



ESF-15 Public Information

JOHNSON COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Coordinating Agency: Johnson County Manager's Office

Support Agencies: Johnson County Departmental Public Information Staff
Johnson County Emergency Management
and Homeland Security
Jurisdictional Public Information Officers

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of *ESF-15 Public Information* is to establish how public information activities will be coordinated to meet the needs generated by disasters affecting Johnson County.

Scope

This annex identifies the key policies, concepts of operations, roles and responsibilities, and capabilities associated with public information in Johnson County. Specific operating procedures and protocols are addressed in documents maintained by the participating organizations. ESF-15 Public Information applies to all individuals and organizations that may be involved in public information required to support disaster response and recovery operations in Johnson County. ESF-15 Public Information encompasses the full range of external affairs functions including public information, community relations, and governmental affairs.

- Public Information includes providing incident-related information through the media and other sources to individuals, families, businesses, and industries directly or indirectly affected by the incident.
- Community relations activities include identifying and communicating with community leaders (e.g., grassroots, political, religious, business, labor, and ethnic) and neighborhood advocacy groups to ensure a rapid dissemination of information, identify unmet needs, and establish an ongoing dialogue and information exchange
- Government Affairs includes establishing contact with members of the Johnson County Board of Commissioners and legislative bodies representing the affected areas to provide information on the incident and the status of response and recovery activities. It also includes coordinating responses to inquiries from the Board of Commissioners and legislative bodies.

In an emergency or disaster, multifaceted coordination is needed to insure that the county is responsive to the informational needs of its residents and accurate and timely information is disseminated. This annex outlines the authorities, procedures, and roles and responsibilities specific to the public information annex.

SITUATION & ASSUMPTIONS

In addition to the “Situation and Assumptions” section in the Basic Plan, the Concept of Operations for ESF-15 Public Information is based on the following:

Situation

1. The public needs timely and accurate information regarding disasters. This information is needed before, during, and after disasters.
2. All organizations involved in disaster preparedness and response in Johnson County maintain the capability to provide information to the public at some level. Many of these organizations maintain capabilities and procedures for coordinating the release of emergency public information and perform the activity on a regular basis.
3. The Regional Association of Public Information Officers (RAPIO) is a regional organization of local Public Information Officers (PIOs) who meet on a regular basis to address a variety of regional public information initiatives. Assistance from trained PIOs can be requested through RAPIO when/if needed.
4. The Kansas Association of Public Information Officers (KAPIO) is a statewide organization of government and quasi-government public information officers and communication professionals that may be utilized during disaster response and recovery efforts.
5. There are a variety of tools and systems available to assist with notifying and disseminating information to the public. These include the Johnson County outdoor warning system, the Emergency Alert System (EAS), NOAA All-hazards Weather Radios, media outlets, emergency notification systems (phone, text, email, etc.), websites, and social media forums.
6. Johnson County citizens turn to television, radio, the NOAA radios, and the internet a majority of the time to receive emergency preparedness and response information.

Assumptions

1. There will be a strong need for the public to get disaster assistance information. The timely dissemination of accurate, well-coordinated emergency public information

will reduce the impact to life and property as well as help to maintain public trust and confidence.

2. Jurisdictions and organizations involved in response and recovery will recognize the importance of relaying common emergency messages and will coordinate with other jurisdictions and organizations to ensure consistent information is disseminated.
3. PIOs collect and maintain a file of fact sheets, instructions and procedures, and other readily available pre-scripted information on a wide range of topics to support the rapid dissemination of public information. Pre-scripted information is verified on a regular basis to ensure that it is current and accurate.
4. Many disasters can occur rapidly, hampering the ability of response organizations and local government to provide comprehensive information to everyone impacted at the onset. For this reason, it is important to ensure the public is aware of potential hazards and know the appropriate protective efforts before a disaster occurs.
5. The media assists in disseminating emergency information to the public.
6. A disaster may have negative impacts on the existing communication infrastructure or systems requiring the use of alternative methods to provide information to the public.
7. Disasters may impact individuals' ability to receive public information due to displacement, or limited access to television, phone, newspaper, the internet, social networks, etc.
8. A disaster may create a significant demand for information from a wide variety of sources which may exceed local capabilities. Some situations may require the provision of enhanced or supplemental public information resources.
9. Rumors or misinformation may be spread before, during, and after a disaster. This can cause unnecessary distress among the public, provoke counter-productive public actions, and impede response and recovery efforts.
10. The interest generated by a disaster may lead to requests for information or visits from a variety of public officials, dignitaries, or VIPs. Such requests will require coordination and resources.
11. All equipment and systems relied upon to notify/inform the public are operational and tested on a regular basis.
12. All PIOs will have basic PIO training and receive training on relevant plans and procedures specific to the emergency public information function.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

1. The County Manager's Office will maintain a cadre of specially trained PIOs to support the County in an emergency or disaster.
2. PIOs should establish and maintain a solid working relationship with the media. Additionally, the media should be involved with public information planning, training, and exercises when appropriate. PIOs will maintain a current media directory with points of contact and programming information for radio, television, newspaper, and other media outlets.
3. Radio, television, print media, NOAA all-hazard radios, fliers, posters, brochures, information kiosks, social media, and the Johnson County website are all established methods for providing information to the public. Use of a particular medium(s) will be situationally dependent, based upon the urgency of the information and the intended audience.
4. When disasters impact power capabilities, other means of communication may be required to provide public information to the community. Some of these may include bullhorns or door drops from local law enforcement or other volunteer organizations, neighborhood watch groups, libraries and central public areas, etc.
5. Public Communications methods may require "special" support for some population segments such as:
 - a. Economically disadvantaged;
 - b. Limited language proficiency;
 - c. People with disabilities – physical, mental, cognitive or sensory;
 - d. Age vulnerable (under 5 or over 65);
 - e. Culturally/geographically isolated.
6. Organizations responsible for providing emergency notifications/public information are responsible for maintaining the capability to do so. Specific planning efforts may include developing and maintaining the plans, procedures, checklists, contact lists, and other materials needed to implement the public information function.
7. Emergency response organizations, cities, and Johnson County government will coordinate and share the responsibility for notifying and informing the public regarding emergencies and disasters. Each organization will notify and provide information to the public (before, during, and after disasters) according to their plans and procedures.
8. In smaller, more routine emergencies, notification and public information can usually be handled by an Incident Commander (IC) and/or a single organization's Public Information Officer (PIO).

9. In larger or more unique disasters, organizations involved in the response will coordinate their notification and/or public information information efforts.
10. In situations when the Johnson County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated, the ESF-15 Public Information Team will automatically be activated.
11. The EOC Director is responsible for designating the Public Information Officer (PIO) when the EOC is activated. The PIO will be responsible for overall coordination of public information activities for Johnson County. The PIO will lead the ESF-15 Public Information Team in the EOC and support the EOC Director.
12. During disasters, county departments are responsible for public information activities within the scope of their department and according to their organization's plans and procedures. This dissemination is coordinated with the PIO, the ESF-15 Public Information Team, the Joint Information Center (JIC) (when activated) and with any of the following (as appropriate): surrounding counties, local jurisdictions, nongovernmental organizations, organizational districts, and state and federal agencies.
13. Through this coordinated effort, the following information will be disseminated to the public:
 - a. The risk of hazards and appropriate preparedness actions;
 - b. Emergency status information;
 - c. Lifesaving or health preservation instructions;
 - d. Disaster assistance and recovery information;
 - e. Information in response to public or media inquiry;
 - f. Information to resolve any conflicting information or to dispel rumors;
 - g. Donations management assistance from external groups.
14. The mission of the ESF-15 Public Information Team is to ensure the provision and coordination of accurate, consistent, and timely information to meet the needs generated by disasters affecting Johnson County. The ESF-15 Public Information Team will orchestrate the countywide coordination required to fulfill this mission. These activities will include:
 - a. Establish and maintain operational awareness of public information through direct communications links with operational units; (jurisdictional/organizational PIOs and/or liaisons, County EOC ESF teams, County EOC Operations Section Chief, County EOC Director, County Manager's Office, Board of County Commissioners, state and federal level PIO's, the public media, etc.) in the field and/or their appropriate coordinating entities;
 - b. Conduct public information disaster impact and needs assessments, prioritize ESF-15 operational objectives in alignment with the EOC Action Plan, and coordinate ESF-15 county-wide response activities;

- c. Collect and analyze information relevant to ESF-15 and report in WebEOC and EOC documents including EOC Action Plans and Situational Reports;
 - d. Receive, manage, & track resource requests for ESF-15;
 - e. Ensure full coordination of activities with other groups within the EOC to assist in the development and maintenance of a common operating picture.
15. When deemed appropriate, the PIO will establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) to facilitate the collection, coordination, and dissemination of public information for the county. The JIC provides an expanded capability with liaisons to work closely with public information representatives of various county departments and agencies, nongovernmental organizations, organizational districts, government officials from local jurisdictions, and state & federal governments.
16. The following tasks will be accomplished through ESF-15 Public Information in coordination with the Joint Information Center (when applicable):
- a. Develop a capability to rapidly release accurate emergency instructions and information to the public;
 - b. Coordinate periodic media briefings throughout an emergency or disaster as appropriate. A media briefing center may be established at the JIC or other locations as determined by the incident. These locations must be available on short notice and be logistically suitable for conducting media briefings;
 - c. Receive inquiries from the media and the public concerning an emergency situation and respond with official information or relay inquiries to the appropriate function;
 - d. Obtain reports or situation summaries from EOC representatives of all response organization elements to maintain situational awareness;
 - e. Prepare media releases, key messages, and talking points;
 - f. Develop and maintain an emergency on-line web presence for the County to provide emergency information to the media and public;
 - g. Deploy Information Officers into the field as appropriate;
 - h. Conduct situation briefings for visitors, media, other government agencies, representatives, or interested or affected parties;
 - i. Conduct tours for VIP's and elected officials, as appropriate;
 - j. Arrange interviews with key personnel, when requested by the media, or the PIO.
17. Some information may be defined as "Specialized Information Protocols" which may require a different level of approval and dissemination processes. Some examples of these are:
- a. Information on restricted areas, as well as the process for reentry into an area after it has been declared safe, will be obtained from the Incident Commander's staff and disseminated immediately to the media and the public.

- b. Information on any federal, state or local disaster assistance that might be available will be obtained from the agency offering the assistance. In some cases this information may given directly to the media and the public. In others cases, a telephone number will be provided for obtaining additional information.
- c. Information on the number of fatalities, injured and missing will be obtained from the Incident Commander’s staff and coordinate dissemination to the media and the public, as appropriate. The identity of victims will be released only after confirmation of proper next-of-kin notification.

18. The county has a network of outdoor warning sirens that are owned and maintained by the cities. The sirens are used to alert the public of emergency situations. The County maintains the capability and has the primary responsibility to activate the sirens from multiple locations. [This link](#) provides a map depicting the location of outdoor sirens and their areas of coverage.

19. All individuals/organizations involved in disaster response should collect and record information on the utilization of labor, materials, equipment, and disaster-related costs.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ESF-15 Public Information Team

The mission of the ESF-15 Public Information Team is to ensure the provision of Community Relations required to meet the needs generated by disaster affecting Johnson County.	
Coordinating Agency	Johnson County Manager’s Office
Support Agencies	Johnson County Departmental Public Information Staff Johnson County Emergency Management and Homeland Security Jurisdictional Public Information Officers
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the ESF-15 Annex annually and update as needed Continually evaluate the capabilities required to accomplish the ESF-15 mission, identify any gaps, and leverage resources to address them Manage the resolution of ESF-15 after-action issues Develop and/or participate in relevant ESF related planning, training, and exercise activities at the local, regional, state, and/or federal level Ensure necessary supplements to the ESF annex are developed and maintained (including emergency contact lists, resource lists, departmental/functional plans, procedures, protocols, & EOC job aids) Ensure representatives from the Coordinating Agency and Support Agencies are fully trained and prepared to respond to the County EOC as ESF-15 Team Members
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and maintain operational awareness of public information through direct communications links with operational units; (jurisdictional/organizational PIOs and/or liaisons, County EOC ESF teams, County EOC Operations Section Chief, County EOC Director, County Manager’s Office, Board of County Commissioners, state and federal level PIO’s, the public media, etc.) in the field and/or their appropriate coordinating entities;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct public information disaster impact and needs assessments, prioritize ESF-15 operational objectives in alignment with the EOC Action Plan, and coordinate ESF-15 county-wide response activities; • Collect and analyze information relevant to ESF-15 and report in WebEOC and EOC documents including EOC Action Plans and Situational Reports; • Receive, manage, & track resource requests for ESF-15; • Ensure full coordination of activities with other groups within the EOC to assist in the development and maintenance of a common operating picture.
Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate the ESF-15 support of recovery activities • Coordinate the restoration of ESF-15 resources and/or capabilities as needed • Ensure ESF-15 Team Members and/or their agencies provide appropriate records of costs incurred • Conduct an ESF-15 after action review
Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and implement mitigation activities to prevent or lessen the impact of future incidents

ESF-15 Public Information Coordinating Agency Responsibilities

Johnson County Manager's Office	
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure each of the preparedness responsibilities identified for the County ESF-15 Team (listed above) are accomplished • Maintain an inventory of agency resources • Maintain emergency contact information
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ESF-15 support in emergency/disasters, in accordance with departmental operations guides & protocols, existing MOUs & agreements, and the <i>ESF-15 Annex</i>. • Coordinate response activities with the County EOC in support of the ESF-15 mission • Ensure each of the response responsibilities identified for the County ESF-15 Team (listed above) are accomplished regardless of the activation/staffing level of the County EOC • Arrange for appropriate staffing of the County ESF-15 Team in the EOC throughout activations • Coordinate the ESF-15 Team activities in the County EOC
Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate the ESF-15 support of recovery activities • Coordinate the restoration of ESF-15 resources and/or capabilities as needed • Ensure ESF-15 Team Members and/or their agencies provide appropriate records of costs incurred • Conduct an ESF-15 after action review
Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and implement mitigation activities to prevent or lessen the impact of future incidents

ESF Support Agency Responsibilities

Johnson County Departmental Public Information Staff	
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with the ESF-15 Team preparedness activities (listed above) • Maintain an inventory of agency resources • Maintain agency emergency contact information
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ESF-15 support in emergency/disasters, in accordance with departmental operations guides & protocols, existing MOUs & agreements, and the <i>ESF-15 Annex</i>. • Coordinate response activities with the County EOC in support of the ESF-15 mission • Send agency representatives to the County EOC as part of the ESF-15 Team when activated

Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate the restoration of agency resources and/or capabilities as needed • Participate in countywide recovery planning and activities • Prepare the documentation required to become eligible for reimbursement • Participate in after action reviews
Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and implement mitigation activities to prevent or lessen the impact of future incidents
Johnson County Emergency Management and Homeland Security	
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with the ESF-15 Team preparedness activities (listed above) • Maintain an inventory of agency resources • Maintain agency emergency contact information
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ESF-15 support in emergency/disasters, in accordance with departmental operations guides & protocols, existing MOUs & agreements, and the <i>ESF-15 Annex</i>. • Coordinate response activities with the County EOC in support of the ESF-15 mission • Send agency representatives to the County EOC as part of the ESF-15 Team when activated
Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate the restoration of agency resources and/or capabilities as needed • Participate in countywide recovery planning and activities • Prepare the documentation required to become eligible for reimbursement • Participate in after action reviews
Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and implement mitigation activities to prevent or lessen the impact of future incidents
Jurisdictional Public Information Officers	
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with the ESF-15 Team preparedness activities (listed above) • Maintain an inventory of agency resources • Maintain agency emergency contact information
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ESF-15 support in emergency/disasters, in accordance with departmental operations guides & protocols, existing MOUs & agreements, and the <i>ESF-15 Annex</i>. • Coordinate response activities with the County EOC in support of the ESF-15 mission • Send agency representatives to the County EOC as part of the ESF-15 Team when activated
Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate the restoration of agency resources and/or capabilities as needed • Participate in countywide recovery planning and activities • Prepare the documentation required to become eligible for reimbursement • Participate in after action reviews
Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and implement mitigation activities to prevent or lessen the impact of future incidents

POLICIES, AUTHORITIES, AND REFERENCES

Please refer to the Basic Plan for additional Policies, Authorities, and References.

Johnson County Joint Information Center (JIC) plan

KOMA – Kansas Open Meetings Act

KORA- Kansas Open Records Act

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