

**OHIO EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN
EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION #15**

EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PRIMARY AGENCY: Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA)

SUPPORT AGENCIES: All organizations and agencies that may be necessary for effective public information dissemination and external affairs in support of ESF-15 operations.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

ESF-15 ensures that sustained operations exist in support of the State Emergency Management Agency Director and State Emergency Operations Center staff during a statewide incident or incident of national significance, and that accurate, coordinated, and timely information to affected populations, governments, legislators and the media is provided.

B. Scope

1. ESF-15 coordinates the actions that the State will take to provide public information and external affairs support to local, state and federal disaster response elements.
2. ESF-15 provides assistance to all state agencies that may require public affairs support, or whose public affairs assets may be employed during or a major disaster or emergency in the state of Ohio and/or an Incident of National Significance.
3. The resources, structures and support mechanisms that are presented in this document, as well as in other documents that describe the State's plan for Public Information and External Affairs support, the Joint Information Center and the Joint Information System are consistent with the ICS and NIMS principles.
4. ESF-15's provisions apply to Governor's Declarations, Stafford Act Declarations, National Response Plan responses and other situations designated by authority of the Office of the Governor, the Director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, or the Executive Director of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (Ohio EMA).
5. ESF-15 is organized into the following components: Joint Information Center (JIC), Legislative/ Congressional Affairs, Subject Matter Experts, Digital Media.

II. SITUATION

- A. Planning for public information and external communications incorporates federal-state- and local-level agency and government responsibilities for providing timely public information. If state agencies and county governments are unable to provide timely public information to those affected by emergencies and disasters, federal-level resources may be requested to be able to provide vital information to the affected population.
- B. External communications efforts will be coordinated to support the dissemination of a unified message as directed by the Office of the Governor, the Executive Director of Ohio EMA, or key State Agencies.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

- A. External communications resources will be coordinated by the Ohio EMA's Chief of Internal/External Affairs in response to disasters, emergencies and incidents of national significance.
- B. External communications actions/resources may include, but not be limited to: traditional media, social media, video sharing and media relations.
- C. Incident Communications Coordination Systems – Communications Conference Lines

The organizational approach for public affairs and incident communications with the public includes the use of the following coordination systems:

1. National Incident Communications Conference Line (NICCL) – The NICCL is a standing conference line that is designated, maintained and supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Public Affairs as the primary means for interagency incident communications information sharing during an incident requiring federal coordination. DHS Public Affairs provides guidance to federal interagency public affairs headquarters staffs and affected authorities through the NICCL.
2. State Incident Communications Conference Line (SICCL) – The SICCL is a dedicated federal/state incident communications conference line that is also designated by DHS Public Affairs to facilitate the inclusion, transmission and exchange of incident management information and messaging to all states and territories.
3. Private Sector Incident Communications Conference Line (PICCL) – The PICCL is a standing line for use by the Critical Infrastructure/Key Resources (CIKR) incident communications coordinators. Access information will be coordinated and disseminated by DHS Infrastructure Protection and DHS Public Affairs to provide timely public information to the CIKR sectors during an incident requiring federal coordination and response.

4. Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) – HSIN provides the incident communications team with an encrypted online Web system for record communications, chat room capability, and a real-time capability to post and review documents. The HSIN also is used by the DHS National Operations Center to coordinate homeland security operations with interagency participants. DHS Public Affairs manages access, account support and administrative issues relating to the HSIN for public affairs coordination.
- D. The Ohio EMA Executive Director, in coordination with the Ohio EMA’s Chief of Internal/External Affairs, will activate ESF-15-based operations. Ohio EMA’s Chief of Internal/External Affairs will serve as the ESF-15 Coordinator.
- E. Once a determination has been made to conduct a Crisis Action System (CAS) briefing (see the Base Plan for an overview of the CAS system), the Information and Planning Section Chief or the State EOC Manager (or their designee) will notify Ohio EMA Internal/External Affairs staff of the time and location of the CAS briefing. Depending on the nature of the incident, Public Information Officers of activated CAS agencies may be requested to accompany the Chief of Internal/External Affairs for Ohio EMA to the briefing.
- F. Upon activation of the Assessment Room or the State Emergency Operations Center, the Ohio EMA’s Chief of Internal/External Affairs may begin the process of activating the Joint Information Center (JIC), as detailed in the State JIC Crisis Communications Plan.
- G. Once a JIC has been established, the ESF-15 Coordinator will contact the PIO/communications staff of activated agencies and report on the operational status of the State of Ohio’s Emergency Operations Center (State EOC) and/or the JIC. Depending on the nature, surge and scope of the incident, all activated CAS-level state agencies will be expected to support the JIC operations. Agency PIO/communications staff member representatives will also be expected to serve as Subject Matter Experts as needed.
- H. Prior to the activation of the State JIC an incident JIC may be activated by a state-partner agency or by a local entity. Once the State JIC is activated the incident JIC may continue as the on-scene location point of information in coordination with the State JIC.
- I. Joint Information Center Types

A Joint Information Center (JIC) is a central point for the coordination of incident information, media affairs activities and media access to information regarding the latest incident-related developments. If an incident requires a coordinated federal-level response, JICs will be established to coordinate local, state and federal incident communications with the public. The number and size of the JICs will reflect the size and nature of the incident and the anticipated needs of the agencies and partners who will staff it.

1. **State JIC**- The State JIC is the physical location from which external affairs professionals from responding state agencies and NGOs that are involved in response and recovery operations work together to provide critical emergency information, media response and public affairs support.

The State JIC serves as a focal point for the coordination and dissemination of information to the public and media concerning incident prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation.

A media center may be established at a central location for all working media to obtain news briefings and to conduct press conferences. Co-location and/or use of a single incident media center by local, state or federal counterparts may be an option.

2. **Incident JIC – A site specific location that supports the local response to an event.** The Incident JIC is the physical location from which external affairs professionals from organizations that are involved in response and recovery operations work together to provide critical emergency information, media response and public affairs support.

The Incident JIC serves as a focal point for the coordination and dissemination of local information to the public and media concerning local incident prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation.

A media center may be established at a central location for all working media to obtain news briefings and press conferences. Co-location and/or use of one incident media center by local, state or federal counterparts may be an option.

3. **Virtual JIC** - A virtual JIC uses technology and communications to connect participating external affairs components when physical co-location is not feasible or practical. If a virtual JIC is employed, leadership must ensure that connectivity and inclusion of incident participants is assured.
4. **Area JIC** - Due to the possible geographic coverage of a large-scale incident, an area command structure may be employed, per the incident command system. If an area command structure is employed, it must be assessed whether a supporting area JIC(s) will be necessary. In establishing a JIC network, careful consideration must be given as to where the media will get their primary information, how existing state and local JICs will be coordinated, and how liaison and coordination between participating JICs will be facilitated.
5. **National JIC** – If a National JIC is established, a virtual JIC will initially be established to coordinate information among affected states, federal departments and agencies. Federal departments and agencies may be requested to provide representatives to the national JIC. A national JIC may be used when an incident with national-level impacts is expected to be of a long duration (weeks or months) and when the incident affects a large area of the country.

IV. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES (See Organizational Chart, page 43)

A. Ohio Emergency Management Agency – ESF-15 Coordinator/External Affairs Officer

1. Serve as the primary spokesperson and through the SEOC, will coordinate the collection and dissemination of public information within the state during the assessment, response and recovery phases of an incident.
2. Provide advice to emergency managers regarding matters related to public information.
3. Foster positive working relationships among all program areas and the JIC staff.
4. Establish the JIC and assist in message development by working directly with the ESF-15 Coordinator and the Governor’s Press Secretary.
5. Assist in the information and release approval process.

B. State Agency – Lead Agency Public Information Officer

1. Coordinate and supervise daily operations of his/her agency staff within the JIC, executing plans and policies as directed by External Affairs Officer.
2. Has the lead in messaging at the JIC – lead agency/subject matter expert – depending upon the type of disaster that has occurred (i.e., pandemic, radiological, agricultural, etc.)
3. Provide background/education information directly pertaining to specific subject matter related to the incident.
4. If requested by the EA Officer, speak to media on behalf of the State to discuss technical details associated with an incident.
5. Serve as a resource for providing background material and/or clarification and education to the media.

C. Ohio EMA – JIC Manager / Assistant External Affairs Officer

1. Manages all JIC activities, coordinating and supervising daily JIC operations.
2. Execute plans and policies as directed by the External Affairs Officer
3. Provide direction and support to the State EOC JIC staff to ensure all functions are operating efficiently.
4. Assist the EA Officer and activated state agency PIOs to ensure proper setup and function of the JIC, to include work stations, telephones, office supplies and

sufficient workspace for JIC staff and others who may need to work within the JIC.

5. Oversee/assist in development of press releases, advisories, daily summaries, talking points, fact sheets, and other written material.
6. Coordinate daily staff/teleconference meetings/briefings.

D. Ohio EMA/State Agency – Media Monitor/Media Analyst Specialist

1. Review media reporting for accuracy, content and adjustment to ensure that accurate public information is being disseminated to the media and citizens.
2. Monitor social media outlets such as news websites, blogs, Facebook and Twitter to ensure accuracy and detect information trends.
3. Prepare a daily media analysis report for inclusion in daily summary.
4. Detect trends in media reporting and inform proper parties of found trends and possible messaging of issues and trends.

E. Ohio EMA/State Agency – Writer(s)

1. Gather incident information to write news release in journalistic style and following State EOC JIC format.
2. Write materials such as news releases, fact sheets, flyers, etc. in support of the incident. Ensure timely and accurate information.
3. Obtain review and approval of written material from EA Officer, SFO (Executive Director), necessary SMEs.

F. Ohio EMA/State Agency – Digital Media/Digital Communications Specialist

1. Serve as primary point of contact for all digital communications engagement with the public and stakeholders.
2. Is responsible for ensuring that information on disaster websites (dark site and agency website) is updated and accurate, to include posting of related news releases, photos, etc., pertaining to the incident.

G. ODPS/Ohio EMA – Legislative, Governmental Affairs

1. Establish contact with congressional/legislative offices representing affected areas to provide information on incident activities in order to ensure an understanding of how the State EOC is coordinating response and recovery activities.
2. Disseminate talking points, situation reports to congressional/legislative leaders.

3. Organize an initial congressional/legislative briefing as soon as feasible and conducting daily briefings thereafter.
4. Arrange for incident site visits for members of congress and their staff.
5. Respond to legislative/congressional inquiries.
6. Assist in the development of written materials for presentations and making congressional notifications.
7. Coordinate with Ohio EMA operations and recovery personnel on all congressional affairs issues to ensure coordination of efforts.

H. Ohio EMA – **Administrative Support**

1. Support operations within the JIC, as directed by the External Affairs Officer or JIC Manager.
2. Office support by taking meeting/briefing notes; scheduling (briefings, interviews, media availabilities) (All new info/positions/material)

V. **DEMOBILIZATION**

- A. Upon termination of an incident, the ESF-15 Coordinator will close-out JIC operations and release staff.
- B. If an incident warrants, staff from the Public Affairs Office of the Ohio EMA will relocate from the Ohio EOC to the Joint Field Office to continue to support public affairs community relations missions.
- C. All CAS Agency personnel who work in support of ESF-15 will participate in all After-Action Reviews.
- D. Ohio EMA Public Affairs will incorporate AAR recommendations into planning documents and standard operating procedures.

ATTACHMENT 1: JIC Organizational Chart

