

**EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION FIFTEEN
PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

PRIMARY AGENCIES: Chelan County Emergency Management
Public Information Officer
Chelan County Commissioners
Mayors

SUPPORT AGENCIES: Public Broadcasting
KPQ (Emergency Alert System Hub)
NOAA National Weather Service
American Red Cross

INTRODUCTION

- A. Purpose
The purpose of this Emergency Support Function (ESF) is to provide guidelines for an efficient and coordinated flow of timely information and instruction to the public using all available communications media prior to, during, and immediately following an emergency or disaster.

- B. Scope
Emergency public information actions before, during and after any emergency will be determined by the severity of the emergency or potential emergency. A significant emergency public information response could involve personnel from all jurisdictions, organizations, and agencies within the county.

POLICIES

- A. Authorities See Basic Plan

- B. Assignment of Responsibilities
 1. A Public Information Officer and alternate will be appointed by the Incident Commander based on the type of emergency/incident that is occurring.
 2. Each response agency must appoint and train a spokesperson who will act as the Incident Commander's PIO at the scene.
 3. Each of the cities within Chelan County are requested to have persons designated and trained as primary and alternate PIOs who could work in the EOC/Joint Information Center (JIC) during the time of a declared emergency.

- C. Situation
 1. Emergency/Disaster Conditions and Hazards

- a. A natural or technological emergency or disaster could occur at anytime within the county.
 2. Assumptions
 - a. An event has occurred, or has been forecast as imminent, which places people and property in danger.
 - b. Technologically caused events and some natural events such as earthquakes may not provide any advanced warning.
 - c. Other natural disasters such as winter storms and flooding can generally be predicted, allowing some time for preparedness actions.
 - d. The event requires response and/or actions by the public in order to eliminate or reduce their exposure to the danger of the event.
- D. Concept of Operations
1. General
 - a. The county and cities are responsible for providing their citizens with information on impending or existing emergencies to include immediate protective action they should take such as sheltering or evacuation.
 - b. A JIC may be activated if the situation warrants. The JIC will likely be located at an off site location, away from the EOC. Agencies involved will staff telephones and coordinate media activities under the supervision of the Public Information Officer.
 - c. If a JIC is not activated, the PIO will carry out his/her assigned duties from the EOC.
 - d. All county agencies and jurisdictions are responsible for providing the PIO with appropriate information about the incident, and actions needed to save lives and protect property. Generally, if a JIC is activated, a representative from each of the involved county agencies will be assigned to the JIC.
 2. Information Support Structure
 - a. During a declared emergency, the PIO will work out of the Chelan County EOC unless a JIC is activated. Media briefings will not be conducted at the EOC due to space and congestion considerations.
 - b. The PIO will keep the State EOC informed of the local situation and of any public affairs assistance that may be needed.
 - c. The State of WA Military Dept., Emergency Management Division will coordinate with federal agencies to keep them

- informed of the situation, and of any assistance that might be needed.
- d. Incident Commanders will appoint a PIO and spokesperson at the incident scene. If no PIO is appointed, the IC will act as spokesperson. Close coordination between the PIO at the scene and the PIO at the EOC/JIC is necessary.
 - e. If an outside agency/organization, such as FEMA, US Forest Service, an airline, etc. sets up a public information office/JIC in Chelan County because of an event, the Chelan County PIO will coordinate with that agency in order to avoid conflicts in information being released. Preferably, the Chelan County PIO or their representative will liaison with the other agency's public information office/JIC, if established.
3. Notification
Appropriate county agencies will be notified when an emergency or disaster has occurred that requires a PIO response, and they will be asked to keep the PIO at the EOC or JIC informed of the situation in their area of responsibility.
4. Emergency Management Activities
- a. All agencies in all jurisdictions are responsible to:
 - (1) Identify and train personnel to implement the public information responsibilities outlined in this ESF.
 - (2) Prepare and coordinate public information resource material that might be needed by their agency during an emergency.
 - (3) Participate in programs to educate the public about hazards caused by emergencies or disasters, and actions people may be asked to take to protect themselves, their property, and the environment.
 - (4) Advise county agencies and jurisdictions of emergency management PIO training that is available.
5. When the Chelan County EOC and/or the JIC are activated, the PIO or their designee coordinates the preparation and release of news regarding the emergency situation. All news releases and status reports will be coordinated with the PIO to reduce release of conflicting information.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Emergency Management
- 1. Recommend activation of the JIC when deemed necessary.
 - 2. Assist the PIO with technical advice and assistance, and recommend training for that person.
 - 3. Assist the PIO in selecting alternates to serve in the EOC.

4. Maintain a media contact list. This list will be kept with the EOC SOP manual.
- B. Public Information Officer
1. The PIO is responsible for the preparation and release of news regarding the emergency situation. Pre-scripted information may be prepared for all types of hazards which may occur in Chelan County.
 2. Obtain approval from the Incident Commander prior to issuance of a press release.
 3. Distribute press releases to all local media using the pre-established contact list. This may be done by using faxes, phone, e-mail or scheduling/conducting briefings, or using messengers.
 4. Plan, schedule, and coordinate briefings or news conferences for the media.
 5. Coordinate with the State EOC PIO and provide WA EMD with copies of all press releases issued.
 6. If a Federal Disaster Recovery Assistance Center is established in the county, the PIO will continue to coordinate the release of news throughout the recovery phase.
 7. Provide information concerning individual and public assistance when available.
 8. If the activation of the Emergency Alert System is deemed necessary, it will be approved by the Emergency Manager or Incident Commander and activated through RiverCom or WA EMD.
 9. Prepare recorded messages for the emergency information hotline as necessary.
- C. Chelan County Commissioners and/or Mayors
1. Legislative authorities will remind all of their departments to clear any releases to the media or public through the County PIO in order to prevent release of conflicting information and to assist with rumor control.
- D. American Red Cross
1. The American Red Cross will be responsible for sheltering, feeding and registering displaced persons. They may also coordinate volunteers who wish to assist in the response and/or the recovery efforts. The PIO will maintain contact with the Red Cross and coordinate information to the public about the services that are being provided.
- E. All county and city agencies and departments will notify the PIO of any requests for information from any of the media, and of any material or reports they provide to the media.

- F. If an evacuation of part, or all, of the county becomes necessary due to an emergency, the PIO has the primary role in disseminating instructions to the public. Special situations dealing with evacuation are found in ESF 13 – Public Safety, Law Enforcement, and Security.

APPENDIX

- A. Joint Information Center Operations

Appendix A

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER OPERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

1. Protection of the public health and safety in the event of a major emergency or disaster requires many local, state, federal, and private industry organizations to provide accurate and timely information to the public. Effectively and rapidly communicating what happened, what is being done in response and what the public needs to do to protect itself is the primary task of the Public Information Officer (PIO) of the agencies responding to the emergency.
2. Public welfare calls for a coherent, overall response to an emergency and at the same time, clarity in what may be differing messages from responding jurisdictions. A community's information system must be able to provide the public with the information they need in order to cope with the emergency situation. The coordination of this information and its timely dissemination is extremely important.
3. Gathering and disseminating emergency information in a multi-jurisdictional response requires a well organized coordination process. When jurisdiction PIOs coordinate with each other from their respective emergency operations centers, with the community, or by providing media with a single information source, they are using a Joint Information Center (JIC).

B. Intent

1. To provide implementing procedures for the activation of the Chelan County JIC during emergency responses and other situations in which multiple organizations need to collaborate to provide timely, accurate, and useful information to the public and other stakeholders.

SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. Situation

1. Upon receipt of information of an impending local emergency or intensifying national crisis, a decision may be made to enhance activation of the Chelan County Emergency Operations Center.
2. Centralized county/state coordination and dissemination of factual, official information helps assure a well-informed public, avoid or minimize the release of incorrect information, and deflate rumors.

3. Should the JIC be activated, it may operate near the EOC, but normally will not be at the EOC.
4. In major emergency or disaster situations there may be a large number of media representatives seeking information about the situation and about response actions. It is the intent of the Chelan County Emergency Management Office to cooperate fully with the media in all phases of emergency management.
5. A major emergency or disaster will attract regional and national media representatives which may necessitate the activation of a JIC staffed by PIO-trained personnel.

B. Assumptions

1. When activated, the JIC becomes the primary tool for facilitating the release of information to the media, as well as to the citizens of the affected area.
2. During emergency situations and disasters, the general public and media will require information about the emergency situation and instruction on proper response actions.
3. When the JIC is activated, it is in the process of starting up or preparing to open. When the JIC is operational it is responding to requests for information and officially open and ready for business. The JIC may be declared operational once the necessary personnel and equipment are in place.
4. The local media will perform an essential role in providing emergency instructions and up-to-date information to the public.
5. Depending on the severity of the emergency, or the media's perception of the severity of the emergency, regional and national media may also cover the story and require information and comment from local officials.
6. Our capability to provide information will be overwhelmed if sufficient staff are not provided and if sufficient planning is not completed to accommodate media and public needs.
7. Upon activation, the JIC will organize to accommodate the work space and office needs of each responding agency. However, the facility for the Chelan County JIC may not be reasonably equipped to handle multiple agencies. Agency PIOs should be prepared to provide their own equipment, such as laptop computers and printers, as needed, although some may be available at the JIC.
8. In order to provide an organizational framework in the JIC, a team approach to management, coordination and dissemination has been developed.
9. The JIC will be equipped with enough communications resources to ensure the timely and accurate gathering and dissemination of information.

10. The public relies on the JIC concept. All media use the center to receive official news, information, instructions and procedures should a local incident or severe national crisis occur.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. Public Information Response Activities

1. The overriding concept of the Chelan County JIC is that each individual represents his or her own agency, and at the same time participates in a coordinated public information approach.
2. A JIC is a co-located group of representatives from organizations and agencies involved in an event that are designated to handle public information needs. The JIC structure is designed to work equally well for large or small situations and can expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident. JIC activation will be recommended by the EOC Manager or Incident Commander.
3. When public or private agencies and organizations come together to respond to an emergency event, efficient information flow is critical to effectively carry out the PIO responsibilities and meet expectations of the public. A JIC is a centralized location that serves to achieve that information flow.
4. Throughout the emergency, the JIC Manager will provide internal briefings, reconcile conflicts and provide a forum to discuss issues relating to the JIC process.
5. The JIC will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week if needed and as able, with scheduled hours of operation being determined by the JIC Manager in consultation with agency PIOs and JIC staff.
6. All response agencies unable to locate within the JIC will be encouraged to coordinate and disseminate copies of their press releases to and through the JIC. Other agency PIOs may fill support positions within the JIC.
7. Statements that include reporting on actions by other jurisdictions will normally be coordinated within the JIC with the appropriate organization(s) prior to release.
8. The JIC will make available to the media all information received from other organizations, as appropriate.
9. JIC staff will assist agencies in responding to inquiries. They will answer all news media inquiries for which there is releasable information available, and refer news media inquiries to the appropriate agency's PIO.
10. The JIC Manager will facilitate overall policy guidance and operations for the JIC, and will coordinate, as needed, with the lead agency in the JIC, if one is designated.
11. The emergency public information staff may be called upon to warn the public about evacuations and other significant emergency requirements. In this case, the emergency public information

organization's representatives will fully mobilize and disseminate emergency instructions and information to the public in the following order of priority:

- a. Lifesaving/health preservation instructions
- b. Emergency status information
- c. Other useful information originated by the government or in response to media inquiries.

B. Organization

The JIC Organizational structure is based on functions that generally must be performed whether a person is handling a routine emergency or managing communications for a major response to a disaster. For proper coordination in a major emergency or disaster, it is essential that emergency public information be released from a single point to assure consistency and authenticity. The establishment of a JIC will avoid multiple releasing points.

1. At emergency incidents, on-scene PIOs will release information from a single location. It is desirable that the public information representatives from other involved agencies join the PIO at the scene in releasing information through a single coordination point on-scene. All information releases will be coordinated by the PIO with final approval given by the Incident Commander.
2. The PIO (at the EOC/JIC) will coordinate information releases from the emergency and stay in contact with the PIO on scene and other agency PIOs.
3. Goals of the JIC
 - a. Provide confirmed, accurate, and consistent public information
 - b. Provide the public with one contact base for all departments, governments, medical facilities, and public utilities
 - c. Answer media calls and requests
 - d. Set up news conferences, brief executives, and notify the media
 - e. Write press releases, advisories, statements, and speeches, as requested
 - f. Provide rumor and damage control