

## **ESF #15 – External Communications**

<b>ESF Coordinator:</b>	Adjutant General's Department, Public Affairs Office
<b>Primary Agency:</b>	Governor's Office Adjutant General's Department, Public Affairs Office
<b>Support Agencies:</b>	All agencies and organizations having a role in the Kansas Response Plan

### **Purpose**

The purpose of Emergency Support Function (ESF) #15 is to disseminate information on emergencies to the public through the news media. ESF #15 is concerned with information on emergencies in which local governments have requested state assistance, to coordinate, prepare and disseminate relevant disaster-related information to the media.

### **Scope**

ESF #15 coordinates state actions to provide the required external affairs support to federal, state, local, and tribal incident management elements. ESF #15 applies to all State departments and agencies that may require public affairs support or whose public affairs assets may be employed during a disaster/emergency.

The provisions of this annex apply to all organizations and agencies having a role in disaster/emergency response or other events designated by the Administrator of Kansas Division of Emergency Management (KDEM) where significant interagency coordination is required.

### **Policies**

Emergency Public Information activities are coordinated through a Joint Information Center (JIC) designated to disseminate a variety of information and instructions to the general public, government officials, and the news media through direct contact, news conferences, news releases and advisories, and response to public and news media queries.

The Adjutant General's Department, Public Information Officer (PIO), as State PIO, serves as the official spokesperson and primary news media point of contact for inquiries relating to emergency response and recovery operations. The State PIO may enlist other state agency PIOs to serve as spokespersons on behalf of the state or on behalf of their agency, and refer media inquiries to those

individuals. These activities are coordinated with the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), the Governor's Press Secretary, state agencies, and with local and federal information counterparts

Following a Governor's declaration, all agencies and organization having a role in the Kansas Response Plan (KRP) will be integrated into the Joint Information System (JIS).

## **Concept of Operations**

### **General**

Following a state declaration, or at the request of the Incident Commander, the JIC will be activated and partner agencies may be required to report to the SEOC.

The goal of Emergency Public Information is to keep the public informed of the general progress of events and provide educational information, particularly in the realm of health and safety.

A comprehensive emergency public information program combines educational and emergency information to reduce casualties and property damage and provides long-term public education related to hazard awareness. In either case, the participation of several state agencies is often required for successful implementation.

### **Joint information system**

Emergency Public Information activities are coordinated through a JIS designed to disseminate a variety of information and instruction to the general public, government officials, and the news media through direct contact, news conferences, news releases and advisories, and timely response to public and news media queries.

The primary JIC, established in support of the KRP, may release general medical and public health response information to the public after consultation with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). When possible, a recognized spokesperson from the public health and medical community (state or local) delivers relevant community messages.

### **Organization**

ESF #15 will be staffed by the Governor's Office and PIO from partner agencies. During an emergency or disaster, the primary and support agencies of ESF #15 will respond directly to the Incident Commander.

ESF #15 oversees the release of information to the public through the media. Staff will assist with incoming requests for information, preparing for news conferences, drafting news releases and handling reporter and citizen calls. Other state agency PIOs may be asked to assist with the above duties or other communication-related duties including serving as a spokesperson as needed.

### **Notification**

- KDEM staff will notify the Governor's Office and the State PIO of incidents, which have potential state public information implications; and
- The State PIO will notify designated PIOs and identify those who will report to the SEOC.

### **Actions**

Examples of actions performed under ESF #15 during the various phases of an emergency include, but are not limited to:

- **Preparedness**
  - Implement a comprehensive public information program. Such a program should include public service announcements that are prepared in English and other languages and are closed-captioned news conferences, news releases, hotlines, fact sheets for media and local organizations, and state agency Web site updates.
- **Response**
  - Publicize response activities that directly benefit affected communities, including location of shelters and feeding stations; location of comfort stations; location and hours of operation for health clinics to receive medical attention or specific medications, boil water orders; food safety measures, road closure information; school and office closing information; environmental hazards; and
  - Serve the Kansas Emergency Response Team (KERT) in various areas of Field Operations (i.e., the Forward State Emergency Response Team, Impact Assessment Teams: Rapid Response Team, Kansas Assessment Team, Disaster Field Office operations, Recovery Center operations, intrastate and/or interstate mutual aid assistance, etc.).
- **Recovery**
  - Respond to reporter inquiries for damage assessment statistics and estimates; and
  - Coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regarding the status of disaster declarations, types of assistance available to disaster victims, and recovery center locations.

- **Prevention**
  - Publicize state's accomplishments toward mitigation; and
  - Publicize lessons learned, if appropriate (i.e. would not result in a security compromise, etc.).

#### **Direction and control**

- The Adjutant General (TAG) and the designee of KDEM are responsible for all information programs and will direct all emergency information activities;
- ESF #15 staff work is at the direction of the Governor's Press Secretary;
- PIO, as State PIO, serves as the official spokesperson primary news media contact point, but may designate other state PIOs to assist or to continue speaking on issues specific to their own agency;
- Unified information will be provided by ESF #15;
- Information will be obtained from situation reports, county information and one-on-one contact with all ESFs; and
- Information will be disseminated to the media/public.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **Adjutant General's Department Public Affairs Office**

- Coordinate with Governor's Press Secretary;
- Serves as the official spokesperson and primary news media contact point, and designates other state PIOs to assist or to speak on their specific agency issues;
- Activate the JIC and implement JIS;
- Coordinate dissemination of information with local, state, federal officials;
- Make available emergency public information printed materials for the visually impaired and in multiple languages;
- Coordinate release of disaster-related information with the FEMA;
- Establishes an information center/media area that includes a news; conference venue for media representatives in the vicinity of the SEOC;
- Coordinates and maintains response to rumors;
- Maintains a record of events; and
- Schedules periodic news conferences during the emergency.

#### **Governor's Office**

- Primary responsibility for public information; and
- Coordinate with Adjutant General's Department, Public Affairs Office on information releases.

## **Partner Agencies**

- Develop applicable SOPs, guidelines and/or checklists detailing the accomplishment of their assigned functions;
- When requested, deploy a representative to the SEOC to assist with public information activities;
- When requested, serve as a backup spokesperson for the State PIO, or speak on behalf of own agency, as designated by State PIO;
- Provide ongoing status reports;
- Maintain updated resource inventories of supplies, equipment, and personnel resources, including possible sources of augmentation or replacement;
- Document all costs and expenses associated with response and recovery activities taking care to clearly separate disaster related work from daily work in the event that state and federal reimbursement becomes available; and
- Maintain up-to-date rosters for notifying personnel and 24-hour staffing capabilities, and provide this information to the State PIO.