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Unit 1: Introduction to Public Information
Welcome Public Information Officer Awareness

G0289

Refer to Visual: 1

Welcome to the Public Information Officer Awareness course.
Unit 1: Introduction to Public Information

Refer to Visual: 2

This first unit will provide an overview of the one-day Public Information Officer Awareness course.
Course Administration

Refer to Visual: 3

- Course/Site Logistics
  - Emergency procedures
  - Schedule
  - Breaks and lunch
  - Restrooms

- Classroom Behavior
  - Promptness
  - Respectful
  - Cell phones & other electronic devices

Note
- Please observe safety practices and use emergency exits if needed.
- Professional classroom behavior is required.
- Be prompt.
- Silence all cell phones.
- Refrain from e-mail during class.
Introductions

Refer to Visual: 4

Tell us your:

- Name
- Years of experience
- Job
- Goal/expectations for this training

Refer to the instructions on the visual and introduce yourself to the class. Keep your introductions to less than one minute.

Note
Activity: Following Directions

Refer to Visual: 5

Instructions: Complete the activity worksheet on your Student Manual by following the instructions provided by the facilitator
Purpose: To highlight the importance of communications
Time: 5 minutes

Description: Participants are provided with a worksheet and told to follow very specific instructions to complete the assigned tasks from the facilitator.

Note

Time: 10 minutes, including debrief
Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to highlight just how easily it is to misunderstand instructions and the importance of communications.
Instructions: Listen to the facilitator’s instructions and fill out the participant activity worksheet on the next page.

Participant activity worksheet:

1. I
2. — — — — —
3. MB BB PB
4. OODRWWTS

This activity was reproduced with permission from 50 Communications Activities, Icebreakers and Exercises, by Peter R. Garber. Amherst, MA, HRD Press, 2008.
Course Goals

Refer to Visual: 6

This course will:

- Introduce participants to the public information function and the role of the Public Information Officer (PIO) in the public safety/emergency management environment
- Prepare participants to continue developing their public information skills through training

The visual states the goals of this course.

PIOs in public safety and emergency management organizations are responsible for ensuring that the affected public receives accurate and timely information during an emergency. Armed with good information, people are better able to make good decisions and, by doing so, to contribute to the overall response goal of saving lives and protecting property.

The goal of this training is to provide participants with the skills and tools that those new to the position of PIO or with limited experience can use to effectively communicate with external and internal audiences on a daily basis, and to prepare participants for further public information training.
Unit Objectives

Refer to Visual: 7

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define emergency public information
- State the importance of being proactive

The visual lists the learning objectives for this unit.

Note
This course is the first of five courses in the Public Information Training Series. It is part of a tiered training approach in that it provides the foundation for more advanced training that takes participants from the awareness level to the mastery level in their public information careers.

This course is a prerequisite for Basic PIO training, which is followed by the JIS/JIC Planning for Tribal, State and Local PIOs, the Advanced PIO course, and the Master PIO course.

This course is grounded in the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the Incident Command System (ICS), and the National Response Framework (NRF).
Training Strategy

Refer to Visual: 9

This training is grounded in the:

- National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- Incident Command System (ICS)
- National Response Framework (NRF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NIMS</strong> provides a consistent framework for incident management at all jurisdictional levels regardless of the cause, size or complexity of the incident.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ICS** is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazards incident management approach that:

- Allows for the integration of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and communications operating within a common organizational structure.
- Enables a coordinated response among various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private.
- Establishes common processes for planning and managing resources.

The **NRF** is a guide to how the nation responds to all types of disasters and emergencies. It is built on scalable, flexible and adaptable concepts identified in NIMS to align key roles and responsibilities across the nation.
95/5 Theory

Refer to Visual: 10

- 95% of a PIO's work is conducted in non-emergency times
- 5% of time and effort is directly related to incident response or recovery

A theme that begins in this course and is carried throughout the Public Information Training Series is the “95/5” concept that takes its origin from two sources: management consultant D. Edward Deming and Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto. Deming said that 95% of an organization’s performance is attributable to its systems and only 5% is due to the people. Pareto originally proposed the 80/20 formula, which has been applied to many aspects of both business and personal life (e.g., 20% of employees create 80% of an organization’s success; 20% of your interpersonal activities create 80% of your sense of connection with others). Pareto suggested the 80/20 rule in 1906, a time before technology and other cultural changes contributed to speeding up both our work and personal lives. Many management experts today have recalculated Pareto’s rule to 95/5 to reflect these societal changes.

This 95/5 theory may be related to public information in many ways, but the greatest significance may be related to non-emergency and emergency situations. Most relevant to this training, 95% of a PIOs’ work is in non-emergency times, with only 5% directly related to incident response or recovery. Another application might be that 95% of your organization’s image may be affected — for good or for bad — by the 5% of time spent responding to an incident. So the activities a PIO chooses in non-emergency times (95%) has a significant impact on how successful he or she will be in the 5% spent in emergency response and recovery. Use the discussion questions below to engage the participants and to emphasize the importance of being proactive at all times in order to be effective during emergency situations (the 5% of the job).
Terms Used in This Training

Refer to Visual: 11

- Public Information
- Emergency Public Information
- Public Affairs
- External Affairs

For purposes of this training, we will define and make a distinction among the following terms:

**Public Information**: Information collected, assembled or maintained by an organization in connection with the transaction of official business and available for dissemination to the public.

**Emergency Public Information**: Information developed and disseminated in anticipation of, during, or after an emergency to provide specific life- and health-saving information.

**External Affairs**: Coordinates the release of accurate, coordinated, timely and accessible public information to affected audiences, including the government, media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector. External Affairs works closely with state and local officials to ensure outreach to the whole community. Functions include, but are not limited to:

- Public affairs and the Joint Information Center
- Intergovernmental (local, state, tribal and territorial) affairs
- Congressional affairs
- Private sector outreach
- Community relations
Public Information

Refer to Visual: 12

Can be used to:
- Call people to action
- Educate and inform
- Change behavior or attitudes
- Create and maintain a positive impression of your organization

The visual lists some uses of public information.

Note
Emergency Public Information

Refer to Visual: 13

The goal is to get the right information to all the right people at exactly the right time so everyone is empowered to make the right decisions.
Course Objectives (1 of 2)

Refer to Visual: 14

After this course, you will be able to:

• Define emergency public information and the importance of being proactive
• Describe the role and functions of the Public Information Officer (PIO)
• Describe the types of written products used in public information activities

The next two visuals list the learning objectives for this course.
Course Objectives (2 of 2)

Refer to Visual: 15

After this course, you will be able to:

• Recall preparation techniques that contribute to a successful media interview
• Apply public information techniques to a 5% scenario
Course Agenda

Refer to Visual: 16

Unit 1: Introduction to Public Information
Unit 2: Public Information Roles and Responsibilities
Unit 3: Public Information Skills Overview
Unit 4: Strategic Communication
Unit 5: Wrap-Up Exercise
Unit 6: Summary and Next Steps

The content for this course is divided into six units, as shown on the visual.

Note
Course Resources

Refer to Visual: 17

- Student Manual:
  - Visuals
  - Major content points
  - Room to take notes
- Resource Guide
- Instructors
- Your collective experience and expertise

The **Student Manual** includes the visuals you will see in class and major content points, as well as room to take notes.

The **Public Information Training Series Resource Guide** includes tips, templates and general information useful before, during and after an emergency or disaster. It may provide some ideas of programs and processes to implement in your organization.

The instructors are available to answer questions during class and at breaks.

The collective experience and expertise of the group is an important resource for this training. Please participate fully and share your ideas.
Questions?

Refer to Visual: 18
Unit 2: Public Information Roles and Responsibilities
Unit 2: Public Information Roles and Responsibilities

Refer to Visual: 1

This unit will take a look at the PIO’s role and the qualities and skills that contribute to success.

Note
Unit Objectives

Refer to Visual: 2

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Define the role and functions of the Public Information Officer (PIO)
- Identify the qualities and skills that contribute to a PIO's effectiveness

Note

The visual displays the learning objectives for this unit.
Activity 2.1: Where Do You Fit In?

Refer to Visual: 3

Instructions: In your table group, discuss the following for non-emergency times:

- The type of organization where you work (e.g., firefighting, police, other)
- Where your position resides in the organization
- Who you report to (what position)
- Who reports to you

You have 10 minutes.

Purpose: To identify characteristics of your job during non-emergency times.

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Instructions:

- Working in your table group, discuss your non-emergency work situation by identifying:
  - The type of organization where you work (e.g., firefighting, police)
  - Where your position resides in the organization
  - Who you report to (what position)
  - Who reports to you
  - You have 10 minutes.
Where Do You Fit in an Emergency?

Refer to Visual: 4

- Do you have the same boss in an emergency?
- Do you work from your usual location?
- Do you have the same staff or resources?

**Note**

In an emergency situation your job may change a little or a lot. You may report to someone else, work from a different location, or have different resources.
ICS Overview

Refer to Visual: 5

ICS:
- Is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard incident management concept
- Allows its users to adopt an integrated organizational structure that matches the complexities and demands of incidents
- Permits seamless integration of responders from all jurisdictions
- Can be used for incidents of any type, scope, and complexity

Note
Remember that the ICS is foundational to this training because it is the system that will structure your role in an emergency.

ICS is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazards incident management approach that:
- Allows for the integration of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures and communications operating within a common organizational structure.
- Enables a coordinated response among various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private.
- Establishes common processes for planning and managing resources.

ICS helps to ensure:
- The safety of responders and others.
- The achievement of tactical objectives.
- The efficient use of resources.

Using ICS on all incidents helps hone and maintain skills needed for the large-scale incidents.
Incident Commander

Refer to Visual: 6

The Incident Commander:

- Provides overall leadership for incident response
- Delegates authority to others
- Takes general direction from agency administrator/official

Note: In an emergency, the Incident Commander (IC) provides overall leadership.

The IC will sometimes use management by objectives. The IC sets the objectives; therefore, the PIO objectives must tie into or dovetail into the IC objectives. Note that the IC can change. The prerequisite ICS courses are helpful for understanding command responsibilities.
Command Staff

Refer to Visual: 7

It may be necessary for the Incident Commander to designate a Command Staff that:

- Provides information, liaison, and safety services for the entire organization
- Reports directly to the Incident Commander

Note

The PIO is part of the Command Staff under ICS. The PIO serves as advisor to the Incident Commander on public information implications of the incident and the response/recovery effort.

The PIO also looks for opportunities to advance leadership’s goals — for example, by setting up interviews with the news media and preparing talking points for the Incident Commander.
Role of the PIO

Refer to Visual: 8

- Operates within the Incident Command System framework, answers to the Incident Commander
- Collects, verifies, and disseminates information to the target audiences through effective communication

The visual states the role of the PIO in the simplest terms.
Another way to describe the second bullet on this visual is to say the PIO is responsible for the Information Management Cycle.

Note
The role of the PIO in an incident is to manage information. The process of managing information can best be depicted as a seven-function cycle in which:

1. Information is **gathered**.
2. Information is then **verified and analyzed**.
3. Next, during **message development**, the information is put in a form best suited to the audience.
4. The **coordination and approval** process will vary, depending on the number of organizations involved and each agency’s approval process.
5. The message is **disseminated** in a variety of ways.
6. Then the information is **tracked, and documentation** is kept to record the process.
7. Finally, **media monitoring and analysis** ensures that the message got out and was accurately conveyed. Information gathered through media monitoring and analysis feeds back into the Information Gathering process and the cycle continues.
External Target Audiences

Refer to Visual: 10

A key component of any communication is identification of the target audience.

Target audiences may be external or internal.

Note
External target audiences include the general public and the news media that can be described as the conduit to the public.
Internal Target Audiences

Refer to Visual: 11

The second target audience for PIOs is the internal audience, which includes:

- **Organizational leadership.** The PIO assesses every situation and advises leadership on public information implications. The PIO also looks for opportunities to advance the organization’s goals and facilitates leadership’s participation — for example, by setting up interviews with the news media and preparing talking points.

- **Communications advisor.** The PIO prepares others to speak to the public through the media, community organizations or during public events. The workforce.

- **The workforce** is a key player in any organization’s public information efforts. The PIO trains, informs and educates the workforce so they can support and participate in public information activities — for example, “Shop with a Cop” to buy holiday gifts for needy children.

Tell internal audiences what you are telling the media, and also let them know what the media is saying.

Internal communication provides the workforce with information that they can relay directly to the public when asked by citizens. Uniformed personnel and first responders are the main point of public contact and need to know the information their organization is putting out.
Activity 2.2: Who are Your Audiences?

Refer to Visual: 12

Instructions: Working individually, make two lists:
- External target audiences
- Internal target audiences
You have 10 minutes.

**Purpose:** To identify external and internal target audiences relevant to your job

**Estimated Time:** 10 minutes

**Instructions:**
- Working individually, make two lists:
  - Your external target audiences
  - Your internal target audiences
- Make sure to include emergency and non-emergency contacts on your lists. Think: if there is an incident in my organization, who in or near my jurisdiction has basic PIO skills to help with PIO response efforts?
  - Consider school system PIOs, library PIOs, other agency PIOs, and adjacent county and city emergency PIOs).
  - Include email, phone numbers, social media handles, and skill set or specialties (media relations, logistics, writing, social media monitoring, and analysis)
Qualities of an Effective PIO

Refer to Visual: 13

- Analytical
- Strategic
- Proactive
- Knowledgeable
- Assertive
- Credible/trusted
- Flexible: Able to perform under pressure
- Accessible!

Effective PIOs demonstrate the qualities listed on the visual.

- The PIO needs to analyze what’s going on and make strategic decisions in order to operate in a proactive manner. For example, imagine that a PIO for a local emergency management office reads in the paper and hears at town council meetings that the jurisdiction is in a budget crisis. He or she might develop strategies to build community understanding and support of the department by arranging media interviews, partnering with a school to promote emergency preparedness, or arranging tours of the Emergency Operations Center.
- **Knowledgeable**: Can speak with authority and credibility on all facets of the organization’s operations. Knows where the organization fits in the bigger picture.
- **Assertive**: Can effectively navigate in dynamic situations to seek out important information and provide solid, thoughtful advice to leadership. Is able to redirect negative questions and turn them around.
- **Credible/trusted**: Has proven himself or herself to be knowledgeable and someone who will deliver what is promised. Returns calls and answers e-mails from the media. Also is trusted by those in the organization.
- **Flexible**: Can adjust plans and priorities as the situation requires.
- **Able to perform under pressure**: Can meet the demands of the situation without losing his or her cool and without sacrificing good decision making; has good public-speaking skills.
- **Accessible**: None of these other qualities will matter if you aren’t accessible to the news media.
Community Awareness

Refer to Visual: 14

The PIO must know the:

- Demographics
- Governmental structure
- Key players (people and organizations)
- Relevant history
- Community “culture”

Note

You need to know the **demographics** to select the right media to reach your audience. For example, do you have a non-English-speaking segment you need to reach? If you are trying to reach young homeowners with your smoke alarm message, what radio station are they most likely to listen to?

The better you know who makes up your community, the more likely you will be to see opportunities for educating and engaging people in your organization’s mission. It is important to understand the jurisdiction’s **government structure** and how the various organizations or departments relate.

**Key players** include those in government, the media, nonprofit organizations, etc. They include those with whom you will interact during an emergency as well as those who have influence in the community.

What happened in previous events — especially similar incidents — can have a bearing on the current event, so knowing the **relevant history** is important. For example, if an area has recently experienced a large fire, the residents may be more receptive to information on fire safety. If a hurricane has repeatedly changed course and left a community unharmed, the residents may be less likely to follow evacuation orders.

Understanding the **community’s culture** is part of knowing the people. Ask yourself: What are the community’s values, concerns, and interests, and how can I connect through those interests? Keep in mind that your community may be your entire jurisdiction, but may also refer to specific segments of the community such as business community, faith-based community, etc.
Emergency Management Knowledge

Refer to Visual: 15

The PIO must know:

- Basic emergency management concepts
- Incident Command System (ICS)
- National Incident Management System (NIMS)
The PIO should understand **basic emergency management** concepts, including the role of local, tribal, state and federal levels of government. Local government is always first to respond to a disaster. The state provides support as needed, and the governor requests assistance from the federal government if the event exceeds the local and state capacity to respond.

The PIO should be familiar with the local Emergency Operations Plan and his or her organization’s role in an emergency.

The **Incident Command System (ICS)** originated in the 1970s during massive wildfire-fighting efforts in California. ICS is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard approach to incident management. It provides a common framework within which people can work together effectively, even when they are drawn from multiple agencies that do not routinely work together. ICS has been called a "first-on-scene" structure, where the first responder on the scene has charge of the scene until the incident has been declared resolved, a superior-ranking responder arrives on scene and seizes command, or the Incident Commander appoints another individual Incident Commander.

The **National Incident Management System (NIMS)** provides a systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work seamlessly to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life and property and harm to the environment.

**ICS and NIMS Training Resources:**

- Visit *[FEMA’s Independent Study](https://www.training.fema.gov/is)* website at www.training.fema.gov/is. There you will find several free, web-based training courses about ICS and NIMS.
- Visit *[FEMA’s Emergency Management Institute (EMI)](https://training.fema.gov)* at training.fema.gov. EMI offers several classroom-based, on campus and field deliveries of ICS and NIMS courses for different audiences.
Media Relations Skills

Refer to Visual: 16

The successful PIO develops credibility and builds relationships with the media by consistently:

- Providing information and access to newsmakers
- Demonstrating an understanding of media needs and operations
- Respecting media deadlines
- Maintaining open dialogue

Note

It is important to understand media. For example, if you were a firefighter, would you ever leave a fire before it has been put out? You wouldn’t, right? Similarly, reporters don’t leave a scene until they get the information they need.

PIOs should have a policy on working with the media. Consider holding quarterly meetings with media representatives. Allow them to ask questions and provide food. Some states meet every other month with media and government PIOs.
Written Communication Skills

Refer to Visual: 17

The written communication of successful PIOs:

- Is well organized and easy to follow
- Uses clear, concise language
- Uses correct grammar
- Contains no spelling or punctuation errors
- Uses appropriate formats and style guidance
- Conveys key messages

Note

Writing for the public is different than writing reports. The writing style will be dependent upon the channel being used to deliver the message. Make sure to use the Associated Press Stylebook, available in print or online.
Oral Communication Skills

Refer to Visual: 18

**On-camera interview skills:**
- Use sound bites
- Make good eye contact
- Use non-distracting gestures Know when not to answer

**Public speaking skills:**
- Use voice effectively
- Engage the audience

---

A sound bite is a short, catchy statement often quoted or replayed by the media.

Note
What Should You Be Doing Now?

Refer to Visual: 19

- Assess your readiness
- Know your organization
- Understand the “big picture”
- Establish relationships (other PIOs, the media)
- Conduct regular media outreach
- Plan, train, and exercise
- Build your toolbox
How do you develop the qualities and skills we have been discussing? The first step is to do some self-assessment:

- Which qualities that we discussed do you already possess? Which ones do you want to develop?
- How well do you understand emergency management concepts?
- How strong are your written and oral communication skills?

You also can lay the groundwork for future success by doing the following things now:

- Know your organization inside and out.
- Understand the “big picture” and where your organization fits in.
- Establish relationships. This includes relationships:
  - Within your organization, especially with leadership.
  - With PIOs from other jurisdictions or organizations. Definitely establish relationships now, before an incident occurs.
  - With the media. Conduct regular media outreach. This outreach helps to reinforce the relationships you are building and establishes your credibility. Start with reaching out to local and regional media. Building these relationships makes it easier when you need reporters to cover your events. When you update your contact list, add the reporters’ social media handles and web addresses for their organizations.
  - With a mentor. Particularly if you are new to this field, reach out to a more experienced PIO within or outside of your own organization for guidance. As you become more experienced, “pay it forward” by being a mentor to a new PIO.
  - Plan, train and exercise. In other words, make sure public information is part of your organization’s emergency plan and is part of training events and exercises. Also consider providing training or practice in on-camera interview skills for organizational leadership or those who may be interview subjects.
  - Build your PIO toolbox (e.g., contact information, social media handles, templates for news releases, fact sheets), and make sure you have hard copy backups for important electronic files.
  - Consider assembling a go-kit appropriate for your PIO deployment. Backup batteries and manual or solar chargers may come in handy.
Activity 2.3: Worksheet

Refer to Visual: 20

Individual Activity:
• In your Student Manual, complete the “What Should You Be Doing Now?” worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Item</th>
<th>Already Doing</th>
<th>Want to Do More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your Readiness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectively assess my own knowledge of emergency management concepts (e.g., ICS, NIMS) and take advantage of training opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hone my written and oral communication skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expand my knowledge of social media applications in emergency management.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Knowledge</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Item</td>
<td>Already Doing</td>
<td>Want to Do More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can speak knowledgeably on organization’s programs and operations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have up-to-date contact information on the organization’s key personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>(including after-hours contact information).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand the public’s perception of the organization and its activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Networking</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have developed relationships with PIOs in my own and neighboring jurisdictions</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and at the State level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Know the media who cover my organization; have up-to-date contact information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>in electronic and non-electronic form, including social media handles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct regular outreach to the news media.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create opportunities to meet new reporters and educate them on my organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create and maintain a social media presence for my organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Planning, Training, and Exercising</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation Item</td>
<td>Already Doing</td>
<td>Want to Do More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create plans for public information activities in all situations (e.g., develop public information component of organizational emergency plans).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make sure public information is an intrinsic part of organizational and jurisdiction-wide exercises.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Activity 2.4: PIO Toolbox

Refer to Visual: 21

Table-Group Activity:
- List what should be in a PIO’s toolbox

**Purpose:** To discuss what should be in a PIO’s toolbox with your table group.

**Estimated Time:** 5 minutes

**Instructions:** Group Activity (5 minutes)
- Working in your table group, list the things that should be included in a PIO’s toolbox.
Unit Summary

Refer to Visual: 22

In this unit, we discussed:

- The role and function of the PIO during non-emergency and emergency times, and the skills needed to be effective
- What you can do now to have a proactive public information program

Note

The visual summarizes the key topics from this unit.
Unit 3: Public Information Skills Overview
Unit 3: Public Information Roles and Responsibilities

Refer to Visual: 1

Public Information Skills Overview
This unit will discuss three important skill sets for PIOs: writing, media relations, and verbal presentations in the form of media interviews or public speaking events.
Unit Objectives

Refer to Visual: 2

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the types of written products used in public information activities
- Recall preparation techniques that contribute to a successful media interview

Note

The visual displays the learning objectives for this unit.
What the Public Wants to Know

Refer to Visual: 3

Immediately following a crisis, the public will want to know:

- What happened?
- What does it mean to me?
- What are you doing about it?

But what about non-emergency times — the 95% of your job?

Note
Key Messages

Refer to Visual: 4

The #1 thing you want your audience to know or do as a result of your communication.

The visual defines a key message.

Note
Starting with key messages helps you to:

- Target your audience
- Anticipate questions and concerns
- Develop supporting information
- Select the appropriate medium
- Ensure consistent communication

Your key message — the #1 thing you want your audience to know or do — helps you plan your efforts more effectively:

- Who do you need to reach with this message? Is your target audience people living in a certain community, tourists, young families, or new homeowners?
- What questions or concerns might they have about this subject? How can you address these concerns in your information campaign?
- What supporting information will help you convey your message? Supporting information may include facts (e.g., number of homes destroyed by fire), instructions (e.g., how to install hurricane straps), comparisons (e.g., the cost of a new ambulance over the expected lifetime of the vehicle).
- The complexity of the content is one consideration when selecting the medium. Other aspects are the impact of visuals (Will photos or diagrams help you convey the message?) and the expected “lifetime” of the message.
- An important benefit of articulating your key message is that it begins to ensure consistent communication. If everyone knows the key message and uses the supporting information, the public is less likely to get mixed messages from your organization and ones you are partnering with.
Activity: Using Key Messages

Refer to Visual: 6

Instructions: Working in your table group:

- Select one key message.
- Identify your target audience.
- Identify questions or concerns your audience might have.

You have 10 minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose: To identify target audience and potential concerns related to a key message.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Time: 10–20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in your table group:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select one theme or incident from the list below:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Public kick-off for your annual hurricane preparedness campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fourth of July fire safety campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Flood warning is in effect for your community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bridge collapses in your community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- City-wide marathon is scheduled for this weekend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write one key message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify your target audience for that key message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify questions or concerns your target audience might have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have 10 minutes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Supporting Information & Talking Points

Refer to Visual: 7

Supporting information:
- Validates your key message
- Provides relevance for the target audience
- Addresses questions and concerns

Talking points:
- Make your message compelling and memorable
- Contribute to consistent communication

Note

Supporting information is crucial to success. It gives your message validity and can answer the audience’s question: “What’s in it for me?”
Talking Points

Refer to Visual: 8

- Short, easy to understand statements that reinforce your key message
- Brief, one- or two-sentence answers to basic questions that might be asked
- Memorable statements that make your audience visualize your main point
- Quotable
- Written for the ear, not for the eye
Activity: Writing Talking Points

Refer to Visual: 9

Instructions: Working in your table group and using your key message from the previous activity:

- Write three or four talking points to support your key message that would be relevant to your target audience.

You have 10 minutes.

Purpose: To write talking points based on your chosen key message and target audience from previous activity.

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Instructions:
- Working in your table group:
  - Write three talking points to support your key message from previous activity.
  - Talking points should be one or two full sentences meant to be heard by an audience.
  - Make sure the talking points are relevant to your target audience.
  - Practice delivery of your talking points.
- You have 10 minutes.
- Select a spokesperson to present your group’s experience.
Selecting the Right Product

Refer to Visual: 10

The written product should suit the:
- Purpose of the communication
- Target audience’s needs
- Complexity of the subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>There are five main purposes for communicating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- To answer a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- To inform or announce something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- To educate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- To clarify information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- To ask for an action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your purpose, the needs and preferences of your target audience, and the complexity of the information all have impact on the type of written product you will use.
Public Information Written Products

Refer to Visual: 11

- Statement
- Fact Sheet
- Media Advisory
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Newsletter Articles
- Brochures, Fliers, and Other Handouts

Note

In this unit we will focus on talking points, news releases, and content for the Web, but there are other types of written products you may use from time to time:

- **Statement**: Used in lieu of a news release. Issued electronically or in print; less detailed than a news release. Good to use when you’ve received multiple media calls on the same topic.
- **Fact sheet**: Used when you need to provide more detail than possible in a news release.
- **Media advisory**: Used to invite the media to an event or news conference. Provides basic information (what, where, when, and why); provides directions.
- **Public service announcements (PSAs)**: Used when you want to enlist the cooperation of the electronic media in promoting an important message.
- **Newsletter articles**: Used to communicate within the organization or may be a feature in a newsletter that reaches another audience.
- **Brochures, fliers, and other handouts**: Used to provide background information to supplement a news release, provide photos or graphics, etc. Remember not to overwhelm the reporter with too much or extraneous information. Sometimes “less is more.”

All of these products may be tweaked and repurposed for Social Media. We will cover Social Media later in the unit, but it is important to see all products and mediums as part of your whole public information strategy.
When To Use a News Release

Refer to Visual: 12

Use when an activity or incident is newsworthy and a statement won’t suffice

- Timeliness
- Proximity
- Conflict
- Impact
- Prominence
- Uniqueness
- Human interest

A news release is appropriate when there is a factual report of an activity or incident of news value.

An incident is newsworthy based on:

- Timeliness: Self-explanatory. News is NOW.
- Proximity: Events that happen near us have more significance and are more newsworthy to us.
- Conflict: Controversy or struggle between opposing sides makes news. (NOTE: The struggle doesn't have to be between people; it can be between people and the elements.)
- Impact: How will this affect me and to what degree?
- Prominence: Who is involved? The more “known” they are affects newsworthiness.
- Uniqueness: “Different” can be news.
- Human interest: Human interest stories can be of interest even if they don't exemplify some of these other characteristics of newsworthiness. Human interest stories appeal to emotion and enable the audience to identify with the subject.
News Release Content

Refer to Visual: 13

- Accurate, factual information
- Clear, concise, easy-to-understand language
- Simple sentences
- Short paragraphs
- Third person
- Attributed facts
- No jargon or acronyms

News releases should:
- Provide accurate, factual information.
- Use clear, concise, easy-to-understand language.
- Use simple sentences.
- Contain short paragraphs.
- Be written in the third person.
- Attribute facts.
- Avoid all jargon and acronyms.

Note

Acronyms can help us communicate internally, but can be real barriers to communicating with the public.
News Releases

Refer to Visual: 14


- Most important facts
- Supporting facts
- Less important facts
- Background information

Social media add-ons
Refer to the visual and tell the participants that a good news release:

- Says: Who, what, when, where, why and how; using accurate, factual information with attribution. Sometimes quotes can add value when used appropriately.
- And, says it using:
  - Clear, concise, easy-to-understand language.
  - Simple sentences.
  - Short paragraphs.
  - The third person.
  - No jargon and acronyms.

Make the point that jargon and acronyms can help us communicate internally, but can be real barriers to communicating with the public.

A news release is not a formal report one might file for an investigation. “At 0800 hours, unit 163 was dispatched on a signal 23 to 159 Normandy Avenue. Upon arrival conducted a 360 degree assessment and discovered a two story ordinary with fire on the “C” side” is not a proper news release format.

Review the steps for writing a news release:

1. Gather your facts.
2. Organize. A simple outline works for some, but not for others. Whatever tool you use, time spent organizing may seem like an extra step but will save time in the long run and produce a better product.
3. Develop your lead (strong opening sentence).
5. Put the most important information first: Use the inverted pyramid writing structure.
   - The lead sentence should summarize the key information you want to present.
   - The second sentence supports the lead, and includes any information you could not fit in the lead.
   - Prioritize each additional sentence and paragraph and write in declining order of importance. Include less important material near the end; this way, this information can be cut without impacting the story when column space or airtime is lacking.

Review the recommended format and style for news releases:

- Write in accepted journalistic style.
- Each sentence should be a declarative statement containing a fact in a subject-verb-object form.
- Attribute information. If the statement is coming from your organization, say so. If you are conveying information from another source—for example, the National Weather Service—use words such as: “According to the National Weather Service.”
- Follow Associated Press (AP) style. The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law is available in university bookstores or online.
- Most reporters will rewrite your material, which is all the more reason it should be clear and concise and focus on facts.
News Release Format and Style

Refer to Visual: 15

Journalists use The Associated Press Stylebook

- Normally one page, single spaced
- On organization letterhead
- Following AP style
- Includes:
  - Contact information
  - Date (time optional)
  - News release number
  - “More” for continuation
  - “End” or “# # #” or -30-

For news releases:

- Each sentence should be a declarative statement containing fact in a subject-verb-object form.
- Attribute information. If the statement is coming from your organization, say so. If you are conveying information from another source — for example, the National Weather Service — use words such as: “according to the National Weather Service.”
- Consider adding social media links to the news release.
- Make sure your header includes all the necessary contact information.
- Provide a news release number, along with the date and time it was written, to make it easier to tell which release is the latest (most current information).
- Most reporters will rewrite your material, which is all the more reason it should be clear and concise and focus on facts.
- The samples below are just that: samples. Your organization probably has templates for news releases and other products.
- Follow Associated Press (AP) style. The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law is available in university bookstores or online.
Governor Declares Emergency for Liberty County

Governor declares emergency for Liberty County

(CAPITAL CITY — June 18, 20xx, 2PM) Governor James Smith today declared a state of emergency in the Great A&P fire rapidly spreading west. The fire started near Harvest Junction on the railroad and the flames from the burning hazardous materials in the cars threaten a number of nearby communities, according to local authorities.

The governor declared the emergency following a similar declaration by Liberty County. The governor’s declaration allows the use of state resources in paying the costs of fighting the fire.

Smith also activated the State Emergency Operations Center, which coordinates state firefighting efforts in these situations. The governor is continuing to monitor the situation.

"Once again, we see a fire threatening our citizens and their homes. I know our superb team of firefighters will do all they can, but the conditions on the railroad are particularly difficult," Smith said.

The governor repeated his request that everyone use caution and heed warning messages on TV and radio, or in their newspapers.

Unfortunately, these hazardous materials are creating a dangerous situation for all of us. I would urge you to be careful whenever you travel," Smith said.

End --- ### ---

Social Media info

Consider adding social media information here, including social media handles, tweets, hashtags, web links, and other information relevant to the release context or the organization. For example, if you write a strong headline, you can use it as a tweet with a link to the news release.
Governor Declares Emergency for Liberty County Page 2

CAPITAL CITY, COLUMBIA
EXECUTIVE OFFICE
JANE DOE
MAYOR
WWW.MAYOR.CAPCITY.CL.US

FOR MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT (555) 765-4231(H)
THOOK@CITYGOV.CAPCITY.CL.US

Nominations open for city’s transportation safety awards
CAPITAL CITY – February 18, 20xx, 2PM

Traffic accidents in Capital City have dropped nearly 10 percent over the past calendar year, according to city transportation officials, and Mayor Jan Doe wants to know why so she can encourage more of the same.

“If you’ve noticed repaired potholes, cleared bike paths, easy-to-see traffic signs and the safe driving of your bus driver, I urge you to nominate the people responsible for recognition,” said Mayor Doe.

The Mayor’s Transportation Safety Awards recognize individuals and organizations that have made contributions to transportation safety in Capital City. The awards recognize accomplishments in the public and private sectors by individuals and organizations that promote transportation safety.

“The efforts of these organizations and individuals have made Capital City a safer place for all of us who live, work or visit here,” said Mayor Doe. “I look forward to honoring this year’s award recipients.”

Award categories include public transportation safety, rail safety and general traffic safety. For nomination forms, go to www.cctranssafety.org.

To be eligible for consideration, activities and programs must have taken place during calendar year 20XX. Entries must be postmarked no later than March 15, 20XX, and mailed to The Mayor’s Transportation Safety Awards, Room 405, Post Office Box 27412, Capital City, Columbia 03269-0001.

Winners of the Mayor’s Transportation Safety Awards will be notified in April and honored in May at the Columbia Conference on Transportation Safety.

End  ⬇  ###
Activity: Using the Inverted Pyramid

Refer to Visual: 16

Instructions: In your table group, create a news release using the inverted pyramid.
- Review the statements provided
- Reject the statements you determine not newsworthy
- Reorder the statements using the inverted pyramid structure
- Write a strong headline

You have 15 minutes.

Purpose: To develop a news release using the inverted pyramid structure.

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Instructions:
- Review the statements in your Student Manual and work in your table groups to:
  - Decide if all nine statements are newsworthy;
  - Take out any statements that are not newsworthy;
  - Reorder the remaining statements in the inverted pyramid structure; and
  - Write a strong headline.
- Write your headline and the order the statements should appear on chart paper.

You have 15 minutes.
Activity Worksheet

Instructions: Working in your table group, read the statements below and:

1. Determine what is newsworthy and what is not (delete what is not newsworthy);
2. Put the statements in order (inverted pyramid); and
3. Write a strong headline.
4. Record your answers on chart paper and report out in 15 minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement #</th>
<th>Statement Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>As night falls, more than 100 personnel are on the scene searching for the missing child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A police chief arrives at the scene, along with news crews and numerous volunteers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Given the number of personnel on the scene, there is a need to provide meals, food, first aid, and rest areas for responders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Incident Commander establishes an Operations Section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The child was outside playing and may have wandered off into a vast wooded area adjacent to the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A local police officer arrives at the scene, establishing the initial ICS organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>After the first hour, the Incident Commander establishes a Planning Section that will develop the Incident Action Plan and track the status of resources on the scene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>At 4:30 p.m. on a chilly autumn day, a parent calls 911 to report a missing 3-year old child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Within the Search Group, four canine search teams are assigned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing for the Web and Social Media

Refer to Visual: 17

The basics are the same. Content should be:

- Relevant to your target audience
- Most important information first (inverted pyramid)
- Clear, concise, easily-understood language
- Short sentences and paragraphs

Training Resource:

This discussion focuses on writing for the Web and Social Media. For a more extensive look at how social media may be used in emergency management, you may want to take the FEMA independent study course IS 42: Social Media in Emergency Management, available at http://www.training.fema.gov/is.

Using the Web and social media tools has become an effective way to:

- Maximize timely dissemination of information.
- Reach diverse audiences.
- Facilitate information sharing and interactive communication.

When writing for the Web or social media, standard guidelines still apply:

- Content should be relevant to your target audience.
- The most important information should come first (inverted pyramid).
- Language should be clear, concise, and easily understood.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs. Consider the maximum number of characters allowed for different social media outlets.
What is Different?

Refer to Visual: 18

People read differently online than they do when they read print materials. Web readers scan for information.

TIPS:

• Use the words your audience uses to optimize search
• Chunk content
• Use visuals and multimedia

Note

There are some important differences to consider when writing for the Web or social media. Remember that people read differently online. You may use the same information that you use in a news release, for example, but you will want to repurpose it to fit the environment. The visual displays some of the differences between writing for Web-based and social media and other communication tools.
Social Media Do’s (1 of 2)

Refer to Visual: 19

- Know your organization’s clearance policy for social media
- Be strategic (think about your target audience and your goal)
- Think about how you will measure success (identify metrics)

Note

The next two visuals display some “Do’s” when writing for social media. The same concepts of clearance policy, strategy, and metrics apply to all communications. In this section we will discuss specific application to social media writing.

Social Media Do’s (2 of 2)

Refer to Visual: 20

When you write:

- Use conversational tone (use contractions and pronouns)
- Put intriguing information upfront Use fewer characters than allowed to make sharing easy
- Keep repurposing in mind (reuse Web content, but not verbatim)
- Use tagging (Facebook) and mentions (Twitter) to link with partners
News Media’s Role in Public Safety

Refer to Visual: 21

The news media is the organization’s link to the public before, during, and after a public safety incident

AND

Social media can provide a direct link to your audience

---

Whether you use the word “partner” or not, the news media is undeniably our primary link to the public when it comes to sharing information. The better we understand the media and its needs, the stronger that link will become.

The traditional news media paint the image of the incident response in the eyes of the public. They create the perception of the agency and their response to the incident, and perception is reality to the public.

In the course of an incident’s lifecycle, media attention usually follows this pattern:

- **Initial:** Reporters rush to the scene to capture and report the basic facts of the event. Stories typically do not require much investigative reporting.
- **Continuing:** The breaking news stage may or may not be past, as new challenges emerge. (For example, media turn to covering the repercussions of the event on the populace, which may include a shortage in food or housing after a hurricane or transportation problems after a bridge collapse.) Investigative reporting can also keep a story in the news. If the focus turns to “who’s at fault,” the reporting will dig deeper and deeper and will keep the media’s and the public’s interest for a longer period of time.
- **Diminishing:** Story ideas come from reporters in the field or a PIO. Examples include profiles of a first responder or a disaster victim. Stories can also take an analytic approach, looking for deeper answers to why something happened.
- **Recognition:** Anniversary stories fall into this category and can offer opportunities to the PIO. For example, the anniversary of a severe winter storm may include the message to prepare a winter emergency kit for the home and the car.
Discussion

Refer to Visual: 22

Technology and social media have brought significant changes to the way the media does business.
What changes have you observed in your community? How can you capitalize on this opportunity?
News Media Types and Structure

Refer to Visual: 23

- Print
- Television
- Radio
- Internet
- Social

“Social media is not a fad. It is a fundamental change in our environment. How we communicate, aggregate with others, and interact with our environment is changing dramatically with successive generations.”
ADM Thad Allen, Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard, 2008

Note
- A medium is controlled by its technology (i.e., print and paper, radio waves, video cameras, etc.). These controlling factors create limitations, but also can be used to your advantage.
- One way the media deal with these limitations is by joining or “converging” with other types of media to share resources and eliminating deadline limitations. –
  - This approach is sometimes dubbed the “Tampa Model” after Media General brought its three properties (the Tampa Tribune, WFLA, and TBO.com) under one roof a few years ago. –
  - Fans of the approach say that tips and story ideas are shared and cross-promotion is possible. At the same time, not every story will suit every medium.
- One thing is certain: Yesterday’s news media are not today’s news media and certainly won’t be tomorrow’s. You only need to look at the role of social media today to appreciate that change. We’ve seen individuals with mobile devices using blogs, video, and Twitter to spread information in real time during an emergency. Social media can both aid and detract from emergency response and is proving to be both a tool and a challenge for PIO.
- Using social media can maximize media coverage by directly sending photographs and videos via Tweeter and YouTube directly to your contacts at statewide and local media outlets. The goal is to persuade them to post our photos and videos on their Web sites.
## The Types of Media and Their Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>What They Need</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Print (newspapers and magazines)</td>
<td>• Details&lt;br&gt;• Background information&lt;br&gt;• Access to subject-matter experts&lt;br&gt;• Access to photo op</td>
<td>• Can use more detail</td>
<td>• Takes longer to get the information to the audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>• Visuals!&lt;br&gt;• Sound bites&lt;br&gt;• Staging area</td>
<td>• Varied programming&lt;br&gt;• Immediate</td>
<td>• Less detailed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>• Audio (sound clips or telephone interview)&lt;br&gt;• Sound bites&lt;br&gt;• Recorded PSAs</td>
<td>• Immediate&lt;br&gt;• Can reach special populations</td>
<td>• Few field reporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>• Same access and information as other media</td>
<td>• Can be updated quickly (potential is there)</td>
<td>• May be updated at only certain times of the day (the reality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>• Short-format information</td>
<td>• Updated immediately</td>
<td>• Potential for context collapse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What ALL News Media Need

Refer to Visual: 24

- Prompt answers to queries
- Access to the scene
- Access to policymakers, responders, and victims
- Fair treatment
- Respect for deadlines
- Updates and corrections to information in evolving incidents as fast as possible

Note

The main thing the news media want is access to you — the PIO — 24/7!

To build good media relations, PIOs should:

- Be accessible and return calls and e-mails promptly. Even if you don’t have all the information immediately, being accessible, responsive and honest builds your credibility.
- Coordinate access to the scene and to policymakers, responders and victims.
- Treat all media fairly — meaning you don’t play favorites with media or reporters.
- Focus on maintaining your relationships with local reporters when/if the national news comes into town. Local reporters will remain after the national attention fades.
- If it is necessary to create media pools, tell the media how many slots you have and let them pick their own pool members. Stay clear of picking pool members yourself.
- If you have breaking news, share it with everyone.
- Learn and respect deadlines.
- Provide updates in a timely manner. When dealing with errors, accountability equals responsibility: –
  - When you correct your own errors, you are acting responsibly.
  - When you ask the media to correct their errors promptly, you are holding them accountable.
Transparency in Government

Refer to Visual: 25

- Freedom of Information (FOI) laws allow access to data held by national governments
- Sunshine laws, intended to create greater transparency in government, require government officials to hold certain meetings in public

Note

Educate yourself on laws that prescribe access to documents and meetings. Research your own state’s transparency laws.

Freedom of information laws (FOI laws) allow access by the general public to data held by national governments. They establish a "right-to-know" legal process by which requests may be made for government-held information, to be received freely or at minimal cost, barring standard exceptions.

The Government in the Sunshine Act is a U.S. law passed in 1976 that affects the operations of the federal government, Congress, federal commissions, and other legally constituted federal bodies. It is one of a number of FOI laws intended to create greater transparency in government.

All states, the District of Columbia, and the federal government have laws requiring agency officials to hold certain meetings in public. These laws do not necessarily ensure that members of the public will be allowed to address the agency, but they do guarantee that the public and the media can attend the meetings. The ability to record a meeting, either through audio or visual recording has generally been viewed as implicit in sunshine laws if not explicitly written into the state law.
Media Access

Refer to Visual: 26

- Establish a media staging/briefing area that doesn’t hinder operations, but affords the media reasonable, legitimate access
- Coordinate access to newsmakers and persons in charge
- Consider a media pool

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Note</th>
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</table>

PIO actions to accommodate media access at the scene include:

- Establish a media staging/briefing area that doesn’t hinder operations, but affords the media reasonable, legitimate access.
- When selecting a staging/briefing area, choose your background wisely. If you do not want something recorded by the media, cover it up or shield it with a vehicle. Use the staging area for all media releases, printed materials, live updates, and conferences — it will keep them there!
- Reporters may record anything that they see or hear. They should not be told to stop recording. Always assume you are being recorded!
- Coordinate access to persons in charge.
- Occasionally it is necessary to restrict access to an area from the multitude of assembled media, but you still want to provide access under a more controlled system, such as a "media pool." A media pool is simply one representative from each of the four types of media (television, radio, print and Internet) who will be allowed access to a restricted area. These representatives are allowed access with the understanding that any video, audio or interviews they acquire will be shared with all of the rest of the media. Sometimes media representatives need to include more than one person from each media type (e.g., television might need a reporter and a camera operator, a newspaper might need a reporter and a photographer). This practice is legitimate and should be allowed. Members of the media must decide among themselves who will be in the media pool. Do not put yourself in the position of choosing for them.
Preparing for an Interview

Refer to Visual: 27

- Identify the best spokesperson
- Develop your objectives
- Consider your audience
- Develop your message and materials
- Get clearance/approval
- Practice or prep the spokesperson

Note

The final topic in this unit is presentation skills — how you prepare for and perform during a media interview or public speaking engagement. When a reporter requests or the PIO is setting up an interview, the first question is always: Who should speak for the organization?
Improving Your Responses (1 of 2)

Refer to Visual: 28

DO:
- Know what you want to say
- Stick to one main point
- Be positive, yet realistic
- Show compassion and empathy
- Know when to stop
- Summarize

Note: DO's:
- Know what you want to say. It is the best way to control the interview and accomplish your objectives. Make sure you use your talking points.
- Know your main point and stick to it. Too many messages will be confusing to the reporter and the public.
- Be positive, yet realistic. Turn a negative question around and answer it in the positive. If asked, “Why didn’t the police department use search dogs immediately?” Instead of saying, “We didn’t use search dogs earlier because . . .,” say: “We have used a full range of search strategies, including search dogs.”
- Show compassion and empathy. Personalize and humanize.
- Know when to stop. Stop talking when you’ve made your point. Don’t speculate and don’t feel that you have to fill empty air space.
- Whenever possible, summarize your key points at the end of the interview.
Improving Your Responses (2 of 2)

Refer to Visual: 29

DON'T:
- Speculate or answer hypothetical questions
- Respond for or talk about other agencies
- Comment on what others have said
- Lose your temper
- Lie
- Say anything you don't want to read in print, hear on the radio, or see on TV or the Internet
- Say anything “off the record”

DON'Ts:
- Don't speculate. If you don't know the answer to something, say so. Don't offer your opinion.
- Don't answer hypothetical questions. Hypothetical questions often begin: “What if . . . .” Don't answer questions that require you to make assumptions.
- Don't respond to questions best answered by another agency. Also, don't talk about other organizations, unless to thank them for their efforts. Don't comment on what others have said,
- Don't comment particularly if you haven't heard or read it yourself. It may cause you to verify something that might not be true.
- Never lose your temper.
- Never lie. NEVER.
- And, most importantly, never say anything to a reporter you don't want to see in the news media.
- Never say anything “off the record.” Some PIOs will argue that you can give “off the record” information to a reporter with whom you have a long-standing relationship of trust. One thing to consider: By giving this trusted reporter off-the-record information, you may be doing a disservice. If the information gets out from another source, other media outlets will run with it, while the reporter you trusted may hold back. Also be wary of reporters calling “off the record” information they are seeking from you as only “background” information that is ok for you to share.
“No Comment”

Refer to Visual: 30

NEVER say “No comment.” It implies you are:

- Hiding something
- Unprepared, or
- Uninformed

Note
- Never say “No comment.”
- Answering “No comment” implies you are:
  - Hiding something,
  - Unprepared, or
  - Uninformed.
Alternatives to “No Comment”

Refer to Visual: 31

1. “The matter is under investigation and that information is not available at this time.”
2. “We will provide updates as more information becomes available.”
3. “Let me put you in contact with someone who is better able to answer that question.”
4. “Those details are covered by the Privacy Act and I cannot discuss them, but I can give you this general information . . .”

Note: When you can’t answer a question, make sure the response you give is suited to the situation, is truthful, and is as forthcoming as possible.

The visual displays some options to “no comment.”

- The first two options are suitable when you are dealing with an unfolding situation. Do not promise updates, however, unless you plan to provide them.
- If you cannot answer a question but someone else can, the third response is appropriate. Make sure you follow up and connect the reporter with the appropriate spokesperson or say that you are unable to do so.
- The fourth response is a good option when you are restricted from providing some information but you can offer general information that conveys your key message.
- Have several planned responses. “What I can share is…” Or “What we do know is…”
Transitional Phrases or “Bridging”

Refer to Visual: 32

- “What is most important is ...”
- “What we should focus on is ...”
- "What the public should know is ..."
- “The point (or goal) is ...”
- “I don’t know, but what I can tell you is...”

Note

- In some interviews you may find that you are not provided with the right question to present your message. You can bring the focus back by building a bridge between the question and your message.
- Transitional phrases are tools that help you build such a bridge, and put the interview back on track to your talking points and main message.
Nonverbal Communication Tips

Refer to Visual: 33

Pay attention to:
- Eye contact
- Voice
- Expression
- Body position
- Gestures Movement
- Attire
Any interview can be improved by paying attention to nonverbal communication:

- **Eye contact:** ALWAYS look at the reporter, not the camera. Avoid looking down. Avoid rolling your eyes or looking up to the sky.
- **Voice:** Speak clearly and modulate your voice by varying tone and volume. Slow down for emphasis when making important points. Pause to gather your thoughts rather than use fillers like "er," "um," or "you know."
- **Expression:** Appear attentive. Show emotion as appropriate (sincerity). Assume that the camera is always on. Even if your words are not being taped, your facial expression will be conveying a message. Make sure it is the message you want to convey.
- **Body position:** Stand straight and align your body with the interviewer. In some instances the camera operator may position you for the shot. Be aware of what’s being photographed in the background. Always be aware of scene safety for both you and the reporter.
- **Gestures:** Use natural, but not “big” gestures. Keep your hands away from your face. Don’t cross your arms, raise your eyebrows, or shrug your shoulders. Avoid jerky movements.
- **Movement:** If standing, do not lock your knees, but don’t sway or bounce either. Don’t jingle jewelry or change in pockets. If sitting, don’t jiggle legs or spin or rock in the chair. Sit on your coat tail to keep your jacket from riding up.
- **Attire/Dress:** Consider your audience, market, and communication channel when dressing for an interview. In general, you don’t want your appearance to be “louder” than your message.
  - Wear your uniform or neat, conservative attire if non-uniformed.
  - Avoid bright whites, stripes, plaids, and complicated patterns.
  - Remove dark glasses/sunglasses.
  - Know your agency’s policy on showing your badge in public; some agencies discourage it to minimize fraudulent duplication.
  - Remove hat to avoid shadows on your face.
  - Remove distracting, overly shiny, or noisy jewelry (includes body piercings).
  - Consider covering tattoos and minimizing body piercing jewelry.
  - If something in your appearance significantly detracts from your message, get rid of it or fix it.
- **Digital, High-definition (HD) and Web:**
  - Digital and HD television is high quality and not only shows imperfections in clothing, but also has problems with certain colors (e.g., bright colors may cause problems with color balance and/or appear too vivid on some broadcasts). DOT ANSI (American National Standard for High Visibility) vests are
Dealing With Nervousness

Refer to Visual: 34

- Prepare
- Anticipate questions
- Do something to relax yourself
- Use your nervousness as positive energy
- Realize the reporter wants you to succeed
- Know it is okay to pause to gather your thoughts

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<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>Most of us experience at least some nervousness at the thought of being interviewed on-camera, but there are tips to help manage that nervousness:</th>
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<td>- Prepare. The more prepared you are, the less nervous you will feel. Practice your delivery using talking points.</td>
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<td>- Anticipate questions. Think like a reporter and anticipate the questions you might be asked. Reducing the “surprise” factor will reduce your nervousness.</td>
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<td>- Do something to relax yourself. Take a few deep breaths, stretch, or walk around. Find out what technique works best to relax you.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Use your nervousness as positive energy. Nervousness is not all bad! A bit of nervousness can energize your performance on-camera.</td>
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<td>- Realize the reporter wants you to succeed. In most cases, the reporter is not out to get you and really doesn’t want you to stumble over words or misspeak. If the interview is being taped, don’t hesitate to say, “I’d like to try that again.” if your answer to a question came out tongue-tied.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Know it is okay to pause to gather thoughts. A pause will always seem longer to you than the audience, so don’t ramble or use fillers like “um” to take up dead air. Gather your thoughts and give your best answer.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Public Speaking

Refer to Visual: 35

- Do your homework—know your role, the other players, and the environment
- Anticipate questions and issues
- Assess and “read” the audience
- Practice and demonstrate good verbal and nonverbal communication skills
- Practice active listening
- Use clear open-ended and closed questions appropriately

Note

The verbal and nonverbal tips we’ve discussed for news media interviews are applicable to other public speaking engagements.
Unit Summary

Refer to Visual: 36

In this unit, we discussed:
- The types of written products used in public information activities
- The different types of news media and their needs
- Techniques that contribute to successful media interviews

The visual summarizes the key topics from this unit.

Note
Alt Text for Governor declares emergency for Liberty County (Page 1)

STATE OF COLUMBIA
EXECUTIVE OFFICE
JAMES SMITH
GOVERNOR
WWW.GOVERNOR.STATE.CL.US

Seal of the State of Columbia

ORGANIZATIONAL LETTERHEAD WITH CONTACT AND PERSONAL INFORMATION:

For immediate release

For more information contact (555) 123-4567 EWILLS@CLGOV.STATE.CL.US

HEADLINE: Governor declares emergency for Liberty County

DATELINE: (CAPITAL CITY – June 18, 20xx, 2PM)

BODY OF RELEASE, INVERTED PYRAMID: Governor James Smith today declared a state of emergency in the Great A&P fire rapidly spreading west. The fire started near Harvest Junction on the railroad and the fumes from the burning hazardous materials in the cars threaten a number of nearby communities, according to local authorities.

The governor declared the emergency following a similar declaration by Liberty County. The governor’s declaration allows the use of state resources in paying the costs of fighting the fire.

Smith also activated the State Emergency Operations Center, which coordinates state firefighting efforts in these situations. The governor is continuing to monitor the situation.

“Once again, we see a fire threatening our citizens and their homes. I know our superb team of firefighters will do all they can, but the conditions on the railroad are particularly difficult,” Smith said.

The governor repeated his request that everyone use caution and heed warning messages on TV and radio, or in their newspapers.

Unfortunately, these hazardous materials are creating a dangerous situation for all of us. I would urge you to be careful whenever you travel,” Smith said.

END: ###

SOCIAL MEDIA INFO: Consider adding social media information here, including social media handles, tweets, hashtags, web links, and other information relevant to the release content or the organization. For example, if you write a strong headline, you can use it as a tweet with a link to the news release.

CAPITAL CITY, COLUMBIA
HEADLINE: Nominations open for city’s transportation safety awards

DATELINE: Capital City - February 18, 20xx, 2 PM

BODY OF RELEASE IN INVERTED PYRAMID:

Traffic accidents in Capital City have dropped nearly 10 percent over the past calendar year, according to city transportation officials, and Mayor Jan Doe wants to know why so she can encourage more of the same.

“If you’ve noticed repaired potholes, cleared bike paths, easy-to-see traffic signs and the safe driving of your bus driver, I urge you to nominate the people responsible for recognition,” said Mayor Doe.

The Mayor’s Transportation Safety Awards recognize individuals and organizations that have made contributions to transportation safety in Capital City. The awards recognize accomplishments in the public and private sectors by individuals and organizations that promote transportation safety.

“The efforts of these organizations and individuals have made Capital City a safer place for all of us who live, work or visit here,” said Mayor Doe. “I look forward to honoring this year’s award recipients.”

Award categories include public transportation safety, rail safety and general traffic safety. For nomination forms, go to www.cctransafety.org.

To be eligible for consideration, activities and programs must have taken place during calendar year 20XX. Entries must be postmarked no later than March 15, 20XX, and mailed to The Mayor’s Transportation Safety Awards, Room 405, Post Office Box 27412, Capital City, Columbia 03269-0001.

Winners of the Mayor’s Transportation Safety Awards will be notified in April and honored in May at the Columbia Conference on Transportation Safety.

END: ###
Unit 4: Strategic Communications
This unit will discuss the role of planning in the PIO function.
Unit Objectives

Refer to Visual: 2

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe social marketing
- Relate the 8-Step Model to incident planning (planning P)

The visual displays the learning objectives for this unit.

Note
Social Marketing

Refer to Visual: 3

Social marketing is the use of commercial marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole.

This training highlights the importance of the strategic messaging concept and introduces an 8-step communication planning model founded on social marketing concepts. Let’s say that we need to address a message to someone that needs to evacuate. If they don’t evacuate, they may lose their life.
8-Step Communication Model

Refer to Visual: 4
The visual displays a model for carrying out a strategic communications process based on the social marketing approach.

The eight steps are:

1. **Assess Current Situation**
   - Acquire a thorough understanding of the problem, the audience and the action you want the audience to take. Assessing the situation reduces the assumptions and lays a solid foundation to continue the process.

2. **Set Communication Goals**
   - Answer the question: what do you want to accomplish? Once you set your goals, develop specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) objectives for implementing those goals.

3. **Identify Intended Audiences**
   - Identify the segments of the population you want to target. This will drive the messages, channels and activities you choose for maximum impact.
   - Once you identify your audience, go one step further and analyze the audience. When we segment down to a very specific audience, we learn what makes that particular group tick. And we can use that information to create messages and select channels that will align with the needs, beliefs, values, and priorities of our audiences.

4. **Develop and Pretest Messages**
   - Make sure your messages are: easy for your audience to understand; are direct and concise; don’t use jargon; and communicate the benefits to your audience.

5. **Select Channels and Activities**
   - Research which communication channels are the most effective to reach your target audience. Remember to engage partners as force multipliers. Partnerships with key stakeholders are valuable elements in your ability to communicate with your audiences.

6. **Develop an Action Plan**
   - How will you implement communications strategy? Do you have alternatives (backups) in place to implement all steps of the strategy? Did you identify potential risks and contingency plans?

7. **Develop and Pretest Materials**
   - Conduct concept and positioning testing to determine which materials are relevant to the audience; test the materials for memorability, impact, image, persuasiveness and other key attributes; conduct readability testing; consider adding peer or professional review to the materials testing process; conduct test marketing with a small sample of the target audience.

8. **Implement, Evaluate and Modify Plan**
Incident Planning and the 8-Step Model

Refer to Visual: 5

How do they relate?
During an emergency situation (the 5% aspect of the PIO’s job), you will be operating under ICS.

The Incident Planning Process — a crucial component of ICS — is described on the visual next to the 8-Step Model graphic.

You will notice that both incident planning and the 8-step model include processes for:

- Assessing the situation or developing situational awareness.
- Setting goals and objectives.
- Creating a plan.
- Implementing the plan.
- Evaluating and modifying the plan, as needed.
Fundamental Emergency Planning

Refer to Visual: 6

Deliberate Planning – Accomplished under non-emergency conditions; develops general procedures for future threats
Incident Planning – All planning associated with a particular incident once there is reason to believe that incident will occur

There are two fundamental types of emergency planning:
- Deliberate planning, which is done under non-emergency conditions and includes general procedures for future threats. Examples include the National Response Framework (NRF) and state emergency operations plans.
- Incident planning, which is all planning associated with a particular incident that is impending or has occurred, such as the Incident Action Plan for a given event or the strategic communications plan that incorporates the Functional Plans for that event.
Unit Summary

Refer to Visual: 7

In this unit, we discussed:

- Social marketing
- The 8-step model for strategic communication and how it relates to incident planning (Planning P)

The visual summarizes the key topics from this unit.

Note
Unit 5: Wrap-Up Exercise
Unit 5: Wrap-Up Exercise

Refer to Visual: 1

Note

This unit will give you the opportunity to apply what you have learned in this course.
Unit Objective

Refer to Visual: 2

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

• Given an emergency scenario (5% scenario), demonstrate public information techniques

The visual displays the learning objective for this unit.

Note
Activity: Public Information Strategies

Refer to Visual: 3

Instructions: Working in your assigned group: Use the techniques discussed in this training to complete your assignment.
You have 45 minutes.

**Activity**

**Purpose:** To apply techniques discussed in this course to an emergency scenario  
**Estimated Time:** 45 minutes

Instructions:
- Working in your assigned group, work together to complete the following tasks:
  1. Write three key messages.
  2. List the written products you would use to communicate those messages.
  3. Write talking points based on the three messages.
  4. Briefly describe how you will disseminate the information.
- You have 45 minutes.
The Situation

Refer to Visual: 4

- You are the PIO for Grand County Emergency Management (GCEM).
- It is now the 7th day of record cold temperatures in the State of Columbia and Grand County has been particularly hard hit.

Read the details in your Student Manual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>The details of the scenario are as follows:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- It is now the 7th day of record cold temperatures in the State of Columbia and Grand County has been particularly hard hit. You are the PIO for Grand County Emergency Management (GCEM).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- GCEM has activated its cold weather emergency plan.</td>
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<td>- Warming centers are open at the Grand Library and Point Light Elementary School.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- A shelter will open tomorrow at Grand High School in the auditorium.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Transportation is currently available and Grand Public Transit is adding routes and service to their regular schedule.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Farmer Fred’s, a local grocery chain, is offering to help during this time of need.</td>
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<td>- A power outage is affecting 200 homes in the affluent Grandville Acres community and the nationally-recognized University of Columbia Veterinary Hospital for Large Animals in Grand County.</td>
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<td>- You just learned that the county’s new shelter for homeless families is 50% destroyed following a fire last night started by a kerosene heater.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Activity: Public Information Strategies

Refer to Visual: 5

Tasks:

- Write three key messages
- List the written products you would use to communicate those messages
- Write talking points based on the three messages
- Briefly describe how you will disseminate the information

You have 45 minutes.
The Debrief

Refer to Visual: 6

• What did you learn in this course that you were able to use in the activity?
• What techniques do you plan to apply to your job?
• What public information skills do you want to hone?
• What public information training would you like to take?
Unit Summary

Refer to Visual: 7

In this unit, we discussed:

- How the tools and techniques discussed in this course could be applied to emergency public information activities

The visual summarizes the key topic from this unit.

Note
Unit 6: Course Summary
Unit 6: Course Summary

Refer to Visual: 1

This unit summarizes the course and gives participants an opportunity to provide feedback.

Note
Unit Objectives

Refer to Visual: 2

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Recall course goals
- List additional training opportunities

Note

The visual displays the learning objectives for this unit.
Did We Meet Our Course Goals?

Refer to Visual: 3

Did we meet our goals to:

- Introduce participants to the public information function and the role of the Public Information Officer (PIO) in the public safety/emergency management environment?
- Prepare participants to continue developing their public information skills through training?
**Did We Meet Our Course Objectives?**

Refer to Visual: 4

Did we:

- Define emergency public information and the importance of being proactive?
- Describe the role and functions of the Public Information Officer (PIO)?
- Describe the types of written products used in public information activities?
- Recall preparation techniques that contribute to a successful media interview?
- Apply public information techniques to a 5% scenario?
Continuing Your Development

Refer to Visual: 5

What will you do to continue your professional development?
You can continue your professional development by progressing through the Public Information Training Series curriculum, including:

- G0290: Basic Public Information Officer
- G0291: JIS/JIC Planning for PIOs
- E0388: Advanced PIO
- E0389: PIO Masters Course

The instructor can tell you how to apply for admittance to these courses.

You can also expand your knowledge of public information and emergency management by completing FEMA Independent Study (IS) courses. IS courses are free, and available online at www.training.fema.gov/is. Here is a sample list of the courses available:

- IS-100.b: Introduction to Incident Command System (or ICS course for specific specialty: healthcare, public works, etc.)
- IS-702.a: NIMS Public Information Systems
- IS-909: Community Preparedness: Implementing Simple Activities for Everyone
- IS-42 Social Media in Emergency Management
- IS-100.b Introduction to Incident Command System (ICS) (or ICS course for specific specialty: healthcare, public works, etc.)
- IS-200.b ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents (or discipline specific course)
- IS-201 Forms Used for the Development of the Incident Action Plan (Waived if ICS-300 completed)
- IS-251 Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) for Alerting Authorities
- IS-700.a National Incident Management System (NIMS), an Introduction
- IS-702.a NIMS Public Information Systems
- IS-800.b National Response Framework, An Introduction
Feedback

Refer to Visual: 6

- Please complete the course evaluation form

Use the course evaluation form to provide feedback on this training. Thanks for your participation!

Note
Today’s Date:
Participant Name (optional):

OVERALL PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

We are dedicated to the achievement of excellence in every training activity. To help us in this regard, please provide us with your comments on the workshop you have just completed. **We value your input. Your comments help us ensure we are offering training that meets the needs of the emergency management community.**

1. What additional topics would you like to have seen addressed in this course?
2. What (if any) topics would you like to see eliminated or reduced from this course?
3. General Comments: (Use this area to elaborate on facilities, instructors, course content, and materials.)
4. Rate the overall instruction, content and materials, by circling the appropriate number for each category in the table below. The scale ranges from 1 to 5, where 1 is low and 5 is high.

What is your overall rating for this course?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Overall Course</th>
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## Unit 2: Roles and Responsibilities

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## Unit 3: Public Information Skills Overview

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## Unit 4: Strategic Communications

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## Unit 5: Wrap-Up Exercise

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