

EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION – 15

Public Affairs

PRIMARY AGENCY:	Communications Office
SUPPORT AGENCIES:	Information Services

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

The purpose of this ESF is to establish uniform policies for the effective development, coordination, and dissemination of information to the public in the event of a large-scale incident.

B. Scope

In a large-scale incident, the flow of public information, facts concerning the incident, and the City’s response efforts to save lives and protect property must be consolidated. The descriptions provided to the public must reflect the best information available.

II. POLICIES

- a. It is the policy of the City of Redmond that upon the occurrence of a large-scale incident, the Communications Office will be the primary group for public information and information dissemination using the Joint Information Center and/or any available communications avenues.
- b. The City of Redmond’s public information response will be in accordance with the operational procedures and policies of the City and this Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).
- c. All public information releases will be approved by the Incident Commander or ECC Director.

III. SITUATION

A. Incident Conditions and Hazards

1. See the City of Redmond's Hazard Identification and Vulnerability Analysis (HIVA) and Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) for a description of potential emergency conditions and vulnerable populations.
2. The City may periodically experience situations that require the dissemination of critical information to the public. The means of dissemination include the news media (radio, television, cable, print) and the Internet.
3. When the need for communications equipment is the highest, there may be fewer resources, thus requiring a need for reprioritization and reallocation of working systems.
4. Communications resources may be overwhelmed, requiring outside assets and assistance.

B. Planning Assumptions

1. No guarantee of a perfect response system is expressed or implied by this ESF. The City of Redmond will make every reasonable effort to respond based on the situation, information, and resources available at the time of the incident.
2. Available resources may become limited due to high demand in a large-scale incident.
3. All departments are required to support this ESF as necessary.
4. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is available to give a rapid, initial warning to the public. It may be used in time-sensitive, life threatening situations when the public must be warned immediately of an impending incident. See ESF 2 Communications and Warning.
5. Normal means of communication may not be available. In those situations, nontraditional means of communicating with the public must be established and utilized, for example, posting notices, utilizing public address systems, etc.
6. Demand for information regarding the disaster may exceed the capabilities of the Communications Office staff.
7. In the aftermath of an incident, information is often vague, difficult to confirm, and contradictory.
8. Public Information Officers (PIOs) must focus on stopping rumors and providing accurate and timely information using all dissemination methods.
9. Depending on the nature and magnitude of the incident, different levels of public information may be required (public information may in fact be the primary function occurring during an emergency).
10. In the aftermath of an incident, there will be a great demand to know what volunteer/aid resources are needed and what are available.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. General

1. The City of Redmond government will prepare and distribute emergency preparedness information to the public before, during, and after an incident of local or regional significance, using all available media. Public information will be disseminated in phases, in accordance with the size and scope of the emergency or disaster.
2. Initially, the public information function will be covered by the response agency responsible for the scene (e.g., police, fire, water, etc.). Because of the nature of the incident(s), a PIO team may need to be dispatched to handle media at the scene of an incident in support of the Incident Commander.
3. In large-scale incidents, the PIO function will be conducted from a Joint Information Center (JIC) that may include other non-City jurisdictions.
4. The purpose of the JIC is not to control the activities of other jurisdictions, but to provide a process for the sharing of information between jurisdictions and a central point for the media to get information.

B. Procedures

1. Should an incident occur, the Public Information Officer's (PIO) function will be operated on a 24-hour basis for a potentially sustained period of time. Trained PIOs from the City, possibly augmented by other trained personnel, may work in a consolidated Joint Information Center (JIC).
2. The Public Information Officer (PIO), or designee, will open the Joint Information Center to coordinate public information communications and other information activities with public and private agencies.
3. The Public Information Officers (PIOs) will keep the public informed of what to do to prevent injury or property damage, and what actions the City government is taking. All public information releases must be approved by the Incident Commander or ECC Director.

C. Prevention and Mitigation Activities

1. Support establishments for a Joint Information Center (JIC), an area for public information coordination activities with internal and external agencies.
2. Arrange for public notifications to be announced in multiple languages

D. Preparedness Activities

1. Organize and coordinate the emergency public information program for the City, to include the preparation and maintenance of a Joint Information Center (JIC) Manual.
2. Conduct training for City department personnel whose normal duties may not include Public Information Officer (PIO) functions.
3. Establish and coordinate procedures, and determine the designated facilities for use by the City Public Information Officer (PIO) Team during an incident.
4. Establish procedures for alerting their Communications Office personnel and other key employees in an Incident of local or regional significance.
5. Update equipment and resource listings on an annual or more frequent basis and distribute them appropriately.
6. Regularly attend scheduled exercises and all other applicable training events.
7. Review and analyze lessons learned from incidents that have occurred in other jurisdictions, and make appropriate correction/additions to respective SOGs and this ESF.

E. Response Activities

1. Establish and maintain contact with the Incident Commander or ECC Director.
2. Set up the JIC upon request of the Incident Commander or ECC Director.
3. Coordinate the dissemination of all disaster information to the news media via news releases, news conferences, and media telephone inquiries.
4. Provide information directly to the public via the news media, and the Internet using City of Redmond and other joint regional public information sites (e.g., the Redmond web site).
5. Clearly document all related costs, actions, and communications.

F. Recovery Activities

1. Consult with ESF 5, Emergency Management, and ESF 14, Long-term Community Recovery, regarding needed recovery strategy.
2. Continue the public information program providing information and instructions about City, County, State and Federal government emergency operations; future plans for restoration of disaster affected areas; and instructions on how to apply for federal disaster assistance programs administered by the State.
3. Create After-Action and Lessons Learned Reports and submit them to the Office of Emergency Management.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The City of Redmond Communications Office is responsible for coordinating this Emergency Support Function (ESF) in an incident of local or regional significance. As such, their duties/responsibilities include:
 - a. Pre-incident planning and coordination.
 - b. Managing the financial aspects of this ESF's response, including the funding of mission assignments and/or reimbursable agreements.
 - c. Maintain ongoing contact with ESF primary and support agencies.
 - d. Provide trained Public Information Officers (PIO) staff that can independently set up and operate the Joint Information Center (JIC).

VI. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

1. The City will provide space, telephones, and limited administrative support at the JIC.
2. The support agencies will provide representatives, on a 24-hour basis, to the city JIC location.

VII. FURTHER MATERIALS FOR REFERENCE

1. City of Redmond's Hazard Inventory and Vulnerability Assessment (HIVA) and Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP).
2. ESF 2- Communications and Warnings
3. JIC Operations Plan
4. Refer to primary and supporting departments' plans for further information supporting this ESF.