

## SECTION 17

### PUBLIC INFORMATION

#### Purpose

During an emergency or disaster, which threatens or strikes within Sangamon County, the residents will depend upon public information. Quick and accurate information about the disaster and how the situation is being handled by the officials will save lives and property.

Two purposes of the public information system are:

1. Provide adequate pre-emergency information for the public to inform them of appropriate actions during times of emergencies.
2. Provide public notification and/or warning during a disaster and advisory information of the situation.

The purpose of this annex is to provide for the effective collection, control, and dissemination of emergency public information and rumors during times of emergency. During times of non-emergency, it places emphasis on efforts related to mitigation and preparedness through hazard awareness and information sharing.

#### Situations and Assumptions

##### A. Situations

During periods of emergency, the public 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 be made aware of potential hazards and the protective measures that can be employed. Any disaster or major emergency situation will be covered by the electronic or print media. The media will report to a designated public information center for official statements.

##### B. Assumptions

An effective program combining both education and emergency information will significantly reduce disaster related casualties and property damage. It is recognized that people are generally unconcerned about hazards until affected despite educational programs. Thus, special emphasis must be placed on the effectiveness of the emergency information program. Therefore, the following can be assumed:

1. There will be some misinformation and rumors that can be expected following any disaster or emergency situation.
2. The number of media personnel responding to a designated public information center will depend upon the magnitude of the situation.
3. The local electronic and print medial will normally cooperate by broadcasting and printing detailed disaster-related information to the public. The national media may not be as concerned about handling the detailed information, but on the what, when, where and how.
4. Some emergencies and disasters may disrupt electrical service thereby making the electronic media useless. Therefore, other methods of communicating with the public will be necessary.

### Concept of Operations

#### A. General

Public emergency information efforts will focus on specific event-related information. This information will generally be of an instructional nature focusing on such things as warning, evacuation and shelter. It is also important to keep the public informed of the general progress of events. A special effort will be made to report positive information regarding emergency response in order to reassure the community that the situation is under control. Rumor control will be a major aspect of the informational program. Along with this will be the use of public feedback as a measure of the program's effectiveness. Education efforts will be directed toward increasing public awareness about potential hazards and how people can deal with them. All information and education efforts will rely heavily on the cooperation of commercial media organizations.

#### B. Phases of Management

1. Mitigation
  - a. Hazard awareness programs
  - b. Coordination with media
2. Preparedness
  - a. Public education programs
  - b. Prepare emergency information for release during emergencies
3. Response
  - a. Establish a public information location
  - b. Release public information
  - c. Coordinate rumor control
  - d. Schedule news conference

4. Recovery
  - a. Provide public information
  - b. Compile record of events
  - c. Access effectiveness of information and education programs

One of the command positions in an Incident Command System is the Public Information Officer (PIO). The PIO will be responsible for interfacing with the public, the media and other agencies with incident-related information requirements. The PIO will also perform a key public information-monitoring role.

The Public Information Officer will identify a designated public information center for official statements. Members of the media will be encouraged to report to this location to receive factual information regarding the county's disaster response operation. Emergency public notification of a disaster/emergency situation will be primarily through these media contacts.

During times of a major emergency or in the case of a specialized situation, Public Information Officers from the State and Federal governments may be available to assist in presenting technical or higher level government information through a Joint Information System. During times of non-emergency, matters of hazard awareness and information sharing fall to the OEM Director.

#### Organization and Responsibilities

Public information operations under the Incident Command System are the responsibility of the PIO as set forth in Appendix 1. Ongoing matters of public information for mitigation and preparedness are the responsibility of the OEM Director.

The PIO will be responsible for the issuance of all press statements regarding county emergency operations. The PIO will not release any incident-related information without the Incident Commander's approval. The PIO shall supervise the rumor control team to prevent erroneous emergency information from being communicated to the public.

The Sangamon County OEM Director shall be responsible for the development of any pre-emergency public information material for the purpose of educating the residents of possible hazards and the proper responses. The Sangamon County OEM Coordinator is also responsible for the maintenance of this annex by keeping up-to-date listings of the media for use during emergencies.

#### Direction and Control

Direction and control of an incident will be assumed by the Incident Commander and his General Staff. The Public Information Officer will continually interact with the General Staff who will be sharing vital information and estimates of the current and future situation and developing recommended courses of action for consideration by the Incident Commander.

All official media/press statements will be provided to radio/television/press at a site designated the public information center. This center will be used by the PIO for the purpose of making specific statements related to the emergency.

An assigned public information representative from within the Joint Information System will report to the Emergency Operations Center when activated.

#### Continuity of Government

The line of succession for the county Public Information Officer will be:

1. Another PIO from within the Joint Information System
2. Sangamon County Administrator
3. Sangamon County Sheriff
4. Sangamon County OEM Director

#### Appendices

1. General Public Information Operations
2. Area Media Resources

## APPENDIX 1

### GENERAL PUBLIC INFORMATION OPERATIONS

The Public Information Officer will:

- represent and advise the Incident Commander on all public information matters relating to the management of the incident;
- develop accurate and complete information on the incident's cause, size, and current situation; resources committed; and other matters of general interest for both internal and external consumption;
- handle functions required to coordinate, clear with appropriate authorities, and disseminate accurate and timely information related to the incident, including handling media and public inquiries, emergency public information and warnings, rumor monitoring and response, and media monitoring;
- coordinate public information at or near the incident site;
- serve as the on-scene link to the Joint Information System (JIS), see Note 1;
- serve as a field PIO, during a large-scale operation, with links to the Joint Information Center (JIC), see Note 2; and
- coordinate and integrate public information functions across jurisdictions and across functional agencies; among Federal, State, and local partners; and with private sector and nongovernmental organizations.

Note 1 - The JIS provides an organized, integrated, and coordinated mechanism to ensure the delivery of understandable, timely, accurate, and consistent information to the public in a crisis. It includes the plans, protocols, and structures used to provide information to the public during incident operations, and encompasses all public information operations related to an incident, including all Federal, State, local, and private organization PIOs, staff, and JICs established to support an incident. Key elements include the following: interagency coordination and integration; developing and delivering coordinated messages; support for decision makers; and flexibility, modularity, and adaptability.

Note 2 - A JIC is a physical location where public affairs professionals from organizations involved in incident management activities can collocate to perform critical emergency information, crisis communications, and public affairs functions. It is important for the JIC to have the most current and accurate information regarding incident management activities at all times. The JIC will include representatives of each jurisdiction, agency, private sector organization, and nongovernmental organization involved in incident management activities. JICs may be established at each level of incident management, as required. Multiple JIC locations will be established when required by the circumstance of an incident. The JIC provides the structure for disseminating official information with procedures and protocols to communicate and coordinate effectively with other JICs, as well as with other appropriate components of the ICS organization.

## APPENDIX 2

### AREA MEDIA RESOURCES

<u>MEDIA OUTLETS</u>	<u>VOICE</u>	<u>FAX</u>	<u>E-MAIL</u>
1. WFMB-AM and FM sister stations	523-9100	528-5348	shawnbalint@neuhoffmedia.com
2. WTAX-AM and FM sister stations	753-2020	753-7902	wtaxnews@wtax.com
3. WMAY-AM and FM sister stations	629-6397	629-7952	wmay@wmay.com
4. WCIA Television Channel 3	528-8328	373-3663	news@wcia.com
5. WAND Television Channel 17	425-6397	424-2583	news@wandtv.com
6. WICS Television Channel 20	753-5656	753-5681	news@wics.com
7. WCFN Television Channel 49	525-2306	525-2302	news@wcia.com
8. WRSP Television Channel 55	523-8855	523-4410	news@wics.com
9. The State Journal-Register	788-1519	788-1551	sjr@sj-r.com