# ANNEX D: Public Information /External Affairs
## ESF #14

## Introduction

Public Information consists of the processes, procedures, and systems to communicate timely, accurate, and accessible information on the incident. Public information must be coordinated and integrated across all impacted jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations; at all levels of government. This plan will develop procedures and policies to support the Public Information/External Affairs function for a combined local, State, and Federal response to a catastrophic event in Florida, especially for a catastrophic hurricane. All phases of emergency management will be addressed, including preparation, response, and recovery. This plan builds upon the Emergency Support Function 14 (Public Information) section of the *Florida State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan* (CEMP), local CEMPs, the *Florida Catastrophic Plan* (DRAFT) and the *Joint Information Center (JIC) and Joint Information System (JIS) Guidelines*[1]. This plan will identify the triggers to indicate when to initiate actions for a potential catastrophic hurricane event.

## Roles and Responsibilities

PIOs at all levels of government are responsible for communicating essential emergency information to local populations in two general forms:

- *Crisis Communication* informs the public about the emergency, reviews the government's responses, directs the public to sources of assistance, and recommends protective actions.

- *Risk Communication* is a critical component of crisis communications. Risk communication is the process of informing and influencing the public's actions to avoid risks. Risk communicators describe known risks; identify the probable negative outcomes associated with taking certain actions, and recommend ways of avoiding risk.

Public communication during a crisis or emergency is more challenging than normal or day-to-day communications. Factors contributing to the challenge of public communication in an emergency are:

- Multi-agency Coordination;
- Compressed timeframes;
- Situational uncertainty-especially in the early stages of a crisis; and
- A stressed and emotionally strained public.

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[1] This protocol provides public information officers (PIO) with a framework for crisis and risk communications planning. This protocol is written to guide public information activities during extraordinary incidents where incident command has been established, and the demand for public information will likely exceed the resources and capabilities of local jurisdictions. Approved by the Domestic Security Oversight Council March 2, 2010.

**Basic Public Information Responsibilities**

The basic functions of a public information operation are, as follows:
- Respond to inquiries from the news media and the public
- Monitor the news media to detect and correct misinformation and identify emerging communication trends or issues
- Advise the Incident Commander on public information issues and advocate for the community to ensure public information needs are met
- Manage the release of emergency public information and warnings
- Coordinate, clear with appropriate authorities, and disseminate accurate and timely information related to the incident
- Ensure equipment and personnel are sufficient to meet the public information need
- Constantly inform and apprise elected officials, agency heads and other leaders as to the status of the incident

Depending on the size of the incident, these functions may be accomplished by one PIO or a team of PIOs within a Joint Information Center (JIC).

**Joint Information System and Joint Information Centers**

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) defines a Joint Information Center (JIC) as *"the physical location where public information staff involved in incident management activities can collocate to perform critical emergency information, crisis communications, and public affairs functions".* When PIOs work cooperatively to issue accurate and timely information to the impacted public, they are often organized at a fixed facility as a JIC. The JIC operates within the larger network of information management that constitutes the Joint Information System (JIS). In Florida, the standard for organizing multi-agency public information as a JIS is set by the Florida Comprehensive Emergency Plan (CEMP). It is assigned the responsibility to oversee public information needs during large-scale incidents.

Under the Emergency Support Function (ESF) operating structure, ESF 14 (Public Information) coordinates public information operations with the county's municipalities and other agencies involved in a disaster, as well as with state and federal agency public information programs.
The incident's lead agency will determine the need to implement a JIC based on the complexity of the incident and the need to ensure coordination and integration of messages from multiple agencies. During widespread and prolonged disasters, multiple Joint Information Centers (JICs) may be formed as part of the JIS.

**Establishing a JIC**

It is recognized that public information needs vary by incident. However, a JIC may be established in the following cases:
- When the IC of a large-scale incident determines the public information needs will exceed available resources.
- The incident will be long-term, and will generate intense local, state, national and possibly international news media.
- The incident or event involves multiple jurisdictions and/or disciplines.

- When the (city/county) Emergency Operations Center is activated.

A JIC is commonly in one location, with 15-30 people working out of a single facility. An incident might be long-term and attract national news media attention, thus depleting the resources of the affected agency. A JIC can be tailored to fit the needs of the incident.

The JIC is responsible for interfacing with the public and news media and/or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements. The JIC develops accurate and complete information on the incident's cause, size, and current situation; resources committed; and other matters of general interest for internal and external audiences.

The JIC is organized to manage and facilitate the flow of information to the news media and the public. The JIC satisfies the immediate local, regional, national and sometimes international demand for information. The JIC meets the needs of the public and the news media by pooling PIO assets. Effective coordination of these assets provides the public and news media with fast, accurate information. PIOs at the JIC continue to represent their respective agencies, while at the same time receiving the benefits of a coordinated public information approach. During a JIC operation, agency spokespersons are autonomous; no agency has authority over another. However, JIC members work together and support one another.

A JIC is most successful when the agency PIOs working within it are capable of effective cooperation and communication. PIOs working in a JIC must have the professional skills and abilities to share their agency's public information objectives, their knowledge, and their work products.

Benefits of a JIC include:
- Fact-checking and coordinating information among agencies before issuing news releases
- Holding joint news conferences
- Providing "one stop shopping" for the news media with all information coming from a single place

JIC responsibilities:
- Develop, recommend and execute public information plans and strategies on behalf of the Incident Commander(s)
- Continuously inform elected officials, agency directors, etc. of the incident status
- Gain and maintain public trust and confidence
- Be the primary source of information
- Gather information about the crisis
- Ensure the timely and coordinated release of accurate information to the public by providing a single location from which information is released
- Coordinate with regional, state, national public information agencies
- Monitor public perception of the crisis
- Monitor news programming to ensure accurate release of information
- Inform the Incident Commander(s) of public reaction, attitude and needs
- Advise the Incident Commander about public affairs issues that could impact the response
- Monitor and control rumors/inaccurate information
- Plan and implement communications plan for recovery

For all incidents, the responsibility for meeting the public information needs falls upon the lead agency and/or jurisdiction. The PIO from that agency becomes the Lead PIO. However, the lead agency may delegate the responsibility for public information to another agency, assuming they've obtained concurrence from the agency to which they want to delegate the responsibility for public information. For example, an agency without a full-time or professional PIO may ask to delegate the work of public information to the county government PIO and that PIO's public information staff.

The Lead PIO, in conjunction with the Incident Commander (IC), should assess public information needs on an-ongoing basis and determine if staffing and resources are sufficient to meet the demands. If the Lead PIO and/or IC determine that the public information needs will exceed the lead agency's resources, it can request additional PIO support from agencies involved in the incident, local PIO networks, the Regional Domestic Security Task Force (RDSTF), PIO Cooperative or Public Information Networks (PIN) or the local EOC.

In all cases, when requesting additional PIO resources, the lead agency must ensure that PIO resources are managed effectively and have a clear understanding of the public information needs.

**PIO Position Typing**

To assist with determining the type of public information officers needed to assist, the following "typing" of PIOs is based upon guidelines established by the State of Florida Working Group, as follows:
- **Type I PIO** will be qualified to serve as Lead PIO.
- **Type II PIO** can serve in any capacity deemed necessary by the Lead PIO, however, should not serve as Lead PIO. Also, when and where practical, the Type II PIO should not be deployed alone, on an event.
- **Type III PIO** may or may not meet the above requirements and is not eligible for deployment, however, may provide support services to a JIC during a local event.

**Location of the JIC**

The Joint Information Center (JIC) is the designated location from which public information is coordinated and released. The decision of where to locate a JIC will be made by the Lead PIO in consultation with Incident Command and the Logistics Section (if established).

The JIC functions best when all components are co-located. The location of the JIC can be predetermined, if possible, and the site should be evaluated to ensure:
It is large enough to accommodate sufficient staff
It has telecommunications support
It has computer and other Information Technology support
It has ample parking
If possible, has a PIO work area separate from a news conference news media area

It is important that proximity to Incident Command should be considered when determining the appropriate JIC facility. This is important for the Lead PIO and other spokespersons that will need to address the news media in news conferences. Unfortunately with the unpredictability of

disasters, a pre-determined JIC site is not always feasible and IC and PIOs needs to be flexible when activating and trying to staff a JIC for an incident.

A JIC can be tailored to meet the needs of the incident. An event might be long-term and attract national news media attention, thus swamping the resources of the affected agency. However, a smaller version of the JIC could be implemented depending on the situation and need.

**Establishing a Virtual JIC**

A widespread event, such as Hurricane Phoenix, might require that PIOs stay in their respective areas due to intense damage to local infrastructure. In these conditions, PIOs coordinate their activity by means of radios, phones, e-mail and the Internet as a *Virtual JIC*. A Virtual JIC links all participants through technological means when geographical restrictions, incident management requirements, and other limitations preclude physical attendance by PIOs at one central location.

**JIC Procedures**

Each organization covered by the JIC protocol should develop procedures and specific action-oriented checklists for use during incident management operations to accomplish its assigned tasks. Procedures are documented and implemented with;

- Checklists; resource listings; maps, charts, and other pertinent data;
- Mechanisms for notifying staff; processes for obtaining and using equipment, supplies, and vehicles;
- Methods of obtaining mutual aid;
- Mechanisms for reporting information to organizational work centers and EOCs; and
- Communications operating instructions, including connectivity with private-sector and nongovernmental organizations
- Procedures for the mobilization, staffing and operation of a Mobile JIC, if available within the region.

**Announcing the JIC**
It is very important that the location of the JIC be announced as quickly as possible for the benefit of the response organizations and the media. The formal establishment of a JIC is a critical step toward consolidating media activities for the benefit of the total response.

**Existing MOUs/MOAs**

- Florida Association of Public Information Officers Deployment Procedures as outlined in Regional Domestic Security Task Force Joint Information Center (JIC) Guidelines
- Florida Association of Public Information Officers deployment team handbook (Appendix D-2)
- National Incident Management System

## Basic Planning Assumptions[2]

1. The nature and scope of a catastrophic incident will immediately overwhelm State and Local response capabilities, this requires that counties understand and be able to clearly articulate their resource needs.

2. The assets outlined in response strategies may not be available at the time of a catastrophic event due to needs at their home institution, family requirements, etc.

3. A catastrophic incident will present a dynamic response and recovery environment requiring that response plans and strategies be flexible enough to effectively address emerging or transforming needs and requirements.

4. Traditional methods of distributing information will not be available.

5. Communication networks will be disabled for an extended period of time.

6. The lack of fuel resources will inhibit the mobility of media in and out of the impacted area, resulting in a greater need of media monitoring to ensure accurate information is reaching the intended audiences.

7. There will be a portion of the population that will not evacuate and will remain in the affected area, even if in a mandatory evacuation zone.

8. A number of evacuees will be in a "tailgating" situation both before and after a hurricane landfall.

9. Public Information Officers will need access to air intelligence to determine where people are clustering, in addition to information provided by operational resources.

10. Written messaging will be sent with responders, including Federal Emergency Management Agency representatives and assessment teams, for distribution to the population.

11. People will congregate at any functional building and it will become an ad hoc shelter. Messaging and information needs to be provided.

12. VIP visits will continue through response operations, which will impact Public Information Officer staffing and resources.

13. There will be a need for mutual aid and resources from out of the impact area.

14. There will be competition for resources.

15. Media outlets will have internal communications failures, which may affect outgoing messages and reports.

16. News releases from the impact area may not be sent immediately post-event until deployed resources arrive.

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[2] **Catastrophic Incident Supplement to the National Response Plan** (2005) and **Florida Catastrophic Plan**, 2009.

17. There will likely be a need to prepare for cultural/political issues and sensitivities among various groups and entities.

18. For any "notice event," the Governor will make an emergency declaration prior to landfall.

19. For a major hurricane threat, there will be a Federal emergency declaration made prior to landfall.

20. Communication with residents who self-evacuated before the initial impact will be necessary in media markets away from the impact area. This would likely include media markets in neighboring states.

## Additional Issue Points[3]

- Do agency Public Information Officers (PIOs) and back ups have up to date checklists, phone trees, and other operational references to ensure they are equipped to effectively do their job?
- Do PIOs understand the established JIS/JIC protocol?
- Are "canned" messages standardized? Appendix D-3 has topic areas for Pre-Scripted Messages by Function Area
- What are the mechanisms employed to release information to the public?  How will this be impacted during a catastrophic incident?
- What are the mechanisms that will be employed to limit panic and rumors to limit the possibility of civil disturbances?
- Need to identify where tactical resources, including mobile Joint Information Centers, are located and how to access/deploy them.
- Need to incorporate different responders into resource request to avoid multiple requests.
- May be mitigated by working directly with the local representative that is on scene and providing official information to media outlets through the mobile Joint Information Centers or otherwise identified locations.
- Deployed responders need to have resources necessary to establish lines of communication either to media outlets directly or to unaffected areas for relay.

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[3] *Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina,* 2007 and the *Florida Catastrophic Plan (Draft)* 2008
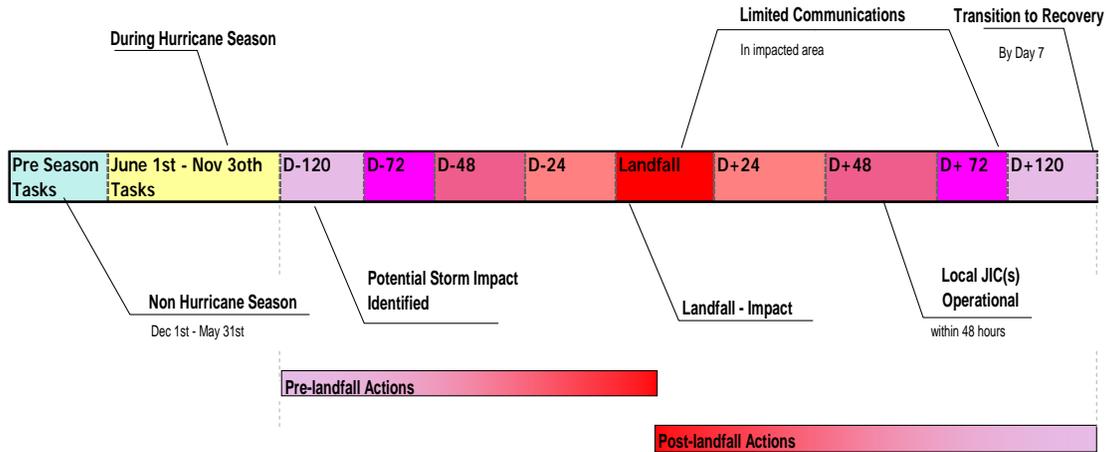
## Operations: Roles and Responsibilities

| Level | Primary Agency | Support Agencies |
|---|---|---|
| National[1] | Department of Homeland Security/Emergency Preparedness and Response/Federal Emergency Management Agency | All |
| State | Executive Office of the Governor, Office of Communications | Florida Division of Emergency Management, Agency for Persons With Disabilities, Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Department of Children and Families, The Department of Community Affairs, Department of Corrections, Department of Education, Department of Elder Affairs, Enterprise Florida, Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Department of Health, Agency for Health Care Administration, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Management Services, Department of Lottery, Department of Revenue, Department of State, Department of Transportation, Department of Veterans Affairs, Agency for Workforce Innovation, Florida National Guard, Florida Fire Chiefs' Association, and WFSU-TV / The Florida Channel. |
| Regional | RDSTF | See Regional JIC Protocols |
| Citrus | Citrus County Sheriff's Office | Citrus County Board of County Commissioners Citrus County Emergency Management Section All ESF Primary Agencies |
| Hardee | Hardee County Emergency Management/Public Safety | Hardee County Office of Community Development The City of Bowling Green The City of Wauchula The Town of Zolfo Springs |
| Hernando | Hernando County Administration (Community Relations Coordinator) | Hernando County Sheriff's Office PIO Hernando County Human Resources Hernando County Emergency Management The American Red Cross |
| Hillsborough | Communications Department | Emergency Management |
| Manatee | Manatee County Public Safety Department | County Administrators Office Manatee County Chapter American Red Cross Manatee County Convention and Visitors Bureau Manatee County Sheriff's Office Manatee County School Board All other ESF Primary Agencies |

| Level | Primary Agency | Support Agencies |
|---|---|---|
| Pasco (ESF15) | EOC Public Affairs Office | Office of Emergency Management (OEM), Fire/Rescue, Sheriff's Office, Utilities, Stormwater, Education, Dept. of Health, Human Services |
| Pinellas | Department of Communications | All law enforcement agencies and fire departments/ districts |
| Polk | Support Services Group (Communications Division) | Public Safety Department (Emergency Management Division) Polk County Sheriff's Office Polk County School Board Central Florida Development Council United Way (Information And Referral Service) Hall Communications Group (Radio Station WONN/ WPCV - EAS Affiliate) |

## FIGURE D-1 Public Information Timeline

**TASKS**
**Phase 1: Before Hurricane Season and Prior to Potential Threat Assessment**

| Tasks |
| --- |
| Prepare and release "survivor" messaging to instill a culture of "survivor" vs. "victim," including the use of video vignettes and other methods. |
| Provide a news release from the State Emergency Operations Center to reinforce the message of preparedness and self-sufficiency. |
| Provide public service announcements regarding personal responsibility. |
| Reinforce messages regularly using all types of media, including social media such as YouTube and blogging. |
| Update (gather) cell phone numbers or other information for text messaging emergency alerts. |
| Maintain contact and conduct training with all deployable resources and key media points of contact. |
| Ensure local Public Information Officers are on appropriate and current distribution lists as applicable. |
| Conduct periodic maintenance of tactical equipment. |
| Identify and maintain inventory of AM/FM radios and batteries (as needed) and printed materials supplies. |
| Annual training for Public Information Officers will include the following: <br> ▪ Exercising resource equipment <br> ▪ Reviewing and updating fact sheets and messaging for public service announcements, as well as fact sheets, talking points, and camera points for agency representatives that may be speaking to the media <br> ▪ Ensuring deployable resource contact information is current including language capabilities <br> ▪ Joint Information Center familiarity <br> ▪ Ensuring credentials, travel cards, etc. are current |
| Pre-brief and educate government officials and others as needed for expectation management. |
| Pre-brief and educate media outlets to include pre-event clearance for media representatives that will be doing tours of affected areas. |
| Pre-brief and educate the public sector. |
| Local resources should identify multilingual persons to assist with public information. |
| Review procedures for EM Constellation tracking and routing for mission assignment training. |
| Provide Continuity of Operations/Continuity of Government training for State Media Partners to increase likelihood of post-disaster stabilization. |
| Establish points of contact with neighboring State Emergency Management Agencies to develop relationships and procedures for distribution of messages, to establish memorandums of understanding for support, etc. |
| Identify vendors to supply and/or seek funding to purchase battery-operated radios in large quantities for distribution to vulnerable populations. |

## TASKS
### Phase 2: Potential Storm Impact Identified (D -72 hours)

| Tasks |
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| To be added to the information release distribution list, local Public Information Officers should contact the State Emergency Operations Center counterpart to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's External Affairs Officer. |
| Identify potential mutual aid resources and activate Mutual Aid Agreements. |
| Request Public Information Officer support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency through mission assignment. |
| Activate call-down tree with Florida State Agencies for Public Information Office support. |
| Determine what capabilities the Florida National Guard will have to support the Public Information Office mission for a catastrophic event. (If Florida National Guard is activated or unavailable, request mission assigned to the Department of Defense for additional National Guard Support for Public Information Officer personnel). |
| Coordinate public information needs with all appropriate Emergency Support Functions. |
| For mass evacuation, coordinate Public Information Officer at embarkation and debarkation sites and ensure information flow to relocated population. |
| Once the State Emergency Operations Center goes to Level 2 activation or at D -72 hours (whichever is first), the deployment team coordinates with the State Public Information Officer and places team members on standby. |
| The trigger for resource movement is the receipt of a message number (prior to mission tasking number). |
| |
| |
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## TASKS
### Phase 3: Pre-Landfall (D +0 to D +24 hours)

| Tasks |
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| Request any available AM radios and deploy to the projected impact area. |
| Issue releases on emergency preparations and life/safety issues. |
| Issue release on staging of material. |
| Establish Public Information Officer work schedule. |
| Local Public Information Officers conduct assessment of their needs. |
| Mission requests made as needed |
| Deployment Team Coordinator makes contact with local Public Information Officer upon receipt of message number |
| Mission tracking numbers assigned |
| MIR3 alert to fill mission assignments |
| Upon arrival, deployed Public Information Officer should operate in accordance with the Florida Association of Public Information Officers deployment team handbook |
| Determine if Emergency Management Assistance Compact is needed. |
| Activate appropriate satellite and TAC phones. |
| Establish (local/State) Joint Information Center as per Regional Domestic Security Task Force Joint Information Center guidelines. |

| Tasks |
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| Conduct or support local press briefing. |
| Coordinate and assist with external affairs as needed. |
| Identify air support for intelligence. |
| Identify media access restrictions (when, where, how, who). |
| Coordinate access with Law Enforcement, Search and Rescue, National Guard, Health Department, Department of Transportation, and the Department of Environmental Protection. |

**TASKS**
*Phase 4: D +24 and continuing*

| Tasks |
|---|
| Schedule local press briefings. |
| Continually reassess the situation. |
| Prepare for VIP visits. |
| Collect damage assessment/loss assessment data (numbers, statistics), including fatalities and injuries. |
| Release information on mobilization areas for logistics and commodities, without getting too specific but enough to highlight movement of resources. |
| It is important not to announce specific times and locations until a confirmation of commodities is received and operations are running. A general message may be better (e.g., "The Disaster Recovery Center will be open within the next 48 hours. More information to follow."). |
| There may not be personnel authorized to be media representatives at each location for a given agency. Request for an authorized person to represent the agency should be made from the media center to the respective agency. |
| Provide follow-on releases to the staging areas concerning how materials will be sent into the impacted areas. |
| Publish locations of points of distribution when they are operational in the affected area; use various methods to get this information out, such as radios, leaflets where practical, patrols with sound systems, and military aircraft with sound systems. |
| Include AM/FM radios at Disaster Recovery Center and other public support locations that are open. They will become public listening locations where people can get information. Broadcasts may need to be bilingual or multilingual to accommodate the local population as needed. |
| When the Joint Field Office is established, local Public Information Officers should contact the State representative at the Joint Field Office in order to be added to the information distribution list as a Public Information Officer, if not already on the list. |

**Long Term Tasks**
**Phase 5: Recovery (D + 120 and beyond)**

| Tasks |
|---|
| Identify support personnel through Emergency Management Assistance Compact requests and other avenues to support staffing needs. |
| Identify positions for volunteers and a method to move those personnel. |
| Survey damage to media outlets and develop timeline for power and transmitter restoration. |