign a public information officer (PIO) to support the incident command structure. The OC would also assign a PIO to the National JIC and/or a Joint Field Office. The PIO represents and advises the Incident Command on all public information matters relating to management of the incident. The PIO handles media and public inquiries, emergency public information and warnings, rumor monitoring and response, media monitoring, and other functions to coordinate, clear with appropriate authorities, and disseminate accurate and timely information related to the incident, particularly regarding information on animal health and food safety and protection.

The PIO is also responsible for coordinating public information at or near the incident site and serving as the on-scene link to the Joint Information System (JIS). In a large-scale operation, the on-scene PIO serves as a field PIO with links to the JIC, which is typically collocated with the federal, regional, or SLTT emergency operations center responsible for primary incident coordination. The JIS provides the mechanism for integrating public information activities among JICs, across jurisdictions, and with private-sector and nongovernmental organizations.

## **USDA Response to a Major Incident**

### **Intergovernmental/stakeholder outreach**

- Internal USDA conference call with USDA agency public affairs/mission areas.
- Federal interagency conference call (White House, HHS, DOI, DHS, DOS).
- Intergovernmental conference call with local/state governments (including animal health, human health, homeland security, and natural resources).
- Stakeholder conference call with industry groups.
- Congressional conference call or personal visits.

### **Media outreach**

- Conduct press conference with HHS, state rep, and other officials to discuss animal, food, and/or human health implications, actions being taken, guidance for the public.
- Issue news release.
- Issue media advisory listing available resources (b-roll Beta tapes, still photos, Q&As, fact sheet, updated sound bites via the web).

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- Establish media briefing schedule to ensure predictable, established lines of communication with reporters to provide updates on management of the incident.
  - Distribute Q&As and fact sheet and post on the website.
  - Provide b-roll tapes upon request.
  - Post still photos on the website (lab testing/inspectors at processing plant).
  - Offer updated sound bites via the website.
  - Monitor media 24/7 to promptly correct misinformation.

### **Public Outreach**

Distribute public service announcements (PSAs) containing key messages to radio stations and post downloadable PSAs on the USDA website.

### **FDA Office of External Affairs Incident Response**

As the agency responsible for ensuring the safety, efficacy, and defense of our Nation's food (human and pet) and animal feed supply, the FDA assists and supports the public health- and medical-related efforts to prevent, respond, mitigate, and recover from an incident.

Ensure the safety and defense of food in coordination with other responsible federal agencies (e.g., USDA); in cooperation with SLTT officials, assess whether food manufacturing, food processing, food distribution, food service, and food retail establishments in the affected area are able to provide safe and secure food.

In cooperation with federal and SLTT officials, ensure the proper disposal of contaminated products and the decontamination of affected food facilities in order to protect human health. In cooperation with SLTT officials as well as the food industry, conduct trace backs or recalls of adulterated products. Issuing safety alerts, health information advisories, warnings, advice and guidance to consumers and industry.

### **Non-Stafford Act Case Study: 2010 Salmonella Outbreak in Fresh Eggs**

- Beginning in late May, FDA, CDC, and state public health partners began investigating a slowly increasing multistate increase of Salmonella Enteritidis infections, and by late July had traced the outbreak back to two large farms in Iowa producing tainted eggs.
- Approximately 2,000 cases of infection were related to this outbreak.
- In August 2010, FDA recalled an unprecedented 500 million fresh eggs because of salmonella contamination.
- FDA and CDC are traditional communication partners in foodborne illness outbreaks. Both organizations' PIOs were in constant contact on epidemiological data, regulatory actions and messaging to the public. FDA led daily coordination calls from May to August with federal and state public health PIOs to review daily plans and events, discuss regulatory communications leads and to share public messages.
- Communications regarding the historic egg recall quickly expanded to include:
  - USDA Food and Nutrition Service – eggs in school lunches.
  - HHS/FDA and USDA Food Safety and Inspection Services – powdered eggs in processed food production.
  - USDA/Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) – on-farm egg graders.

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## **Coordination**

### **USDA/FDA State Communications**

USDA and FDA, under their respective authorities, will notify the state communications officials in the affected state(s). The USDA's and FDA's Office of Communications, in cooperation with federal interagency public affairs staff, will hold conference calls with communicators from State Departments of Agriculture, Health, Homeland Security, and Natural Resources when needed to coordinate and disseminate information regarding the situation. The FDA's External Affairs may also initiate calls with stakeholders, including state health and (depending on circumstances) agriculture counterparts, in coordination with the USDA's OC and relevant agencies.

### **National Incident Communications Coordination Line**

USDA Office of Communications and FDA headquarters will represent their agency on National Incident Communications Coordination Line (NICCL) calls during incidents and will maintain liaison with the ESF 15 function at DHS Public Affairs.

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# **Annex Q to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Staffing and Deployments**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. FEMA Incident Management Handbook

#### **Purpose**

This annex outlines staffing and deployment policies and procedures to ensure that there are enough External Affairs personnel ready to deploy to fill critical ESF 15 staff positions following an incident. Appendix 1 to Annex X provides the ESF 15 Staffing Grid.

#### **Staffing External Affairs Leadership Positions**

An incident requiring a coordinated federal response will require External Affairs personnel to fill ESF 15 leadership positions over an extended time-period. Additionally, the nature of the incident may call for personnel with a variety of external affairs skills and experience from numerous departments and agencies.

#### **Terrorist Incidents**

The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and other law enforcement Public Information Officers (PIOs) are well suited to serve as either the External Affairs Officer (EAO) or in another External Affairs leadership position due to their knowledge and background in law enforcement and terrorism.

#### **Natural Disasters**

FEMA has the primary responsibility for leading and coordinating the federal government's disaster response efforts. However, numerous federal departments and agencies have deployed to support the emergency response following U.S. natural disasters and have a significant External Affairs support role.

#### **Public Health Incidents**

Public Affairs personnel from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) agencies including the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA), Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Food and Drug Administration (FDA), would be called on to fill ESF 15 leadership roles for public health emergencies.

#### **Aircraft Incidents near Military/Civilian Communities**

Many unforeseen incidents may require a rapid response from the Department of Defense (DOD), U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and the National Transportation Security Board

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(NTSB). Incidents such as civilian or military aircraft crashes in (or near) military and civilian communities may call for a military public affairs officer to rapidly deploy to lead ESF 15 in an incident Joint Information Center (JIC).

## **Responsibilities**

### **DHS Public Affairs**

Following an incident, DHS Public Affairs (Incident Communications) may request federal department and agency volunteers to immediately deploy to help form a Unified Coordination Group (UCG) or an incident JIC. Volunteer public affairs personnel from state and local authorities in non-affected jurisdictions will be considered for assignment. Costs for deployment of these personnel will be covered by parent departments or agencies.

### **FEMA External Affairs**

FEMA External Affairs staff frequently deploy in support of natural disasters and incidents requiring a coordinated federal response. FEMA fills ESF 15 disaster response staffing requirements with full time staff and Cadre On-Call Response Employees (CORE), Incident Management CORE, and reservists.

### **FEMA Reservists**

FEMA reservists are intermittent employees that are called up to deploy to fill long-term ESF 15 positions following incidents. Reservists are hired under the authority of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. Therefore, reservists may only be used to perform disaster-related work, defined as specific disaster, emergencies, projects, or activities of a non-continuous nature.

### **FEMA CORE Employees**

FEMA CORE employees are temporary full-time staff (generally two-year appointments) that deploy to support disaster responses.

### **Deployment Tracking System**

The Deployment Tracking System (DTS) is the system by which FEMA deploys all personnel to disaster response operations. Disaster managers in the field, region, or at HQ identify their staffing needs and create deployment orders through DTS per current deployment policies, procedures, and protocols.

### **Federal Department and Agency Public Affairs**

All federal department and agency public affairs offices are strongly encouraged to develop plans, policies, and procedures to rapidly deploy personnel immediately following natural disasters and other incidents requiring a coordinated federal response. Federal department and agency public affairs offices should develop and maintain national deployment rosters to give public affairs personnel maximum deployment predictability. Such rosters may be forwarded to DHS Public Affairs (Incident Communications) for coordination purposes as they are updated.

### **Training**

Given the activities and responsibilities under ESF 15, personnel must be trained to lead ESF 15 staff. All ESF 15 staff must understand a JIC and other ESF 15 component structures, be able to

execute the National Incident Management System (NIMS), National Response Framework (NRF), and National Disaster Recovery Framework principles, and have completed mandatory Independent Study courses offered on the FEMA Emergency Management Institute Web page (IS-100, IS-200, IS-700, and IS-800 [or agency equivalent training on the NIMS and NRF]). Personnel also are encouraged to complete IS-300, IS-400, IS-2900 and any additional Incident Command System position-specific training.

### Federal Deployment Teams

Some departments and agencies deploy pre-identified personnel regularly in response to a crisis. While most deployment teams do not have an allocation for an external affairs or public affairs position, most teams require public affairs reach back support. Some of the federal government's deployment teams that would require public affairs support are:

Federal Government Deployment Teams		
Lead Dept./Agency	Team	Capability
FEMA	Regional Incident Management Assistance Teams (R-IMAT)	13 regional teams (One - two External Affairs Advisors per team). Readily deployable within region; can deploy outside home region if staff are limited within another region.
FEMA	National Incident Management Assistance Teams (N-IMATs)	Five national teams (One External Affairs Advisor on each team). Readily deployable.
FEMA	National Direct Housing Implementation Teams	N/A
HHS/ASPR	Incident Management Team (IMT)	Deploys following the identification of a public health emergency to assess HHS long- and short-term requirements and response. A public affairs staff member may deploy with the IMT and serve as the public affairs advisor to the deployed staff.
HHS/ASPR	National Disaster Medical System: -Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMAT) -Trauma and Critical Care Teams (TCCT) -Victim Identification Team (VIC) - National Veterinary Response Teams (NVRT) - Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams (DMORT)	NDMS teams of medical providers deploy to an impacted area to augment state and local healthcare providers, support patient evacuations from affected to unaffected areas of the country, support the local coroner in victim identification, and provide veterinary care for federal or state working animals.
HHS/PHS	Public Health Teams	U.S. Public Health Service officers will deploy on teams to augment state and local public health offices.

<b>Lead Dept./Agency</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Capability</b>
<b>HHS/CDC</b>	Advisory Team for Environment, Food, and Health	Team includes representatives from EPA, USDA, FDA, CDC, and other federal agencies.
<b>HHS/CDC</b>	CDC Deployment Teams	Provide specific disease-related advice to state/local health officials.
<b>EPA</b>	<b>Environmental Response Team (ERT)</b>	Deploys to emergencies to deal with human health and environmental impacts of terrorist attacks.
<b>EPA</b>	<b>Radiological Emergency Response Team (RERT)</b>	Responds following the release of radioactive materials to provide technical advice, monitoring, sampling, and cleanup assistance.
<b>EPA</b>	<b>National Decontamination Team (NDT)</b>	Provides decontamination expertise of chemical, biological, and radioactive contaminants.
<b>EPA</b>	<b>National Criminal Enforcement Response Team (NCERT)</b>	Provides law enforcement support for contaminated sites linked to terrorism or environmental crimes.
<b>NTSB</b>	Investigative Go-Team	Investigative team that deploys to civil aviation accidents and major accidents in the other modes of transportation: rail, highway, marine, and pipeline. The number of team members varies based on the circumstances of the accident and public interest. See Annex O.
<b>USCG</b>	Public Information Assist Team (PIAT)	Emergency public information during oil spills, natural disasters, domestic terrorism events, exercise participants.
<b>FBI</b>	Media Fly Team	Consists of one to eight public affairs specialists that deploy upon the activation of FBI incident teams.
<b>DOE/NNSA</b>	<b>Nuclear Incident Response Team (NIRT):</b> <b>-Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center (FRMAC)</b> -Aerial Measuring System (AMS) -Accident Response Group (ARG) -National Atmospheric Release Advisory Center (NARAC) -Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site (REAC/TS)	FRMAC's public information officer will deploy with a response team. See Annex N.

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<b>Lead Dept./Agency</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Capability</b>
USACE	<b>External Affairs Planning and Response Team</b>	One team centrally managed out of Headquarters, but members span the entire enterprise (district/divisions) team is readily deployable with recruited skills/capabilities (media relations/videography/photography, etc.) to match the needs of the mission.



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# **Annex R to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Digital and Social Media**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)

#### **Purpose**

This annex outlines the plan for federal departments and agencies to use digital, social, web-based, and other interactive communications with the public during incidents requiring a coordinated federal response.

#### **Concept of Operations**

Official websites, blogs, photos, videos, social media sites, text messages (SMS), and smartphone applications are effective tools to advise and inform the public if used in a coordinated, strategic, and timely manner, and should be used in concert with other non-digital communication channels.

As digital and technology solutions continue to grow and evolve, the concepts, principles, and guidelines in this annex should carry over to any digital communication channel.

All content, messaging, and communication channels should be accessible to populations with access and functional needs and populations with limited English proficiency (LEP) and should be coordinated and thoroughly aligned with Planning and Products and the Joint Information Center (JIC) appropriately.

#### **Digital Communications Channels**

Once the ESF 15 Operations Director is identified, the respective agency and their communication channels are the lead.

#### **USA.gov**

For prolonged national level incidents or incidents where multiple federal departments are involved, the primary portal website will be USA.gov, operated by the General Services Administration (GSA). This site will serve as a portal to the lead agency and other agencies that are communicating incident specific information. The following is not meant to provide an exclusive list of channels, and the focus should be on the underlying principles and guidelines.

#### **Department and Agency Websites**

Agencies should follow these guidelines for the best way to support the response and recovery efforts:

- Stay within agency mission lanes when commenting or creating content about the incident.
- Respond to questions or inquiries from social media users in a timely manner. When the question or inquiry falls outside your agency's mission lanes, direct users to the appropriate agency.

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- Ensure your social media, website, blogs, and other digital communication platforms are up-to-date with timely, accurate, and relevant information regarding the incident.
  - Ensure that information being provided is accessible—meeting or exceeding Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requirements—and in plain language.
  - Use social listening, media monitoring, and other forms of situational awareness to inform the timing, formatting, and delivery method for information and messaging.
  - Do not copy or repost content that is available on another agency website (especially if the other agency is the lead [or authoritative source] for the information). Cross-link to other agencies' content that would be beneficial for your audience.
  - Guidance on coordinating the same URL structure agency (e.g. using [xxxxxx].gov/hurricane-ian or [xxxxxx].gov/ian as a URL structure) across federal agency websites will be provided through the national ESF 15 lead.

### Stafford Act Case Study: 2020 COVID-19 Rumor Control

- During the 2020 COVID-19 response there was a high volume of false and misleading information related to the roles of federal and state responses.
- To ensure an effective External Affairs operation, and in coordination with the other aspects of ESF 15 including the media outreach team, FEMA began a rumor control initiative.
- A webpage on [www.FEMA.gov](http://www.FEMA.gov) was created to directly address commonly seen rumors and restore public trust.
- Rumors were identified by the social listening team, as well as through discussion with ESF 15 partners on the National Incident Communications Conference Line (NICCL).
- Public affairs was responsible for developing timely and accurate messaging that could be used on the web and social.
- These details were then added to the rumor control page, providing clear language addressing the false and misleading information and providing resources where people could find correct information for each rumor.
- The social listening and content teams shared this information with interagency partners through the NICCL and collaborated with state and local partners to share these messages and expand their reach.

#### Department and Agency Social Media Sites

Agencies should always use pre-established accounts during an incident because the account already has an established level of trust and base of users. The lead agency's social media accounts shall provide information and amplify information being provided by other agencies. Other agencies shall provide mission specific information and point back to the lead agency accounts or, if applicable, the incident specific account.

In rare cases, it may be appropriate to create social media accounts dedicated to an incident. The ESF 15 Operations Director should approve the establishment of new accounts, under advisement from Digital Communication Specialists. The following questions should be carefully considered before making the decision to create incident-specific social accounts:

- Are existing agency social media accounts insufficient for reaching target audiences?
  - If so, is there a specific regional or language social media site or network that represents the audience impacted by the incident?

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- Will there be confusion between this new account and existing accounts?
  - Will the response and/or the recovery be prolonged?
  - Who will manage the new account after the incident?
  - Are there enough resources and trained personnel to support the daily maintenance of the account?

### **Messaging and Distribution**

As noted in concept of operations, content and messaging should be coordinated and thoroughly aligned with Planning and Products and the JIC. Posting important, accurate, and relevant content is the most important component of any web and social media operation. When it comes to digital communication channels, agencies should follow these guidelines for the best way to support the response and recovery efforts and engage audiences:

As with all messaging during a federal response, digital content should consist of actionable information to promote public safety and follow Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) principles.

The federal government does not endorse any non-government websites, companies, or applications. The concepts presented in this annex are applicable for any social media site or digital communication platform.

Since social media sites or digital communication channels are owned by third party companies, key content and information about the incident should always be available on the agency's website in an easily accessible format and location.

Digital content and messages must be accessible, according to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Content for social media sites (e.g. Facebook, X, Instagram) should be tailored to fit the characteristics and audiences of each site. In general, content on social media sites should be in plain language and provide relevant updates in an easily digestible format, preferably with actionable public safety information.

All federal and state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners should amplify messaging on their accounts as appropriate. Private sector entities supporting the incident response, including but not limited to, associations, businesses, nonprofits, and educational institutions, may also amplify messages through their channels, as they may have followers that are impacted by the incident.

### **Social Media and Media Monitoring and Reporting for Situational Awareness**

Social listening and media monitoring should be used to analyze publicly available content across the online information environment. Agency policies and procedures should be followed as it relates to social listening, personally identifiable information, and privacy concerns. During an incident, ESF 15 should search appropriate keywords, hashtags, and monitor public posts on digital channels to inform strategic messaging and identify false and misleading information. This information should be shared with federal response partners to assess public perception and inform messaging and operational decisions. All responding agencies should follow their

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agencies' rules, policies, and procedures as to what capacity they are authorized to use approved applications and platforms.

### **Stafford Act Case Study: Maui Wildfires 2023 Social Media Team Coordination**

- FEMA was designated as the ESF 15 lead for the Maui Wildfires and was responsible for coordinating the External Affairs for the federal response.
- Staff from multiple FEMA regional offices, as well as DHS Headquarters, coordinated with FEMA HQ External Affairs on web and social media outreach at FEMA Headquarters and eventually at Joint Field Offices in on two islands in Hawaii.
- At the height of the storm, more than 15 staff members were supporting the social media and social listening operations.
- Due to the time difference between Washington, D.C. and Hawaii, staff located in D.C. worked on a split schedule to provide additional coverage and support to regional and field staff.
- This surge support, and the ability of FEMA digital staff to work from anywhere there was an internet connection, was critical in FEMA's digital response to this disaster.
- The social media team worked across ESF 15 to develop and write social media content, and to manage the FEMA social media accounts with a focus on telling the story of the response in a culturally competent way.
- Social listening played a critical role in identifying rumors and providing insights into the primary messaging concerns on the ground. These reports ensured FEMA shared the right messages at the right time and provided a feedback loop to measure the success of our content.

#### **Collaboration with Planning and Products**

While the Digital Communications Specialist falls within the JIC, the specialist and the JIC manager and leads should work closely with counterparts in Planning and Products in several ways:

- Alerting Planning and Products to priority issues stemming from public social media conversations and advising on best practices for messaging in response to those priority issues.
- Monitoring for inquiries and feedback sent from the public directly to the agency social media accounts and working with the ESF 15 specialists (External Affairs Specialists, Visual Imaging Specialists, Media Relations Specialists, Program Liaison Specialists, Creative Specialists, Intergovernmental/Congressional Affairs Specialists, and private sector liaisons) so appropriate responses can be incorporated into the communications plan.
- Providing guidance and recommendations on timing for posting content on digital channels, along with other best practices for developing digital content.

#### **Reporting**

Agencies should ensure that all reports follow their agencies' legal, privacy, and records management rules and appropriate SOP and should always consider copyrighted content and the public's right to privacy.

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# **Annex S to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Community Engagement**

#### **Purpose**

This annex provides information, principles, and operational direction to enhance ESF 15 effectiveness in communicating and engaging with all segments of the population. Community engagement is increasingly essential for all aspects of a communication strategy, but especially when developing and delivering crisis communication messaging. Community engagement operationally increases awareness of key information and, more importantly, helps motivate changes in behavior in ways that other communication channels and platforms alone simply cannot do.

Effective ESF 15 operations require community engagement to ensure direct two-way communication with an audience, or those in trusted positions such as public-private, faith-based, and community-based organizations who are closer to the direct audience. Additionally, reflecting insights and perspectives gleaned from direct work with various communities may strengthen problem solving and identify new opportunities for outreach, which may not yet be understood or leveraged in an operation. This annex will cover best practices for:

1. Learning about the Community
2. Building Partnerships
3. Addressing Access Barriers
4. Tracking Engagement Outcomes

#### **Who is “the Community”?**

A community refers to a group of people connected through shared attributes (i.e., location, culture, history, values, experiences, or beliefs) who feel a mutual sense of belonging. Communities can be any size and made up of different demographics, cultures, occupations, social patterns, and many other distinguishing factors.

#### **What is Community Engagement?**

Community engagement refers to a variety of outreach and collaborative activities with community-based organizations, partners, and key stakeholders. Engagement can look different depending on community preferences; historic, social, or political dynamics; availability of resources; and the capacity of community members and leaders.

#### **Learn about the Community**

Learning about a community is an important first step in providing tailored and functional ESF 15 communication support. While this can take time and may be difficult during a crisis, gaining a deeper understanding of a community’s demographics, resources, geography, and history can help uncover unique needs and ways to engage. An initial community assessment can set the foundation for engagement and provide direction for selecting appropriate partners and channels of communication to meet specific community needs.

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## **Assess Community Demographics and Capabilities**

Use data and state and local contacts to learn more about the community, including potential vulnerabilities, history that may affect community perception of a disaster response, and valuable community resources. Examining demographic information is one way to uncover potential vulnerabilities when assessing a community. Pairing disaster data with social and economic data can provide insight into potential compounding challenges. As most datasets are presented at the county-level, identifying impacted counties may be useful. Consider using resources like the [National Risk Index](#) (NRI) or the [Social Vulnerability Index](#) (SVI) to conduct an initial assessment of a population.

The following are examples of communities that may face limited access to resources during an emergency:

- Older adults or children and adolescents.
- Persons with disabilities.
- Persons who live in rural areas.
- Persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty, discrimination, or inequality.
- Individuals facing language barriers (See Annex E for more).
- Members of religious minorities or those who face discrimination based on religious affiliation.
- Persons who have immigrated to the country.
- Individuals with insecure housing or who are unhoused.

Since this list cannot capture every possible example, be sure to consult organizations, data, and state and local officials. Recognize that some groups may not be readily apparent in the initial analysis, and that individuals can belong to multiple communities with differing impacts.

## **Building and Identifying Partners and Stakeholders**

Building strong partnerships with trusted groups can help make engagement more transparent and effective. Consulting local perspectives also can help identify questions that resonate with the community while offering them a role in the decision-making process. Leverage the resources, institutions, and leaders that are already part of a community to enhance the spread of information, minimize barriers to access, and form unique partnerships. Valuable community partners may include:

- Local leaders, including business professionals, religious leaders, local media personalities, and other influential individuals that are considered trusted voices in the community.
- Nonprofits and faith-based organizations that are active in disasters and have a primary mission of helping disaster survivors.
- Nonprofits, faith-based, and volunteer organizations that have a mission of helping people in a variety of ways outside of incidents including disability advocacy organizations, organizations that promote and support economic development, housing organizations, local shelters, and social services.

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- Private businesses and industries including retail, service, hospitality, tourism, utilities and healthcare.
  - Associations and organizations affiliated with government, business, trade, or community-based projects.
  - Academic and research institutions, including local universities and departments, that can offer useful community data.
  - Government entities including Tribal Nations, other federal departments and agencies and state, local, and territorial governments.

### **Question Bank for Learning about the Community Through Partners**

Rather than assuming what engagement techniques will work best, directly engage local partners and stakeholders to gain insight into a community. Be mindful of asking for information that a community or partners have already shared or that could be informed by knowledge and data that already exists. The question bank below provides sample questions to consider asking partners and stakeholders to understand the community better.

General questions:

- What are the community's biggest challenges?
- Who in this community do you consider to be 'underserved'?
- What are current barriers to accessing resources?
- What are important economic, environmental, historic, and cultural resources in the community?

Communication-related questions:

- What languages does the community speak and understand?
- How do you exchange new information?
- What are the places where community members like to gather?
- What information sources does the community trust?

Incident-related questions:

- Has your community previously faced challenges in emergency preparedness and response?
- Have you accessed emergency resources in the past? If so, what was your experience?
- What are the current gaps in your community's incident recovery and response?

Partnership-related questions:

- What other organizations, nonprofits, and agencies do you currently have strong relationships with?
- Which partnership networks do you belong to?
- Are there barriers you currently face when thinking about partnering with federal agencies or other government (i.e., local, regional, or state) partners?
- What are important considerations to keep in mind when supporting your community?
- How do you feel current partnerships could be strengthened?

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## **Understanding and Addressing Barriers to Access**

Barriers to access are conditions or obstacles that prevent someone from using or accessing knowledge and resources. Often, more than one barrier exists at a time and can impact individuals and communities across all phases of an incident. This includes obstacles to preparing for disasters, challenges to participating in community events, or differences in culture and language that limit access to information, and more.

Understanding these barriers through direct and ongoing engagement is an important step toward navigating them. Remember that some may be hidden and may take time to understand and address. Furthermore, consider implementing feedback methods to continuously evaluate and address obstacles, as they may appear at any time in the incident cycle. The following are common barriers and recommendations for addressing them:

**Communication Barriers** are obstacles to finding, understanding, and using information. They may include:

- Information that is inaccessible without a phone or computer.
- Information that is inaccessible to those with difficulties reading or speaking, or those who are hearing- or sight-impaired.
- Information found in limited places, during limited times, or disseminated through limited formats.
- Information products that are not Section 508 compliant.
- Videos without closed captions.
- Information and products delivered in a way that is not culturally or linguistically appropriate.
- Information that is not written in plain language.
- Information that is not available in multiple languages.

Recommendations for eliminating these barriers:

- Identify trusted voices and organizations that can share messages.
- Place information in frequented areas such as local newspapers, newsletters, or radio stations, laundromats, shelters, places of worship, recreation centers, major employers, libraries, large department stores, health clinics, local government offices, restaurants, etc.
- Hold media briefings and community meetings with sign language interpretation and real-time captioning.
- Develop simple how-to guides for navigating programs and processes.
- Ensure information is shared in the languages spoken by the community.
- Create documents that are easy to read, 508 compliant, and can attract the attention of the target audience.
- Distribute information through multiple methods or platforms to increase visibility and spread messages more effectively.



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**Administrative Barriers** are obstacles to accessing services and amenities. They may include:

- Services that are only available during limited hours or days of the week.
- Lack of available childcare services or alternatives, which can limit program participation from parents.
- Settings with limited accommodations for dietary preferences, religious requirements, or cultural preferences.
- Unfamiliarity with programs or resources.
- Burdensome and time-intensive processes that cause obstacles to accessing services.

Recommendations for eliminating these barriers:

- Provide services on weekends and before or after traditional business hours to increase the accessibility of programs.
- Provide technical assistance and training on grants, programs, and resources.
- Develop processes that are accessible, easy to understand, and navigable to meet individual and community needs.
- Conduct child-friendly community meetings or virtual alternatives to increase accessibility for single or working parents.
- Plan for possible dietary requirements, allergies, and personal, religious, or cultural preferences in the context of shelters and disaster support services.

**Physical Barriers** are obstacles to physically navigating a space and may include:

- The inability to enter or use a site for people who use wheelchairs or individuals that need seating accommodation.
- Limited, inconvenient, or no access to public transportation.
- Services located in limited locations or far from major community hubs such as major employers, schools, or childcare facilities.

Recommendations for eliminating these barriers:

- Ensure availability of wheelchair ramps and elevators, automatic doors, bathrooms, and seating designated for people with disabilities.
- Hold meetings and services in locations accessible by reliable public transportation.
- Ensure shelters and facilities have appropriate accommodations for physical disabilities.
- Provide spaces for support animals and caretakers.
- Work closely with advisors or subject matter experts on disability integration and/or civil rights to ensure locations are accessible and meet the community's needs.

**Personal or Social Barriers** are obstacles caused or increased by harmful stereotypes, stigma, socioeconomic status, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, or others. They may include:

- Fear rooted in lived or perceived danger or distrust that may prevent someone from accessing government services.
- Financial strain that makes it challenging to participate in engagements or initiatives.
- Lack of time, capacity, and resources to attend and respond to engagement requests.

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Recommendations for eliminating these barriers:

- Communicate or provide services through locally trusted leaders and organizations where possible.
- When possible, invite local leaders to visit or participate in engagements.
- Ensure all recommendations and initiatives have low-cost or no-cost alternatives where possible.
- Provide multiple opportunities and a variety of formats for engagement to ensure maximum participation.

### **Tracking Engagement Outcomes**

Tracking engagement outcomes can show what is working well, identify other areas of opportunity, and help create a culture of continuous learning. Outcomes can be measured through quantitative metrics like the number of products produced or the number of new contacts made. However, consider striving for more qualitative metrics to measure “success” in ways that feel appropriate to inclusivity goals.

In addition to addressing barriers through the suggested question bank above, the following prompts may speak to the impact of the engagement:

- Did community members confirm that they understood what was being presented? Did staff confirm that they understood what was learned from the community?
- Was action taken on the feedback received from participants?
- Did participants receive the necessary tools and support to spread the word to others?
- Did community members commit to a plan of action?
- Were new relationships and connections formed within the community?
- How did the community’s resilience or ability to adapt to future events increase after engagement?

### **Summary**

Community engagement is crucial in crisis communications because it builds trust while harnessing the collective knowledge and resources of local populations. By actively involving community members, responders can ensure that communications are tailored to the specific needs and cultural contexts of those who are affected. Working directly with a community will foster a sense of ownership and empowerment that accelerates cooperation. Ultimately, engagement can transform disaster response from a top-down approach to a collaborative effort, significantly improving outcomes between responders and the communities they serve.

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## Case Study 2020-2023 COVID-19 Vaccination Centers

- FEMA and its partners were tasked with administering one million vaccines in 100 days during the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This milestone was met 42 days ahead of schedule, and showcased widespread coordination between the whole of government, private sector, non-governmental organizations, and members of the public.
- Carrying out a nationwide operation amid a pandemic posed unique challenges in ensuring the effective distribution of vaccines.
- FEMA and its partners conducted assessments to select vaccination sites by cross referencing indexes and databases to prioritize areas with high rates of infection and limited healthcare resources.
- Federal communications personnel used a variety of outreach techniques to address vaccine hesitancy and misinformation while building trust. Among them was a commitment to engaging directly with communities, holding open dialogues, listening sessions, town hall meetings, and working with trusted community leaders. Actively involving community members in the decision-making process ensured that vaccination efforts were inclusive and reflected local needs.
- Within the Community Vaccination Centers, accommodations such as wheelchair ramps, sign language interpreters, multilingual support, and translated materials ensured facilities were easily accessible for those facing mobility and language barriers. In many locations, extended hours of operation and partnerships with public transportation services encouraged participation from people for whom common vaccination center hours were inaccessible.
- To reach rural communities, including Tribal Nations, FEMA, the Health and Human Services Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), and a host of other partners oversaw the coordination of mobile and pop-up vaccination centers that could be set up anywhere and mitigate traveling distance; limited access to medical providers; lack of mass transportation; mobility issues; work and family care schedules; and lack of vaccine confidence.

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### Case Study: Maui Wildfires and the Cultural Protocol Task Force

- Maui's devastating 2023 wildfires left residents of Lahaina, a historic town with deep cultural significance, in urgent need of food, shelter, water, electricity, and so much more. Disaster responders quickly recognized that messaging needed to be tailored to the community to build trust and jumpstart their recovery.
- A federal Cultural Protocol Task Force was formed to educate disaster workers and help them understand, respect, and integrate local customs and practices in their work. The task force was led by the Senior Advisor for Native Hawaiian Affairs from the U.S. Department of the Interior and was responsible for advising field leadership on the significance of cultural institutions and historic landmarks to ensure response and recovery activities were respectful and inclusive.
- Direct feedback from disaster survivors and field staff informed the development of new culturally competent materials, including public service announcements and social media messages and graphics. Existing materials also were updated to better reflect communities on Maui. This included translating communications into multiple languages, including Hawaiian and Hawaiian Creole, to ensure that those facing language barriers had access to critical information.
- Due to the area's history, conducting the debris removal in close coordination with the Native Hawaiian people was critical.
- Disaster responders were able to build trust and create effective messaging despite a longstanding distrust of the federal government among some of the affected population.

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# **Annex X to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **Administration and Logistics**

#### **References:**

- A. National Response Framework (NRF)
- B. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. FEMA Incident Management Handbook

#### **Purpose**

This annex outlines information and procedures concerning administration and logistics requirements and operations support for the ESF 15 organization.

#### **Requirement**

External Affairs (EA) operations are mission-essential tasks, and they must be afforded a high priority by the Unified Coordination Group (UCG) when establishing basic operational capabilities. Infrastructure and supporting capabilities to deliver life-saving and life-sustaining information must be established in a timely manner. If the ESF 15 team does not have these and other basic tools, EA operations cannot be successfully executed.

#### **Responsibilities**

##### **ESF 15 External Affairs Officer**

Upon designation and activation of ESF 15, the ESF 15 External Affairs Officer (EAO) will assess initial logistical requirements necessary in establishing operational capabilities in the UCG and Joint Information Center (JIC). The ESF 15 EAO will work closely with the ESF 15 Operations Director, Assistant EAOs, and the UCG to ensure that initial requirements are identified in a timely manner and action is taken to address shortfalls where they exist. This information should be provided by ESF 15 to the UCG Scoping Meeting. If the nature of the incident requires, the ESF 15 EAO should identify an EA Specialist(s) to support resource management needs.

##### **ESF 15 External Affairs Specialist**

The EA Specialist will coordinate all administrative and logistics activities for the ESF 15 operation. This will include office space and equipment needs, in-processing of the ESF 15 staff, JIC support, and coordination with UCG elements. The EA Specialist will coordinate directly with the ESF 15 staff and the following partners:

- Logistics: Ensures that logistic support including working space, equipment, and technical support are provided to the EA in a timely manner.
- Human Resources: Ensures EA staffing deployment requests are fulfilled, daily staff accountability completed, and provides additional HR support to the Joint Field Office.
- Finance and Admin: Coordinates all EA funding with Comptroller on limited English proficiency translations, ordering of supplies, and assists with payroll certification.

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### **Personnel and Staffing Coordination**

The EA Specialist will maintain close coordination with the ESF 15 Operations Director, component directors, and interagency state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) public affairs counterparts to ensure that appropriate staffing is provided for the ESF 15 organization.

### **Pre-scripted Mission Assignments and Mission Assignments**

Pre-scripted Mission Assignments (PSMA) are developed in advance to facilitate rapid response following ESF 15 activation. The following PSMA are approved in advance. Other PSMA may be developed in addition to the following:

- PSMA-167: U.S. Coast Guard Public Affairs subject matter experts.
- PSMA-168: Other federal agency technical subject matter experts that can speak publicly about their agency's activities.
- PSMA-170: U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Broadcast Transmission Support-Public Affairs Communications Teams.
- PSMA-287: Bureau of Indian Affairs' tribal liaison support.

Any agency can be mission assigned to support ESF 15 operations. Some frequently used mission assignments include:

- All departments/agency EA personnel to support coordination of messaging related to department/agency response operations. The most frequently used include DOD, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers HQ (USACE), and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG).
- DOD-Combat Camera teams for photo and video production.
- DOD-Joint Public Affairs Support Element (JPASE) or Civil Affairs and Information Support Element (CAISE).
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Tribal Liaison support.
- Any agency-External Affairs subject matter experts to support FEMA's National News Desk or Social Media operations when our internal assets are exhausted.

**Appendix 1 to Annex X to Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs  
ESF 15 Staffing Grid**

Event and Event Number	Event Date	Event Type(s)	Counties Declared	Joint Field Office (JFO) Address	Program Deadlines	JFO Closure
Kilauea Volcanic Eruption DR-4366-HI	5/30/2018	Volcano, Earthquake	Hawaii	N/A	Individual Assistance: 7/30/2018	TBD

**Employee Information**

Title	Name	Agency	Location	Email	Phone	Hotel
EAO						
Assistant EAO						
Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMAT)						
Hawaii County PIO						
SBA PIO						
USACE PIO						

**Leadership**

Title	Name	Agency	Location	Email	Phone	Hotel
JIC Manager						
Media Relations Specialist						
Digital Communications Specialist						
Visual Imaging Specialist						

**Planning and Products (P&P)**

Title	Name	Agency	Location	Email	Phone	Hotel
Planning and Products Manager						
Creative Specialist						
Program Liaison Specialist						

**Private Sector**

Title	Name	Agency	Location	Email	Phone	Hotel
Private Sector Manager						
Private Sector Liaison						

**Governmental Affairs**

Title	Name	Agency	Location	Email	Phone	Hotel
Governmental Affairs Manager						
Governmental Affairs Specialist						

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# **Annex Z to Emergency Support Function 15**

## **External Affairs**

### **References**

#### **Emergency Support Functions**

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 created the National Response Plan in 2004 to coordinate the federal response to actual or potential incidents. The National Response Plan grouped the capabilities of the federal departments and agencies as well as the American Red Cross into 15 ESFs. The table below lists each ESF alongside its lead federal agency(ies).

<b>Emergency Support Functions</b>	
<b>Key ESFs</b>	<b>Lead Agency</b>
ESF 1 – Transportation	Department of Transportation (DOT)
ESF 2 – Communications	DHS/National Communications System
ESF 3 – Public Works	Department of Defense (DOD)/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
ESF 4 – Firefighting	Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Forest Service
ESF 5 – Information and Planning	FEMA
ESF 6 – Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services	FEMA
ESF 7 – Logistics	FEMA
ESF 8 – Public Health and Medical Services	Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
ESF 9 – Search and Rescue	U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
ESF 10 – Oil and Hazardous Materials Response	U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)/Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
ESF 11 – Agriculture and Natural Resources	Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Forest Service
ESF 12 – Energy	Department of Energy (DOE)
ESF 13 – Public Safety and Security	Department of Justice (DOJ)
ESF 14 – Cross Sector Business and Infrastructure	FEMA and CISA
ESF 15 – External Affairs	DHS Office of Public Affairs/FEMA External Affairs



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## Common Acronyms

Presented below is a list of acronyms used frequently used in this SOP and elsewhere within ESF 15 activities.

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Definition</i>
AAR	After Action Report
AEAO	Assistant External Affairs Officer
AMS	Aerial Measuring System
ANG	Air National Guard
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
ARG	Accident Response Group
ARNG	Army National Guard
ASD/PA	Assistant Secretary of Defense - Public Affairs
ASPA	Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs
ASPR	Assistant Secretary for Public Response (HHS)
ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
CA	Congressional Affairs
CAD	Congressional Affairs Division
CAT	Crisis Action Team
CAISE	Civil Affairs and Information Support Element
CBL	Cytogenetic Biodosimetry Laboratory
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CERC	Crisis and Emergency Risk Communications
CI	Critical Infrastructure
CISA	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CME	Coronal Mass Ejection
CMHT	Consequence Management Home Team
CMMG	Planning and Products Manager
CNGB	Chief of the National Guard Bureau
CODEL	Congressional Delegation
COOP	Continuity of Operations
COP	Common Operating Picture
CVSP	Creative Specialist
CS&C	Cybersecurity and Communications
CWMD	Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction
DCE	Defense Coordinating Elements
DCO	Defense Coordinating Officer
DCS	Domestic Communication Strategy
DCS	Daily Communication Summary
DCSA	Defense Support of Civil Authorities
DCSP	Digital Communications Specialist
DHS	Department of Homeland Security

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Definition</i>
DMAT	Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (HHS)
DOD	Department of Defense
DOE	Department of Energy
DOI	Department of Interior
DOJ	Department of Justice
DOS	Department of State
DSAT	Disaster Survivor Assistance Team
D-SNAP	Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
DTRA	Defense Threat Reduction Agency
EAD	External Affairs Director
EAO	External Affairs Officer
EAS	Emergency Alert System
EDEN	Extension Disaster Education Network
EMI	Emergency Management Institute
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERT	Environmental Response Team
ESF	Emergency Support Function
ET	Executive Team
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FCO	Federal Coordinating Officer
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FERN	Food Emergency Response Network
FHCO	Federal Health Coordinating Officer
FISMA	Federal Information Systems Management Act
FMS	Federal Medical Station
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
FRMAC	Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center
FS	Forest Service
FSA	Farm Service Agency
FSIS	Food Safety and Inspection Service
GCC	Government Coordinating Council
GETS	Government Emergency Communications Service
GIPSA	Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration
GSA	General Services Administration
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
HSIN	Homeland Security Information Network
HSPD	Homeland Security Presidential Directive
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
IA	Individual Assistance

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Definition</i>
IAP	Incident Action Plan
ICCT	Incident Community Coordination Call
ICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement
ICMG	Intergovernmental/Congressional Affairs Manager
ICP	Incident Command Post
ICPACC	Incident Communications Public Affairs Coordination Committee
ICS	Incident Command System
ICSP	Intergovernmental/Congressional Affairs Specialist
IGA	Intergovernmental Affairs
IMAAC	Federal Interagency Modeling and Atmospheric Center
IMAT	Incident Management Assistance Team
IMT	Incident Management Team (HHS)
IND	Improvised Nuclear Device
ISAC	Information Sharing and Analysis Center
JFHQ	Joint Force Headquarters
JFO	Joint Field Office
JIC	Joint Information Center
JIS	Joint Information System
JIMG	Joint Information Center Manager
JMD	Department of Justice Management Division
JPASE	Joint Public Affairs Support Element
JTF	Joint Task Force
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
LEP/ACN	Limited English Proficiency/Accessible Communications Needs
LFO	Lead Federal Official
LNO	Liaison Officer
LRN	Laboratory Response Network
MARAD	Maritime Security Administration
MOTR	Maritime Operational Threat Response
MRSP	Media Relations Specialist
NAD	North Atlantic Division (USACE)
NARAC	National Atmospheric Release Advisory Center
NARP	Nuclear Weapon Accident Response Procedures
NBEOC	National Business Emergency Operation Center
NCC	National Coordinating Center
NCC	National Contact Center
NCERT	National Criminal Enforcement Response Team
NCP	National Continuity Programs
NCS	National Communications System
NCTC	National Counterterrorism Center
NDMS	National Disaster Medical System (HHS)
NDRF	National Disaster Recovery Framework
NDT	National Decontamination Team

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Definition</i>
NGB	National Guard Bureau
NIC	National Incident Commander
NICC	National Infrastructure Coordination Center
NICCL	National Incident Communications Coordination Line
NIFA	National Institute of Food and Agriculture
NIFC	National Interagency Fire Center
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NIMS/ICS	National Incident Management System/ Incident Command System
NIPP	National Infrastructure Protection Plan
NIRT	Nuclear Incident Response Team
NJIC	National Joint Information Center
NNSA	National Nuclear Security Administration
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOC	National Operations Center
NORAD	North American Aerospace Defense Command
NRC	Nuclear Regulatory Commission
NRCC	National Response Coordination Center (FEMA)
NRF	National Response Framework
NRT JIC	National Response Team Joint Information Center
NRP	National Response Plan
NRT	National Response Team
NSSE	National Special Security Event
NSTAC	National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee
NTAS	National Terrorism Advisory System
NTNF GCTF	National Technical Nuclear Forensics Ground Collections Task Force (CWMD)
NTSB	National Transportation Safety Board
NVRT	National Veterinary Response Teams (HHS)
NWIR	Nuclear Weapons Incident Response
OASD	Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (DOD)
OAR	Office of Air and Radiation
OC	Office of Communication (White House or USDA)
OEA	Office of External Affairs
OEC	Office of Emergency Communication (DHS)
OEI	Office of Environmental Information (EPA)
OPA	Office of Public Affairs
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
ORISE	Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
OSLTF	Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund
PACL	Public Affairs Conference Line (HHS)
PAG	Protective Action Guide
PAO	Public Affairs Officer

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Definition</i>
PARC	Public Affairs Response Cell
PA	Public Affairs
PAR	Protective Action Recommendation
PICCL	Private Sector Incident Communications Coordination Line
PIO	Public Information Officer
PMSP	Program Liaison Specialist
POC	Point of Contact
PP	Planning and Products (ESF 15)
PSA	Public Service Announcement
PSMA	Pre-Scripted Mission Assignment
PSMG	Private Sector Manager
PSSP	Private Sector Specialist
PSO	Private Sector Office
PPD	Presidential Policy Directive
RAP	Radiological Assistance Program
RDD	Radiological Dispersal Device
REAC/TS	Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site
RED	Radiological Exposure Device
RERT	Radiological Emergency Response Team
RFO	Recovery Field Office
ROE	Rights of Entry
RRCC	Regional Response Coordination Center
RRT	Regional Response Team
RSF	Recovery Support Function
SAC	Special Agents In-Charge
SAD	State Active Duty
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SBA	Small Business Administration
SCC	Sector Coordinating Councils
SCO	State Coordinating Officer
SEO	Senior Energy Official
SHO	Senior Health Official
SICCL	State Incident Communications Coordination Line
SIOC	Special Incident Operations Center (FBI HQ)
SITREP	Situation Report
SLTT	State, Local, Tribal and Territorial
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SOC	Secretary's Operations Center (HHS)
SONS	Spill of National Significance
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SPEEDI	System for Prediction of Environmental Emergency Dose Information (Japan)
SPWC	Space Prediction Weather Center (NOAA)

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Definition</i>
SpaceWOC	Space Weather Operations Center
SRAG	Space Radiation Analysis Group (SRAG)
SSA	Sector Specific Agency
STAFFDEL	Staff Delegation
TCCT	Trauma and Critical Care Teams (HHS)
TCO	Tribal Coordination Officer
TLNO	Tribal Liaison Officer
TSA	Transportation Security Administration
UCG	Unified Coordination Group
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USINDOPACOM	U.S. Indo-Pacific Command
USNORTHCOM	U.S. Northern Command
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VAL	Voluntary Agency Liaison
VIC	Victim Identification Team (HHS)
VISP	Visual Imaging Specialist
VOAD	Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
VTC	Video Teleconference
WHO	World Health Organization
WPS	Wireless Priority Service
WMD-CST	Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team