



State of Utah Emergency Operations Plan



ESF #15 Public Information

Primary Agency: Division of Emergency Management

Support Agencies: All State agencies and departments as assigned that have public information officers.
The Utah PIO Association

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

1. Provide guidance and procedures for disseminating Emergency Public Information in support of the State's response and recovery to an emergency or disaster.
2. Provide for the effective collection, monitoring, management and dissemination of accurate, useful and timely information to media outlets during emergencies or disasters.
3. Disseminate emergency instructions and protective actions to the public.
4. Provide disaster and Emergency Public Information to special needs populations.
5. Maintain procedures to disseminate public information and instructions for obtaining disaster assistance.
6. Provide procedures to develop and disseminate public information regarding governmental response and recovery operations.
7. Coordinate Emergency Public Information (EPI) with State agencies, county and local jurisdictions, and the private sector (e.g. energy suppliers) to foster cooperation, promote wise actions and dispel rumors and hearsay.
8. Provide long-term public education efforts related to hazard awareness, family protection planning and emergency self-help.

B. Scope

ESF #15 applies to emergencies, disasters or major catastrophes, natural or manmade, when it is necessary to augment the disaster response capability of local government by State resources.

II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. Situation

A significant natural disaster, emergency condition, or other incident may be of such a magnitude that the means of disseminating public information in the disaster area may be severely affected or cease to function. Outside the disaster area, the demand for information concerning the emergency or disaster will be overwhelming.

ESF #15 is responsible for the following:

1. Disseminating coordinated information through the Joint Information System (JIS) concerning specific disasters, associated threats, and protective actions to the news media and general public.
2. Activating and operating a physical or virtual Joint Information Center (JIC) to provide a central contact point for the news media and the general public to access information concerning protective actions taken by the State.
3. Establishing a format for managing and staffing of public information telephone lines in the JIC before, during, and after a disaster. ESF #15 will coordinate with the 2-1-1 phone bank to ensure needs are met.
4. Releasing public information concerning needed volunteer goods and services.
5. Sharing information with other external partners, including federal and local government agencies, State and local elected officials, other VIPs and certain private sector elements.

B. Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made:

1. Effective measures can be taken to enhance survival and minimize hardship during an emergency or disaster by providing EPI to the public. During an emergency, disaster or major catastrophe, the public requires survival instructions, information regarding disaster relief and government response and recovery operations.
2. When an emergency, disaster or major catastrophe strikes, the JIS cannot always react in time to inform the public about the hazard and appropriate safety precautions. Therefore, it is important to inform the public before an emergency, disaster or major catastrophe, of hazards, protective actions and preparedness measures they can employ to reduce the impact of the hazards on themselves and their community.
3. A public affairs program combining both public education and community

information will help to significantly reduce disaster-related casualties, property damage and economic loss. People will want more emergency preparedness information during an emerging crisis. The public and/or media can receive this information by accelerated printing, distribution of advisories or fliers, web- or mobile-based delivery or prepositioned information.

4. The principal means by which EPI will be disseminated will include traditional news releases to the media, Emergency Alert System (EAS), social media, television, radio, cable outlets, a dedicated website for disseminating EPI (<http://emergencyinfoutah.com>), newspapers, press services and fliers. A back-up means for public information will include vehicle public address systems, door-to-door contact or posting of billboards during critical periods and in locations with life-safety incidents.
5. Access and functional needs groups will be considered based on the ability of people to receive, act on, or understand EPI messages. These might include people with disabilities, sight or hearing impairments, non-English speaking public, custodial institutions (i.e., schools, nursing homes), hospitals and prisons. While some traditional methods may reach several of the special needs populations, many will remain on the periphery, unaware of critical notifications or warnings.
6. Major events create significant media interest that will bring out-of-state reporters, photographers and camera crews to an incident. This will create a heavy demand on the State and local EPI structure requiring augmentation. External sources will be interested in major operations, devastation, high impact and human-interest events.
7. Extensive destruction of media communications facilities and loss of electrical power may severely disrupt the normal flow and dissemination of information in the disaster area.
8. The demand for public information outside the disaster area may exceed the capabilities of the Division of Emergency Management (DEM) and JIC in coordination with the Governor's office public affairs staff.
9. The demand for public information in the disaster area may exceed the capability of the local government to provide service. Additional support may be requested from the State or if the nature of the disaster causes inquiries to State offices. The Utah Public Information Officer Association can also provide supplemental support staff for public affairs activities.
10. In the aftermath of a disaster, information is usually erroneous, vague, difficult to confirm, and contradictory.
11. In the aftermath of a disaster, there will be critical demand to know what volunteer and donations resources are needed.
12. Public information staff deployed to a disaster area may need to be virtually self-sufficient.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. Mission

1. Develop a media relations program for DEM that will be utilized under routine and emergency conditions to effectively respond to media inquiries and public interests.
2. Disseminate preparedness information, emergency instructions and protective actions to the public through the media to enhance public health, safety and welfare and economic stability in Utah, in conjunction with certain private sector elements if indicated (e.g. energy suppliers).
3. Provide information and instructions to the public for obtaining disaster relief and assistance.
4. Disseminate information regarding State and local governmental response activities and operations in support of life safety and property and environmental protection.
5. Curtail erroneous or conflicting information presented to the public.
6. Maintain a roster of federal, State, local and private-sector emergency public information officers (PIOs) and provide this roster to media outlets.

B. Concept

Establish and maintain contact with the media before, during and after termination of an event.

1. DEM media relations efforts will provide information on State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) operations and related State response functions. It is important to keep the media informed of the general progress of associated events. Efforts will be made to report positive information regarding emergency response to reassure the public that the situation is being dealt with and utilizing appropriate resources.
 - (a) Education efforts will be directed toward managing the public's expectations, increasing public awareness about hazards and how people can successfully deal with them.
 - (b) Information and education efforts will rely on the cooperation of commercial media organizations, social media and the Division's own dissemination channels.
 - (c) Public awareness campaigns will be harder to achieve due to the large influx of population into the state.
2. State agencies involved in emergency response operations will coordinate news releases regarding their operations with the DEM Lead PIO. Using the JIS, the DEM PIO or JIC Management Team will ensure that the Governor's staff is aware of information releases that are being made by State agencies. The DEM PIO and JIC Management Team will coordinate this function for the DEM Director with

the Governor's Communications Staff.

3. The Governor's Communications Staff will advise the Governor of pertinent policy issues regarding emergency information and establish press conferences for the Governor. The DEM PIO and JIC Management team will support and assist in these efforts in concert with PIOs from other State agencies and the private sector.
4. When a Presidential Declaration of an Emergency or Major Disaster has been issued, the State Coordinating Officer will coordinate with the Federal Coordinating Officer to establish policies concerning joint news releases. This information will be relayed to the Governor's Communications Staff. Coordination of these functions will be maintained and managed by DEM.
5. Depending on need, a physical or virtual JIC should be established in coordination with the DEM Director to coordinate multi-agency news releases and dissemination of public information. The JIC will be used to convey information releases to the media for immediate dissemination to the public. (For more information on JIC functions please reference the Utah JIC/JIS Standard Operating Guidelines). In certain instances, it may become necessary for the Governor or other designated public officials to request activation of the EAS to provide information directly to the public.

C. Outreach Programs

DEM is responsible for conducting public affairs programs. The DEM Director will appoint a PIO and other support staff to direct, coordinate and produce community education, information activities. The PIO will also train, exercise and prepare for State EOC operations. There are many types of activities associated with the educational outreach program.

1. The media is provided with information on both routine and emergency developments affecting emergency management functions. This information reaches the public via television, websites, social media, radio and newspapers.
 - (a) Lectures and other group presentations are provided to organizations and community-based institutions.
 - (b) Tours of the State EOC, briefings on emergency management and the responsibilities of the Division are provided to groups, including schools, service organizations, Scouting organizations, local military units and other interested organizations.
 - (c) Informative educational brochures are distributed to county emergency management offices, the general public and organizations in support of emergency preparedness and outreach efforts. Similar information is available on Division websites.
 - (d) Conducting federal and State community and family preparedness programs. The focus of these programs is to develop public awareness of emergency self-help and an understanding of how emergencies, disasters or major

catastrophes can impact communities. Developing this capability will assist potential victims during emergencies by enhancing their ability to assist themselves during the initial period after a disaster strikes.

2. Public Information/Media Relations Programs: Many activities are ongoing educational efforts conducted by the Division of Emergency Management. Pre-scripted news releases and fact sheets will be maintained and distributed to the media.

IV. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Primary Agency and Responsibilities for ESF #15

Utah Division of Emergency Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead agency during catastrophic disasters. • The Director and Deputy Director of the Division of Emergency Management will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide authority for the release of state-level information to the public. ▪ Direct the DEM PIO or JIC Management Team to disseminate emergency instructions, and information on government response operations and emergency/disaster public assistance programs. ▪ Provide State EOC and Joint Field Office (JFO) support for the Emergency Public Information program. ▪ Conduct public information, media relations and community education programs. A PIO will be appointed by the DEM Director/Deputy Director to provide coordination of these services and serve as a member of the policy section. • The DEM PIO and JIC Management Team will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operate an EPI program in conjunction with the Governor’s Communications Staff and State agency PIOs. ▪ Provide guidance to the DEM Director, Department of Public Safety leadership and Governor’s communications staff concerning policy issues and the EPI program. ▪ Conduct periodic news conferences with the Governor’s Communications Staff providing emergency information about disaster conditions, State emergency operations and the State’s involvement in federal disaster assistance programs. ▪ Continue EPI releases during the post-disaster period to

counteract rumors and public unrest.

- Maintain effective working relationships with the media.
- Facilitate media staging and produce media briefings.
- Develop procedures for the coordination and release of information and news releases with the other active JICs, Utah National Guard PIO, the American Red Cross, 2-1-1, Utah VOAD and other government agencies and organizations, and certain private sector. Ensure these groups are invited to and participate in the state JIC and JIS.
- Maintain disaster related information on hazards the state faces to utilize during emergencies, disasters or major catastrophes.
- Assist the Governor's Communications Staff in coordinating and directing EPI activities during an emergency, disaster or major catastrophe at the State EOC.
- Monitor and collect information from the media useful in supporting requests for emergency action. Share this information with the EOC and Planning section.
- Maintain a system for information inquiries from the public and government officials.
- Other State agencies are responsible for coordinating and providing information to the DEM PIO, regarding emergency response activities of their agencies.

Support Agencies and Responsibilities

Federal Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Federal Coordinating Officer is responsible for releasing official public information concerning federal assistance and disaster response activities in cooperation with the State Coordinating Officer, PIO and their respective JIC-PIO staff.• The JIC and PIO staff will use the JIS concept in releasing information to the media with other State, local, federal, and/or volunteer agency officials.
Other Support Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide Public Information support as necessary.
Utah PIO Association	
Governor's Communication Staff	
Other State Agencies	

