

# 15

## EF 15 – Public Information

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## EF 15. Public Information

EF 15 Tasked Agencies	
<b>Primary Agencies</b>	Shasta County Office of Emergency Services Public Information Officers in individual departments
<b>Supporting Agencies</b>	Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency
<b>Primary State Agency</b>	California Governor's Office of Emergency Services Office of Crisis Communications and Media Relations

## 1 Purpose and Scope

Emergency Function (EF) 15 provides guidance and procedures for gathering, controlling, and disseminating emergency information to the public, media partners, community leaders, and other stakeholders. EF 15 also establishes policies for internal review and approval of public information prior to its release to the community and/or media partners, while clearly defining clearance procedures within the incident command structure. This support function pertains to all response agencies and is applicable to all types of incidents.

Coordination and collaboration with local and regional media and public information personnel is essential to providing accurate, consistent, and timely information regarding the status of the emergency response/recovery. Where applicable, information should be provided in appropriate languages (Spanish, Iu-Mien, and others spoken by County residents) to accommodate non-English-speaking populations. Public information and educational materials dealing with emergency management and preparedness can be provided to the general public and community partners prior to a disaster or emergency incident. Information can be disseminated in a variety of formats and via multiple communication avenues.

The primary means for disseminating public information in this jurisdiction includes the Internet, brochures, newspapers, community meetings, workshops, and schools.

## 2 Policies and Agreements

### 2.1 Policies

The following policies are currently in place:

- Shasta County Code, Chapter 2.72.
- Shasta County Resolution Number 95-175 establishing the Shasta Operational Area (September 26, 1995).
- Government Code, Title 2, Division 1, Chapter 7 (California Emergency Services Act).

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- Title 2, Division 1, Chapter 7.5 (California Natural Disaster Assistance Act).
- California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 2 (Standardized Emergency Management System Regulations).

**2.2 Agreements**

The following agreements are currently in place:

- None at this time.

**3 Situation and Assumptions****3.1 Situation**

The County is vulnerable to a variety of hazards. Media outlets exist that, if effectively employed, can be used to inform the population of the events that are occurring and how they may best take action to them.

During periods of emergency, the public both needs and generally desires detailed information regarding protective action to be taken for minimizing loss of life and property. There are times, however, when disaster strikes without warning and the public information system cannot react rapidly enough to properly inform the public about the hazard. For this reason, it is important that prior to the occurrence of an emergency, the public is made aware of potential hazards and the protective measures that can be employed.

The Emergency Alert System is activated as the principal means to disseminate emergency warnings and priority emergency instructions to the public. The system is designed to provide a 24-hour warning point to the public for emergencies and disasters. The County may also use its reverse dialing system, Dialogic, to conduct mass notifications.

**3.2 Assumptions**

- Emergencies and disasters may occur without warning at any time of day or night and may cause mass casualties.
- A public education and information program will help save lives and property during emergencies and disasters if the public knows how to prepare for them.
- In an emergency situation, the public will demand information about the emergency and the protective actions being taken.
- Local print and broadcast media will cooperate in broadcasting, publishing, and posting on the web detailed disaster-related instructions for the public.

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- Normal means of communications in the affected areas may be either destroyed or largely incapacitated; therefore, only limited and incomplete information is anticipated from the disaster area until communications can be restored.
- Responding agencies will provide information to reduce public concerns about the incident and response activities.
- Sufficient numbers of trained support personnel will be available to help coordinate public information and interface with the media and appropriate agencies.
- Demands for information from media outside the jurisdiction will be significantly increased in a disaster.
- State-level news releases should be coordinated with the designated County Public Information Officer (PIO) and not conflict with local-level releases.
- Rumor control procedures directed by the designated County PIO should prevent incorrect information from affecting emergency response activities.
- The EOC PIO maintains listings of media contacts and Emergency Alert System networks and relies on those contacts and networks for the dissemination of emergency public information.
- In a disaster, the County Sheriff's Office, Office of Emergency Services (OES) or the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) may assist in establishing and managing a Joint Information Center (JIC) to coordinate federal, state, and local information.
- During a Countywide or large disaster, a JIC may be established to coordinate the dissemination of information about all County, State and Federal disaster response and recovery programs.
- Information is one of the first casualties of a disaster. Rumors often abound and information is usually sketchy at best. It may be hours before officials know the facts. The lack of information or contradictory information may cause confusion. The public may accept as valid rumors, hearsay, and inaccurate information that may cause unnecessary fear and confusion.

## **4 Roles and Responsibilities**

During emergencies, public information activities will be managed by the responding department's Public Information Officer in coordination with supporting agencies.

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**4.1 EF 15 Actions by Phase of Emergency Management****4.1.1 Preparedness**

- Develop plans, procedures, policies, and systems:
  - For coordinating, managing, and disseminating public information and alerts and warnings effectively under all hazards and conditions.
  - To process the inflow of public-related information from all sources in a timely fashion.
  - To rapidly control rumors by correcting misinformation.
- Develop community-based mechanisms to support the provision of prompt, accurate information to the public in the dominant languages of the community (English, Spanish, Iu-Mien, etc) and in languages and formats appropriate for those with limited language competence, disabilities, cultural or geographic isolation, or vulnerabilities due to age.
- Develop emergency plans that are community-based and include outreach and education to the public, through community and faith-based organizations and other institutions, to promote individual preparedness based on the risks in their communities.
- Establish neighborhood pre- and post-disaster information centers at schools, the work place, libraries, shopping centers, places of worship, and other community institutions to provide information on evacuations and the location of disaster assistance sites.
- Develop and implement public information, alert/warning, and notification training and exercise programs.
- Conduct planning with support agencies.
- Ensure that lead agency personnel are trained in their responsibilities and duties.
- Develop pre-scripted messages in multiple formats and languages.
- Identify possible locations for a JIC and press conferences.
- Develop staffing procedures and checklists for the JIC.
- Develop and maintain a list of equipment needed to activate the JIC.
- Ensure that all departments have trained staff to support the JIC.

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- Ensure that all local media outlets are pre-identified and contacts established. Brief them regularly on emergency public information procedures.
- Ensure that emergency responders are familiar with public information procedures and know how and when to refer the media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
- Encourage media involvement in the exercise design process and planning.

**4.1.2 Response**

- Activate emergency plans and mobilize emergency personnel.
- Conduct rapid assessments for immediate response objectives.
- Coordinate with the EOC and primary and supporting agencies to develop a flow of information, including situation reports, health advisories, and other public information releases concerning the response efforts.
- Inform the public of health and/or safety concerns and ways to reduce or eliminate the associated dangers.
- Provide evacuation instructions and shelter locations.
- Provide situation reports, health advisories, evacuation instructions, shelter locations, and other public information releases in multiple languages and formats appropriate for those with limited language competence, disabilities, cultural or geographic isolation, or vulnerabilities due to age.
- In coordination with the EOC, release emergency information as dictated by the situation.
- Implement a proactive public information strategy to ensure that the media's needs are being met.
- Conduct media briefings on a regular basis.
- If the situation dictates, activate and staff the JIC.
- After coordination with the County PIO, release information regarding the emergency or disaster to other County departments and agencies, the media, and the public.
- Resolve any conflicting information and dispel rumors.

**4.1.3 Recovery**

- Provide public information on recovery efforts.
- Continue to utilize multiple means of communicating public information and education and provide information in multiple languages.
- Provide news releases with major emphasis on:
  - Types and locations of emergency assistance available, including contacts, phone numbers, location (e.g., food and water points), information concerning disaster recovery centers, and trash debris disposal instructions
  - Public health notices
  - Restricted areas
  - Movement or travel restrictions
  - Contacts and phone numbers for missing persons information
  - Contacts and phone numbers for local non-emergency assistance
  - Public safety notices.
- Continue EOC operations until it is determined that EOC coordination is no longer necessary.
- Coordinate with the appropriate agencies to deactivate the JIC.
- Inform the public of any follow-up recovery programs that may be available.
- Return staff, clients, and equipment to regularly assigned locations. Provide critical payroll and other financial information for cost recovery through appropriate channels.
- Participate in after-action critiques and reports.
- Update plans and procedures based on critiques and lessons learned during an actual event.
- Initiate financial reimbursement process for support services.

**4.1.4 Mitigation**

- Conduct hazard awareness programs.
- Conduct public information education programs.

## 5 Concept of Operations

### 5.1 General

- The County OES is the primary agency responsible for coordinating emergency public information activities. Plans and procedures developed by the primary and supporting agencies provide the framework for carrying out those activities.
- Requests for assistance with emergency public information resources will be generated one of two ways: they will be forwarded to the County EOC, or they will be issued in accordance with established mutual aid agreements.
- The County EOC will provide guidance for the coordination of emergency public information resources.
- Emergency public information support requirements that cannot be met at the local level should be forwarded to the State for assistance. If needed, Federal assistance may be requested by the Governor.

### 5.2 Notifications

- The Director of Emergency Services will notify the primary and supporting agencies of EOC activations and request that their representatives report to the EOC to coordinate emergency public information activities.
- As additional EOC staffing needs become apparent, other support and partnering agency personnel may be asked to report to the EOC to assist with emergency public information activities.

### 5.3 Access and Functional Needs Populations

Provision of emergency public information services in the County will take into account populations with access and functional needs.

## 6 Annex Development and Maintenance

The Director of Emergency Services will be responsible for coordinating regular review and maintenance of this EF Annex. Each primary and supporting agency will be responsible for developing plans and procedures that address assigned tasks.

## 7 Supporting Documents

The following documents are currently in place:

### Shasta County

- Shasta County Emergency Operations Plan: EF 2 – Communications

### State of California

- California Emergency Plan: EF 2 – Communications and EF 15 – Public Information

### Federal

- National Response Framework: ESF 2 – Communications and ESF 15 – External Affairs

## 8 Appendices

None at this time.