

Kanawha Putnam Emergency Management Plan  
Functional Annex

**Emergency Public  
Information**

Revised December 2015; Reviewed Annually

**A02**

<b>NRP Coordination:</b>	ESF #2 – Communications
<b>Primary Agency:</b>	Incident Command/Public Information Officer
<b>Support Agencies:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Emergency Management</li><li>▪ All responding agencies</li></ul>

## I. Introduction

### A. Purpose

1. To establish guidelines for the timely and accurate dissemination of emergency-related warnings, information and instructions to the public during and following a major incident.
2. To establish guidelines for the coordination of media and public inquiries through the Incident Command and command staff.

### B. Scope of Work

1. Establish command staff position to coordinate Emergency Public Information.
2. Identify recognized National Incident Management System strategies for managing Emergency Public Information during incidents requiring a large response from many different governmental, non-governmental and private agencies.

*Note: Public Warning deals with initial warning of the public and is addressed in [Functional Annex A01 – Public Warning](#).*

## II. Situation and Assumptions

- A. The majority of the public does not prepare for most disaster situations and may feel at risk, frightened or confused.
- B. Providing timely information to the public can help save lives and property, speed recovery and results in less confusion and fewer rumors.
- C. The media will be a part of the response package to major emergencies and will report a story.
- D. If the media is not provided with clear information, the result may be inaccurate information provided to the public.
- E. Uncoordinated information provided to the media from different sources can be conflictive and result in confusion and lack of confidence in the response.
- F. The electronic and print media are readily available in the metropolitan area and are willing to participate in the response by reporting information to the public.
- G. A coordinated public information system, when included as a part of the command staff, insures a consistent message, promotes confidence in the response effort and pleases the media by making their job easier.
- H. Infrastructure failures (i.e., power or telephone system failure) or technical issues can delay Emergency Public Information from reaching the public from an incident scene.
- I. All response personnel must understand that statements to the public or the media come only from the Command Staff.
- J. The NIMS mandates that, "Public information must be coordinated and integrated across jurisdictions and across functional agencies..."
- K. Local agencies and jurisdictions will practice the Joint Information System (JIS) concept in training and in real-life situations.

### III. Concept of Operations

#### A. General

1. The basic concept of Emergency Public Information is to provide *unified messages* of information to the public. This means that all agencies and jurisdictions involved in the response should participate in coordination and delivery of Emergency Public Information, speaking with one voice.
2. Every agency involved in response to emergencies should, in advance, plan and test the Emergency Public Information functional plan, including the JIS.
3. In the event of an emergency/disaster incident, the Emergency Public Information Plan must be in place as a part of the Incident Command.

#### B. Primary Agency

##### 1. Incident Command

- a. Appoint a Public Information Officer (PIO) as a part of the command team. If necessary, coordinate this appointment with the Emergency Operations Center.
- b. Empower the PIO to coordinate Emergency Public Information with the command team and with the Emergency Operations Center.
- c. Provide PIO with necessary briefings and assist with responding to media and public inquiries.
- d. In the event of a Unified Command, insure that Emergency Public Information is coordinated by all members of the command staff.
- e. In the event of a protracted incident, consider establishing a Joint Information Center (JIC) comprised of representatives from all responder agencies and jurisdictions.
- f. As appropriate, participate with all members of the command team in media briefings. Allow function-specific issues and questions to be addressed by the appropriate commander.

## 2. Public Information Officer (on-scene)

- a. Maintain communication with the Incident Command, the rest of the command team and the Emergency Operations Center to coordinate Emergency Public Information.
- b. If possible, coordination with the Emergency Operations Center should occur by phone.
- c. Establish and manage a media briefing area or Joint Information Center in an appropriate location at the scene.
- d. Review Section V, sub-section H (Joint Information System), 2 (Public Information Officer) of the [Basic Plan](#).
- e. Work within the command structure to respond to media or public inquiries.
- f. As necessary, set up media briefings and interviews.
- g. Insure that response participants in media interviews are briefed and that all are unified in their message.

## C. Supporting Agencies

### 1. Emergency Operations Center Manager

- a. Ensure that the PIO position has been established at the scene and that proper coordination is occurring (NIMS requirement).
- b. Consider establishing a PIO position in the Emergency Operations Center. The media will likely visit both the incident scene and the Emergency Operations Center.
- c. Ensure that proper communication/coordination is occurring between the on-scene PIO and Emergency Operations Center personnel.
- d. Ensure that the 911 Center is aware of the PIO position and refers pertinent calls to that person.
- e. Remember that public safety and amateur radio repeater frequencies are monitored by the media during emergency events. Therefore, coordination

with the on-scene PIO is best accomplished by phone or some other secure communications conduit.

#### D. Dealing with the media

1. During even a routine emergency, it is a given that the media will be a part of the response. In the event of a disaster situation, the media response may be overwhelming, especially if the incident is of national news significance.

The news media is a valuable resource for providing emergency-related information and rumor control to the public. Therefore, Command staff should reasonably accommodate their job-related needs while managing their access to the incident site. If we summarily deny any access to the media, they will still do their story based on information gathered from external sources not connected with the response/management to the incident. Therefore, it is always prudent to anticipate the media's response, as follows.

- a. Incident Command should appoint an on-scene Public Information Officer and establish an Information Center, or media staging area. This area should be removed from the Incident Command Post, triage/treatment and morgue areas, but still close to the incident site as to allow good camera shots.
- b. If on-scene resources don't support a PIO, consult with the Emergency Operations Center to see if one can be provided to you.
- c. Provide the media truthful, factual and timely information. Make an effort to answer their questions, even if it means delaying the answer with an "I'll get back to you" response.
- d. Be polite and sincere.
- e. Make sure information provided to the media is coordinated through the Emergency Operations Center.
- f. When practical, let the Chief Elected Official or other elected official who is part of the JIS be the spokesperson to the media.
- g. Control the media access to the incident operations area, but allow them the freedom to interview bystanders. Don't micromanage their every move.

E. Emergency Public Information Coordination with state and federal agencies

1. The WV State Emergency Operations Center has a PIO in place. As necessary, local PIO staff should coordinate with them.
2. Federal responder agencies like the FBI utilize Joint Information System and will staff with a PIO when involved on-scene. Such personnel will, obviously, be incorporated into the existing command structure.