

KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON

COMPREHENSIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION 15

** PUBLIC AFFAIRS **

PRIMARY AGENCIES: Local law enforcement agencies, Public Health

SUPPORT AGENCIES: Kittitas County Chapter of the American Red Cross (KCC-ARC)

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

This ESF provides the structure for the Public Information and Media Relations function to key officials and the general public.

B. Scope

The emergency public information system provides for coordination of information released to the news media and the general public in time of crisis. This system is a multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency process and affects all responding organizations.

II. ORGANIZATION

INFORMATION OFFICER: Each jurisdiction or agency defines how their Information Officer is appointed and the scope of that person's duties. The Joint Information Center (JIC) concept will be used in the event of a multi-jurisdictional event.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER (PIO): The Public Information Officer is the point of contact for the news media. The PIO will:

1. Establish a joint information center (JIC) when appropriate.
2. Prepare information for release to the media and the public.
3. Obtain approval for all releases from the incident commander (IC).
4. Coordinate all news media activities associated with the incident.

5. Coordinate the public information and rumor-control process.
6. Monitor news media coverage of the incident.
7. Work with the Warning Officer, as appropriate.

IV. EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION RESPONSIBILITIES

- A.** Statewide warning fan-out will be received by the Ellensburg warning point at the Kittitas County 9-1-1 communication center via NAWAS or NLETS. Upon receipt of warning or test information, the Kittitas County Sheriff's Office will fan out all warning information via the state law enforcement teletype system (ACCESS), telephone, and voice radio, as provided in its emergency SOPs. (NOTE: Kittitas County Emergency Management also has NAWAS.)
- B.** In the event of any national, state, or local incident requiring warning dissemination, the Kittitas County Sheriff's Office or the initial agency contacted will alert the Kittitas County Emergency Management duty officer. The Kittitas County Emergency Management duty officer will activate the warning procedures, as necessary.
- C.** Warning to the general public will be accomplished by all means available, including the Emergency Alerting System (EAS), NOAA Weather Radio (NWR), helicopter, door to door, media, sirens, voice radio, or any other workable method.

V. EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

- A.** Prior to or during a local emergency, Kittitas County Emergency Management will coordinate the dissemination of emergency information and subsequent instructions to the public, via the local media. Priorities for release to the public include:
 1. Presidential declarations and announcements by federal officials.
 2. County and city government instructions or announcements.
 3. Gubernatorial proclamations and announcements, or other state official announcements.
 4. General (local) information on the details and progress.
 5. County information pertaining to individuals and families or the effects of the emergency on the community and its resources.

- B. All public information released during an emergency will be coordinated through the sheriff or director of Kittitas County Emergency Management, or a designated Public Information Officer, to minimize confusion.
- C. The Emergency Alerting System (EAS) and all available local communications and warning systems will also be used for disseminating emergency public information.

VI. JOINT INFORMATION CENTER (JIC)

In large events, or when more than one jurisdiction is affected by the emergency, a joint information center (JIC) may be established to coordinate the release of information. The designated information officers will equally and cooperatively staff and operate the JIC.

A. COOPERATION WITH THE JIC

All agencies and organizations involved in emergency response and recovery will contribute their designated information personnel to the JIC to ensure accurate information regarding their individual operation is released to the media. All response and recovery agencies are required to cooperate with the JIC to the fullest extent possible regarding the release of any information involving the incident. Each participating agency will assist in providing current information to the PIO/JIC.

B. REACHING SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Technical support from state and federal organizations for disseminating warnings and information to people who have impaired hearing or vision is limited. Locally, emergency management officials will address what special needs individuals should do to prepare for emergencies, including receiving warnings.

C. DISASTER VICTIM INFORMATION SYSTEM

The disaster victim information systems provide for central coordination of casualty lists and other victim information. The disaster victim information system is coordinated by the Kittitas County Chapter of the American Red Cross (KCC-ARC).

D. RUMOR CONTROL

The information officer(s) will activate, staff, and supervise the rumor control system, if necessary. They will work in coordination with the JIC and other public information systems.