

# **ESF 15 - External Affairs Annex, 2015**

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- Coordinating Agency :** PA Governor's Office of Communications/Press
- Primary Agency(ies) :** PA Governor's Office of Communications/Press
- Support Agency(ies) :** PA Department of Health  
 PA Department of Aging  
 PA Department of Community and Economic Development  
 PA Department of Revenue  
 PA Fire Commissioner's Office  
 PA State Police  
 PA Public Television Network Commission  
 PA Department of Human Services  
 PA Department of Agriculture  
 PA Department of Education  
 PA Department of Transportation  
 PA Department of Labor & Industry  
 PA Department of State  
 PA Office of Homeland Security  
 PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
 PA Department of General Services  
 PA Department of Corrections  
 PA Office of Administration  
 PA Department of Military & Veterans Affairs  
 PA Historical & Museum Commission  
 PA Department of Banking and Securities

## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Purpose**

1. To establish procedures and protocols for Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs to support Commonwealth of Pennsylvania incident management during an incident of state significance or incidents requiring a coordinated commonwealth response. ESF #15 integrates Public Affairs, Legislative Affairs, County and Local government coordination, Community Relations and the Private Sector under the coordinating auspices of external affairs.

### **B. Scope of Operations**

1. All agencies under the Governor's jurisdiction will support the procedures outlined in this ESF. Municipal (county and local) officials and public affairs personnel should coordinate the release of essential information to the media for dissemination to the public using these procedures as well.

2. The ESF #15 team will utilize this SOP as procedural guidance for activating, establishing, and operating the Commonwealth external affairs operation. A central feature of this concept, consistent with the incident command system, is a unified planning component that brings unity of effort to all strategic communications planning and product development.

## **II. Situation and Assumptions**

### **A. Situation**

1. Public information needs are subject to rapid change during the threat and actual occurrence of a disaster.
2. During an emergency, information delivered through the Emergency Alert System (EAS) or mass media may direct actions, give instructions and transmit direct orders from existing authority aimed at saving lives and minimizing damage.

### **B. Assumptions**

1. The public is prone to receive and accept as valid, rumors, hearsay and half-truth information that may cause panic, fear and confusion. It is the responsibility of the government to provide a consistent, accurate picture of the disaster situation, hazards facing the community, actions being taken and recommended protective actions for individual citizens.

## **III. Concept of Operations**

### **A. General**

1. In an actual or potential emergency, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) will coordinate a flow of official information and instructions to the general public, through the State Emergency Operations Center. This will be accomplished through the ESF #15 Lead.

### **B. Organization**

1. The JIC will oversee the key function of media relations and public information dissemination and assure the unity of effort among all key participants/agencies.
2. Coordinate all messages.
3. Provide incident-related lifesaving and life sustaining information through the media and other sources to individuals, families, businesses, and industries directly or indirectly affected by the incident.

4. Conduct news conferences and news briefings.
5. Monitor news coverage to ensure accurate information.
6. Respond to rumors and inaccurate reports.
7. Coordinate special projects/events. Staff will handle events such as news conferences, press briefings and tours for senior officials. Works as the point of contact for all protocol issues and for organizing and planning all VIP visits.
8. Provide still photography documentation of the response to support print and internet media needs. Responsible for maintaining a photographic database.
9. When the emergency situation involves multiple agencies, political subdivisions, or entities, a JIC will be activated as a central location for the coordination and dissemination of emergency public information. JIC activities ensure the coordinated and timely release of incident-related prevention, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation information to the public. ESF #15 provides the interagency coordination mechanisms and resource support for Commonwealth JIC activities. The JIC will be activated by the Governor's Press Office/PEMA Press Secretary at the request of the Director of PEMA or designated Incident Manager.
10. All disaster related public information originating from state departments and agencies will be coordinated with and/or released through the JIC.
11. When the disaster is common to two or more counties, disaster related information will be coordinated with and/or released through the JIC.
12. When the magnitude of the disaster places undue burden on county or local emergency management information officials, the JIC may relocate all or a part of its operation to the affected areas (Forward JIC).
13. When the State Incident Management Team (IMT) is deployed to an incident location, a public information officer may travel as part of that team and serve either as a Forward JIC or a Liaison Officer to the JIC.
14. The Community Relations (CR) program provides the vital information link between PEMA, county and local communities, and those affected by disasters. This mission can be carried out with the assistance of Community Relations Specialists in the Department of Environmental Protection and Community Relations Coordinators within the Department of Transportation. The Citizen Corps program and other community groups may be utilized to carry out the CR function as well.
15. Community Relations functions to assist disaster victims and affected communities in accessing assistance, and gathering information from affected communities to guide response and recovery efforts.
16. Identify geographic, demographic, and economic areas that are most affected by the incident.

17. Identify pertinent community based organizations (CBO) that can assist with dissemination of information to target audiences and establish an ongoing dialogue with leadership within those organizations.
18. Establish strategies to reach those individuals or groups that may not be reached by CBOs and/or conventional media.
19. Implement the Speaker's Bureau and coordinate public presentations, individual meetings and special events.
20. Legislative/Congressional Affairs provides information to the members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly and member of the U.S. Congress representing affected areas. It addresses incident related questions, concerns, and problems expressed by their constituents.
21. The purpose of the Legislative/Congressional Affairs component is to coordinate the exchange of information between the State Emergency Operations Center and members of the U.S. Congress, PA General Assembly, local officials, their staffs, and legislative committees representing the affected areas by fostering a positive and continuous dialogue.
22. Legislative/Congressional Affairs will educate, build relationships, direct energies, and manage expectations throughout the response phase of the incident.
23. Establish advisory and notification procedures for the coordinated release of response information to legislative offices.
24. In a Presidentially Declared Major Disaster or Emergency, public information concerning federal assistance and the location and operation of the disaster recovery centers (DRCs) is the shared responsibility of public information officers assigned to Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) and Commonwealth Coordinating Officer (CCO) staffs.
25. The PEMA Press Secretary and county and municipal government public information officers will assist the federal public information officer to the maximum extent possible.
26. Answer inquiries from the public.
27. Act as a media monitoring group to monitor media broadcasts to ensure accuracy of released information.

## **IV. Responsibilities**

### **A. Coordinating Agency**

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

1. The Governor's Office of Communications and Press will initially release all information concerning a disaster. Upon the direction of the Governor or the Governor's Director of Communications, the public information function will pass to the PEMA Press Secretary.
2. Provide overall policy guidance for public information activities associated with commonwealth emergency operations.
3. Provide support, as requested by PEMA, to press centers established in the vicinity of the State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC), at any PEMA regional office or at a temporary field EOC.

## **B. Support Agencies**

1. Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
  - a. In accordance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), coordinate and integrate public information activities across federal, state and local jurisdictions and with private-sector and non-governmental organization through participation in a Joint Information Center (JIC).
  - b. Receive, compile and prepare authoritative information on all phases of disaster planning and operations for evaluation and release.
  - c. Coordinate the release of disaster related information to the public with the federal government; state departments, agencies and offices; and the American Red Cross; and other non-profit organizations as needed.
  - d. Keep the Governor or his designee (i.e.: Chief-of-Staff, Deputy Chief-of-Staff) informed.
  - e. Prepare media releases and explanatory information for transmission to the media.
  - f. Establish area information center(s) as required.
  - g. Establish and operate the Joint Information Center (JIC). See Figure 15- 1.
  - h. Coordinate and administer the statewide Emergency Alert System (EAS) and any subsequent alerting and notification systems.
  - i. Coordinate and administer a system using telecommunications and satellite technology to transmit commonwealth media briefings in real time to locations throughout the state.
  - j. Coordinate all functions outlined under Concept of Operations.
2. Department of General Services/Commonwealth Media Services
  - a. CMS will establish the capability to transmit, via satellite communications, commonwealth press conferences and briefings from various locations including the Commonwealth Media Center and provide a staff.
  - b. CMS will have photography and or videography responsibility as needed (i.e.: Aerial photography if necessary).

3. Pennsylvania State Police
  - a. Assist PEMA in the dissemination of essential disaster information and instructions by means of the Commonwealth Law Enforcement Assistance Network and other State Police facilities.
  - b. Report information on fatalities during emergencies and provide that information to the DOH EPLO at the SEOC.
  - c. Aerial support for incident over flies if needed.
4. Department of Environmental Protection
  - a. Provide PEMA with staff to execute Community Relations mission.
5. Department of Transportation
  - a. Provide PEMA with staff to execute Community Relations mission.
6. Other State Departments and Agencies
  - a. In addition to the responsibilities outlined above all state departments/agencies participating in the response or possessing the capability are to be prepared to furnish professionally qualified personnel to staff the Joint Information Center, on request and to utilize the JIC for all incident related disaster information dissemination.

## **V. Administration and Logistics**

### **A. Administration**

1. Provides administrative support to the ESF #15 function.

### **B. Logistics**

1. PEMA will provide or coordinate for a physical location for the JIC. The ESF #15 External Affairs Officer and Resource Manager must prepare and provide detailed requirements as soon as practical to assure the rapid establishment and support of the JIC.

## VI. Figure 17 - Joint Information Center

**FIGURE 17:  
JOINT INFORMATION CENTER**

