

15

ESF 15 – External Affairs

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ESF 15, External Affairs Tasked Agencies	
Primary Agencies	Klamath County Board of County Commissioners
Supporting Agencies	Klamath County Emergency Management Agency
Adjunct Agencies	Local Media

1 Purpose and Scope

Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 provides guidance and procedures for gathering, controlling, and disseminating emergency information to the public, media partners, community leaders, and other stakeholders. This ESF also establishes policies for internal review and approval of public information prior to its release to the community and/or media partners, while clearly defining clearance procedures within the incident command structure. This support function pertains to all response agencies and is applicable to all types of incidents.

Coordination and collaboration with local and regional media and public information personnel is essential to providing accurate, consistent, and timely information regarding the status of the emergency response/recovery. Where applicable, information should be provided in appropriate languages to accommodate non-English-speaking populations. Public information and educational materials dealing with emergency management and preparedness can be provided to the general public and community partners prior to a disaster/incident. Information can be disseminated in a variety of formats and via multiple communication avenues.

The primary means for disseminating public information in this jurisdiction include Internet, radio, television, brochures, newspapers, community meetings, workshops, and schools.

2 Policies and Agreements

The following policies and agreements are currently in place:

- None at this time.

3 Situation and Assumptions

3.1 Situation

During periods of emergency, the public needs—and generally wants—detailed information regarding protective action needed to minimize loss of life and property. There are times, however, when disaster strikes without warning and the public information system cannot react quickly enough to properly inform the public about the hazard. For this reason, it is important that prior to the occurrence of an emergency, the public is made aware of potential hazards and protective measures that should be employed.

3.2 Assumptions

An effective program combining both education and emergency information will significantly reduce disaster-related casualties and property damage. It is recognized, however, that people are generally unconcerned about hazards until they are personally affected, despite educational programs. Thus, special emphasis must be placed on the effectiveness of the emergency information program.

4 Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for each department in support of emergency services will vary depending on the type of resource, the length of the warning period, and the duration of the incident.

4.1 General

The overall responsibility for public information rests with the Klamath County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), who may appoint a Public Information Officer (PIO) as it deems necessary and if the situation warrants to manage and coordinate Public Information for the BOCC. Normally the Incident Commander appoints a Public Information Officer (PIO) to manage incident information. This person, under the supervision of the Incident Commander, will manage and coordinate all emergency information-related activities, usually coordinating the efforts of all affected jurisdiction's PIO's. This coordination may be accomplished at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

4.2 Task Assignments

4.2.1 Klamath County Board of Commissioners

- Appoint a Public Information Officer.
- Ensure that a public information and education program is developed and maintained.
- Provide official public information.
- Authorize release of information to the media.

4.2.2 Public Information Officer

- Direct all public information efforts.
- Serve as the Official County spokesperson and the sole source for dissemination of official emergency related materials to the public.
- Conduct public education programs as an ongoing activity.

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- Coordinating with the Emergency Manager, and based on all hazards likely to confront the County, develop and maintain Emergency Public Information guidance materials, to include:
 - General materials dealing with the nature of hazards and basic protective actions to take in the event of an emergency;
 - Hazard-specific instructions regarding where to go and what to do in an emergency, including detailed instructions for protective actions such as shelter and evacuation; and
 - Meaning of warning signals.
- Develop methods (e.g., newspaper supplements, prepared TV/radio scripts for broadcast stations) for distribution of EPI materials to the public. Ensure that special programs are included, e.g., the visually impaired, non-English-speaking groups, etc.
- Develop written agreements with broadcast media (e.g., radio stations, TV stations, cable TV, and educational TV) to receive and disseminate warning messages and emergency information.
- Provide media news releases with clearance from the Incident Commander.
- Check all media for accuracy of reports (TV, Radio, Print).
- Maintain a record of events.
- Take action to control rumors.
- Educate all department heads and administrative staff on media access.
- Authenticate sources of information and verify for accuracy before releasing.
- Provide for dissemination of emergency warnings with the media.
- Secure printed and photographic documentation of the emergency/disaster situation.
- Compile and prepares emergency information for the public in case of emergency.

4.2.3 Media

- Provide coverage of emergency management activities.
- Work with Emergency Management on educational programs.

- Check accuracy of information with Emergency Management.

5 Concept of Operations

5.1 General

- Emergency information efforts should focus on specific event-related information. This information will generally be instructional, focusing on such things as warning, evacuation, and shelter. It is also important to keep the public informed of the general progress of events.
- A special effort should be made to report positive information regarding emergency response to reassure the community that the situation is under control. Rumor control must be a major part of the informational program. Public feedback should be used as a measure of the program's effectiveness.
- Education efforts will be directed toward increasing public awareness about potential hazards and how people should deal with them. All information and education efforts will rely heavily on the cooperation of commercial media organizations.

5.2 Phases of Emergency Management

5.2.1 Mitigation

- Conduct hazard awareness programs.
- Coordinate with media.

5.2.2 Preparedness

- Conduct Public Education Programs.
- Prepare emergency information for release during emergencies.

5.2.3 Response

- Release public information.
- Coordinate rumor control.
- Schedule news conferences.

5.2.4 Recovery

- Provide public information
- Compile record of events.
- Assess effectiveness of information and education program.

6 Direction and Control

6.1 General

The Klamath County Emergency Management Agency is responsible for all education and information programs. During disaster incidents, the IC may designate a person as the PIO. All emergency disaster information will be coordinated through the PIO. This person may operate from the EOC and function as a member of the EOC staff. All departments and agencies shall coordinate with the PIO before releasing any information to the public.

6.2 Educational Programs

There are many activities involved in the educational programs. The media are constantly provided with information about new developments affecting emergency management activities. Thus, much information reaches the public via television, radio, and newspaper. Lectures and other presentations are often requested by various organizations, presenting another opportunity for public education. Educational brochures and films are also distributed to the general public and organizations.

7 Supporting Plans and Procedures

The following plans and procedures are currently in place:

- National Response Framework, ESF 15, External Affairs
- State of Oregon Emergency Operations Plan, ESF 15, External Affairs
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), 1981. Guide for increasing local government readiness during periods of International Crisis, CPG 1-7.
- FEMA, 1984. Formulating Public Policy in Emergency Management, SM51.
- FEMA, 1981. Public Affairs Workshop, SM21.

8 Appendices

None at this time.

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