ESF 15: Public Information

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1.0 Introduction

Coordinating Agency:

- Lewis & Clark County Community Outreach and Communications Director

Primary Agency:

Lewis & Clark County Community Outreach and Communications Director

Support Agencies:

- All City & County Agencies
- Capital City Amateur Radio Club (CCRC)/Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES)
- Local Media
- Montana Disaster & Emergency Services (MTDES)
- FEMA
- Lewis and Clark County DES

1.1 Purpose

Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 – Public Information is responsible for keeping the public informed about threatened or actual emergency situations and providing protective action guidance as appropriate to save lives and protect health and property.

This plan supports the Incident Command System (ICS) Public Information Officer (PIO) function and the Joint Information System (JIS). The JIS function is to coordinate information before its release to the public and the news media.

1.2 Scope

ESF 15 identifies and coordinates resources necessary to provide public information support to local incident management operations and elements and appropriate information to the general public. This ESF applies to all local agencies within Lewis and Clark County that may require public information support during emergencies or disasters.

Some agencies have designated Public Information Officers (PIOs) and existing departmental emergency public information plans and procedures/guidelines. ESF 15 is not designed to take the place of these plans but is designed to complement and support the departmental staffing and procedures/guidelines already in place.

1.3 ESF Activation & Plan Maintenance

ESF 15 may be activated independently or in conjunction with other ESFs, depending on the needs of the situation. The ESF 15 Coordinating and Primary Agencies are responsible for review and revision of this annex.

The primary responsibility for development and maintenance of this annex belongs to LCCO DES with support from all supporting agencies and departments.

This annex should be reviewed annually, unless significant changes warrant earlier revision. Continued and regular revision and updating should keep this document valid and useful. Regular testing and exercising should establish the groundwork for efficient and expeditious delivery of assistance in times of emergency or disaster.

1.4 Policies

❖ Lewis & Clark County will strive to release timely, accurate, and easy to understand emergency information to the public concerning emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

❖ Mission assignments to departments or jurisdictions for public affairs should be agreed upon by those entities prior to an actual emergency or disaster.

❖ Lewis & Clark County and its incorporated cities and towns are entitled to release information concerning their emergency actions. Any releases that quote or mention another jurisdiction should be coordinated with the respective jurisdiction before being released.

❖ All appropriate governmental and volunteer agency resources should be used as available.

❖ All services should be provided without regard to economic status or racial, religious, political, ethnic, or other affiliation.

❖ The County's response during incidents, emergencies, or disasters is based on the availability of resources. If the need for resources surpasses local capabilities, then mutual aid, state, and/or federal assistance should be requested.

❖ All requests from appropriate local jurisdictions to the state for medical and public health assistance should be assumed to be valid.

❖ All organizations are responsible for the development and maintenance of their own internal operating and notification procedures. No part of this annex is intended to supplant agency SOG/SOPs.

❖ All organizations are responsible for filling any important vacancies; recalling personnel from leave, if appropriate; and, alerting those who are absent due to other duties or assignments.

❖ Personnel designated as on-scene responders or representatives to the EOC should make prior arrangements to ensure that their families are provided for in the event of an emergency, so to ensure a prompt, worry-free response and subsequent duty.

2.0 Situation & Assumptions

2.1 Situation

❖ Lewis & Clark County is vulnerable to a variety of hazards.

❖ Media outlets exist that, if effectively employed, can help to inform the population of hazardous events that are occurring and how to best take action to protect themselves from the hazard.

❖ During periods of emergency, the public wants and needs detailed information to help them take appropriate protective actions for minimizing loss of health, life and property. However, there are times 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 to alert the public in advance to potential hazards and the protective measures that can be employed to mitigate them.

❖ The Emergency Alert System (EAS) 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. KCAP Radio Station (950 AM) is the primary station, with simulcast capability to the other participating local stations. KCAP and the local 911-dispatch center have generators, to enable broadcasting during power outages. The system serves Lewis & Clark, Jefferson, and Broadwater counties.

❖ Local law enforcement has the ability to target alerts and warnings by phone to specific affected areas through the use of its Target Notification System.

2.2 Assumptions

❖ Emergencies and disasters may occur without warning at any time of day or night, and may cause mass casualties.

❖ Information is one of the first casualties of a disaster. Rumors often abound, and information often is incomplete, especially in the first hours of the event. The lack of information or contradictory information may cause confusion. The public may believe rumors, hearsay, and inaccurate information, which may cause unnecessary fear and confusion.

❖ A public education and information program will help save lives and property during emergencies and disasters by teaching the public how to prepare for them.

❖ In an emergency situation, the public will demand information about the emergency and protective actions they should take.

❖ Local print and broadcast media are likely to cooperate in distributing disaster-related instructions to the public.

❖ Normal means of communications in affected areas may be destroyed or largely incapacitated. Therefore, only limited or incomplete information may be provided from the disaster area until communications are restored.

❖ Responding agencies will provide information to reduce public concerns about the incident and response activities.

❖ Sufficient trained support personnel will be available to help coordinate public information and interface with the media and other agencies seeking public information.

❖ Demands for information from media outside the affected jurisdiction may increase significantly during a disaster.

❖ State-level news releases should be coordinated with the designated County Community Outreach and Communications Director who will assume the role of PIO during emergency events and not conflict with local-level releases.

❖ Rumor-control procedures directed by the designated PIO should help to prevent incorrect information from affecting emergency response activities.

❖ The PIO will maintain a list of media contacts and Emergency Alert System (EAS) networks and will rely on those contacts and networks to disseminate emergency public information.

❖ During a county-wide or large disaster, a Joint Information Center (JIC) may be established to coordinate the dissemination of information from all county, state, and federal disaster response and recovery programs.

3.0 Concept of Operations

3.1 General

❖ The local agencies of Lewis and Clark County are committed to a proactive public information program before, during, and after a disaster or emergency.

❖ At a minimum, the PIO should perform the following functions during an emergency or disaster:

  ♦ Establish and maintain contact with local media;

  ♦ Develop and disseminate written information, such as news releases, fact sheets, and other materials;

  ♦ Schedule news conferences and interviews with elected officials, department heads and other subject-matter experts as appropriate, providing advance briefing if needed.

  ♦ Provide interview opportunities that meet the unique needs of each medium (television, radio, print);

  ♦ Establish and maintain a communications link or a Joint Information System (JIS) with others   performing public information activities related to the same incident;

  ♦ Monitor information released by the media to ensure its accuracy, and take steps to correct any inaccurate or misleading information;

- ♦ Exchange information with elected officials, voluntary organizations, industry representatives, State and Federal PIOs and all other involved agencies as the situation dictates;

- ❖ As soon as possible, updates and important information should be disseminated through all appropriate and available channels. These may include the county website and Facebook page.

- ❖ Lewis and Clark County public information and education programs should endeavor to:
    - ♦ Provide support during the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery operations.
    - ♦ Provide the public with accurate, timely, and easy-to-understand information concerning incidents. This may include protective actions, route restrictions, health notices, and emergency assistance information.
    - ♦ Control rumors through media monitoring and quick release of accurate information.
    - ♦ Coordinate information releases with all participating public and private agencies, emergency responders, and all levels of government to support public officials and media representatives in satisfying the public's need for accurate and consistent information.
    - ♦ Limit public information activities to County-specific events and actions. Federal and State governments are responsible for information related to their jurisdictions.

- ❖ The County Incident Command System (ICS), Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and Joint Information System (JIS) should support public information, not further complicate it.

- ❖ The PIO or an approved designee may serve as spokesperson for the Incident Commander (IC) during an emergency situation. Organizations not represented by the (IC) may use their own PIO but should coordinate messages through the PIO and/or the EOC Public Awareness Officer as well as the JIS as appropriate.

- ❖ The PIO should issue news releases on behalf of the county after coordinating current information with other agencies. Staff of the EOC and cooperating partners should receive copies of all releases. IC approval is required before issuing policy-related news releases.

Joint Information System (JIS)

- ❖ The purpose of a Joint Information System (JIS) is to :
    - ♦ Gather and coordinate timely, accurate, consistent, and useful disaster-related information
    - ♦ Enable emergency responders and the EOC staff to concentrate on emergency decision-making.
    - ♦ Ensure the ability to answer direct inquiries from the public
    - ♦ Monitor media coverage to verify the accuracy of information being disseminated

- ♦ Be proactive in responding to the disaster-related information needs of all audiences
- ♦ Develop and implement a comprehensive public information strategy to gain and maintain public trust and confidence.

❖ A Joint Information System (JIS) encompasses all public information activities related to a specific incident, including those outside the EOC. It may include public information functions carried out at the scene and from departmental offices or other remote offices and locations. It also may include on-scene PIOs from responding agencies.

❖ ESF 15 should work to establish communications with all Joint Information System (JIS) components to facilitate the exchange of information. The use of an organized JIS should help to ensure inter-agency communication and the release of consistent information.

❖ The Incident Command PIO should keep the EOC and JIS informed of any media briefings at the scene and the content of those briefings.

Joint Information Center (JIC)

❖ The Joint Information Center (JIC) is a physical location where PIOs from organizations with primary disaster involvement can come together to coordinate and disseminate information.

❖ In most cases, the JIC will be located in close proximity to the County EOC. However, it may be located anywhere to support emergency activities. Wherever it is located, it is imperative that the JIC maintain contact with decision makers and/or the EOC.

❖ When a JIC is established, news releases, instructions, and official information originated by the various participating organizations should be channeled and verified through the JIC to reduce the risk of conflicting information.

❖ The JIC is designed to be flexible to accommodate the unique requirements of any emergency or disaster situation. Its structure and staffing should be customized for each response. For example, a major event may require JIC activation and full staffing, while a smaller event might only require one or two people performing all necessary tasks.

❖ Regardless of the incident, the number of agencies involved, and the location and amount of information to be disseminated, the function of the JIC remains essentially the same

❖ PIOs working in the JIC retain the autonomy to represent the public information needs of their respective agencies, while working closely with the EOC PIO and other staff to ensure consistent information is disseminated in a timely manner by all agencies.

❖ The PIOs working in the JIC have two primary functions: (1) carry out the public information activities of their respective departments and agencies and (2) provide support to and assist with the overall JIC mission.

❖ Designated departmental PIOs may be asked to staff various JIC functions regardless of the level of involvement of their respective departments. This can help to ensure that

an adequate number of PIOs are available to support emergency public information activities.

❖ The PIO should notify the media and other interested parties of the activation of a JIC as soon as sufficient personnel are on hand to respond to information needs. The county JIC Initiating Checklist is found in Attachment 4.

❖ The JIC, when operational, should serve as a location where most incident-related inquiries from the citizenry may be directed.

❖ The JIC, when operational, should serve as a location where most incident-related inquiries from the citizenry may be directed. Some inquiries, such as those involving claims, may be routed to another location.

Public Hotline

❖ A Public Hotline may be established to provide a single point of contact for the general public to call and receive current, accurate information regarding a specific event or threat. The PIO determines the need for the hotline and activates it based on that need. The DESC manages and coordinates staffing of the hotline using trained volunteers or places a recorded message approved by the PIO on them for the public.

❖ The public hotline serves a dual purpose. It ***disseminates*** information by responding to inquiries from the public, and it also ***gathers*** information from the public, identifying trends, misinformation, and misperceptions. If the misunderstanding indicates an isolated concern, the hotline staff should address the matter directly with the caller. If a pattern of confusion or misunderstanding emerges, they should notify the EOC Manager who will in turn notify the PIO who can then address the situation through the news media and other communications channels.

❖ Until the EOC is activated and the hotlines are operational, answers to queries from the public should be provided by the DESC, coordinating with the Incident Command Post to the extent possible.

❖ The EOC should release the telephone number for the public hotlines to the local news media for dissemination to the public.

Confidential Information

❖ The county EOC is committed to being as transparent as possible about its activities and the information it releases. However, in some instances information may be deemed confidential by law. Confidential information is not to be released. This includes:

♦ The names of fatality victims prior to notification of next of kin. Identification and cause of death should not be released without authorization from the Coroner.

♦ Home phone numbers of city/county personnel and volunteer emergency workers, and unpublished city/county numbers.

❖ Do not release information that might hinder emergency response, prejudice the outcome of an investigation, or pose a further threat to public safety. Examples include:

♦ Personal conjecture about the course of the emergency or the conduct of response.

♦ Speculation.

♦ Demeaning information/statements.

Media Access to the Scene

❖ Every effort should be made to allow the media access to the disaster area, consistent with safety.

❖ In cooperation with the EOC and on-scene personnel, the Incident Commander may allow media representatives restricted access to the scene, accompanied by a member of the Public Information staff. This should be done with regard to the safety of media personnel, the impact on response, and the wishes and concerns of the victims.

❖ The Public Information Officer will not allow media access to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) except under limited, controlled circumstances, and only with prior approval of the Incident Commander or EOC Manager. Before being admitted to the EOC, media representatives must display appropriate identification and must be escorted by a member of the Public Information staff.

❖ If it is not safe or practical to admit all media representatives to the scene, a media "pool" may be created, where media representatives select one camera crew to take video footage for all. If even such controlled access is impractical, a "staged" photo opportunity to tape response vehicles or support activities may satisfy the media's need for video footage.

❖ When appropriate, victims and their families will be provided with access to public officials in such a way that they are not visible to media.

❖ The media may be allowed access to response personnel at the discretion of the Incident Commander, but only if such an interview does not interfere with the response effort.

3.2 Notifications

❖ The Incident Commander will notify the designated PIO of activation and request that he or she (or a designee) report to the Incident Command Post to coordinate ESF 15 activities. The Incident Commander will also activate the EOC via notifying the DES Coordinator.

❖ As a need for additional EOC staffing become apparent, other support and partnering agency personnel may be asked to report to the EOC to assist.

❖ The DESC or his deputy may activate the EAS, if appropriate, by contacting the **NWS (453-8429)** to initiate the message. If phones are down, a message may be hand delivered to the primary EAS station, KCAP. Radio stations and TV stations will copy the message and interrupt regular programming for the broadcast.

❖ If regular communications channels are not functioning, the Capital City Amateur Radio Club may be able to distribute emergency information through its ARES organization, which is able to provide portable and self-sustained Ham radio communication.

3.3 Preparedness

During periods when there are no disasters and emergencies, the role of ESF 15 is to:

❖ Develop plans, procedures, guidelines, and policies for coordinating, managing, and disseminating public information effectively under all hazards and conditions.

❖ Develop plans, procedures, guidelines, and policies for coordinating, managing, and disseminating alerts and warnings effectively under all hazards and conditions.

❖ Develop programs and systems to process the inflow of public-related information from all sources in a timely fashion.

❖ Develop plans, procedures, guidelines, programs and systems to rapidly control rumors by correcting misinformation.

❖ Develop community-based mechanisms to support providing prompt, accurate information to the public in the dominant languages of the community and languages and formats appropriate for those with limited language competence, disabilities, cultural or geographic isolation, or vulnerabilities due to age or other factors.

❖ Develop emergency plans that are community-based and include outreach and education to the public through community and faith-based organizations and other institutions.

❖ Promote individual preparedness based on the potential risks in local communities.

❖ Establish neighborhood pre-disaster and post-disaster information centers at schools, workplaces, libraries, shopping centers, places of worship, and other community institutions, to provide information on evacuations, location of disaster assistance sites, and other vital response information.

❖ Develop and implement public information, alert/warning, and notification training and exercise programs.

❖ Conduct planning with support agencies.

❖ Ensure lead agency personnel are trained in their responsibilities and duties.

❖ Develop pre-scripted messages in multiple formats.

❖ Identify possible locations for a JIC and news conferences.

❖ Develop staffing procedures, guidelines 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.

❖ Ensure that all local media outlets are pre-identified and aware of emergency public information procedures and guidelines.

❖ Ensure that emergency responders are familiar with public information procedures and guidelines and know how and when to refer the media to the appropriate PIO personnel for information.

❖ Encourage media involvement in planning and holding emergency preparedness exercises.

3.4 Response

❖ During disasters and emergencies, the role of ESF 15 is to:

❖ Activate emergency plans and mobilize emergency personnel involved in the public information response.

❖ 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.

❖ In coordination with the EOC staff and with the approval of the IC, 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 as needed.

❖ If the situation dictates, activate and staff a JIC.

❖ Release information regarding the emergency or disaster to both internal audiences like city and county officials and staff, and external audiences like the media and the public.

❖ Resolve any conflicting information and dispel rumors.

3.5 Recovery

❖ During the recovery period following a disaster or emergency, the ESF role is to:

❖ Provide public information on recovery efforts.

❖ Continue to use multiple means of communicating public information and education.

❖ Provide news releases with major emphasis on:

   ♦ Types and locations of emergency assistance available, including contacts, phone numbers, location(s) (e.g. food and water points), information concerning disaster recovery centers (DRC), and trash and debris disposal instructions;

   ♦ Public health notices, including notice of isolation or quarantine;

   ♦ Locations of restricted areas;

   ♦ Movement or travel restrictions;

   ♦ Contacts and phone numbers for missing persons information;

   ♦ Contacts and phone numbers for local non-emergency assistance; and

   ♦ Public safety notices.

❖ Continue both Incident Command and EOC operations until it is determined that it is no longer necessary.

❖ Coordinate with appropriate agencies to deactivate the JIC when appropriate.

❖ Inform the public of any programs that may be available to assist them with recovery.

❖ 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, procedures, and guidelines based on critiques and lessons learned during actual events.

❖ Initiate financial reimbursement process for support services.

3.6 Mitigation

❖ Conduct hazard awareness programs.

❖ Conduct public information education programs.

4.0 Organization & Responsibilities

The following listed agencies are tasked with primary and/or support responsibilities. More specific assignments can be found in the detailed emergency Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines (SOP/SOGs) that should be developed by each individual organization. *It is understood that agency capabilities are affected by available resources and the size and scope of an incident and that listed tasks will be "as able" depending upon the given situation.*

4.1 Organization

The Public Information role will be consistent with the concepts and principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS). If the incident situation dictates it, emergency public information activities may be coordinated from a Joint Information Center (JIC). Activating a JIC can help County departments and participating organizations coordinate their activities and help to ensure consistent and accurate information is disseminated during large-scale incidents.

4.2 Responsibilities

ESF Coordinator

❖ Maintain list of resources available.

❖ Coordinate activities with other agencies identified in this annex.

❖ Meet regularly with members of the media to foster a close working relationship.

❖ Familiarize the media with this annex. Consider their recommendations to improve it.

❖ Collect and coordinate information from all private and public sources to monitor overall response.

❖ Disseminate emergency information and instructions to the public, to include, if necessary, twenty-four hour telephone numbers.

❖ Involve the media in exercises and critiques.

❖ Test the EAS at least annually.

❖ Conduct and/or coordinate regular press conferences at the JIC.

❖ Determine the need for and activate JIC.

❖ Monitor media broadcasting articles to check for accuracy. Monitor and log incoming calls for information and rumor control.

❖ Support EOC operations and coordinate support for ESF 15 activities.

❖ Requests support from other local governments or the State if local resources are insufficient.

Primary Agencies

❖ Provide leadership in directing, coordinating and integrating overall efforts to provide public information to affected areas and populations.

❖ Assume the role of PIO for the incident.

❖ Conduct vigorous public awareness campaigns to educate the public of dangers from potential hazards and provide them with information on the actions necessary to save lives and protect property. Stress hazard awareness and personal preparedness.

❖ Evaluate the emergency situation, make strategic decisions, and identify resource needs and secure resources required for field operations.

❖ Inform the public through the EAS. Ensure that the EAS is not overly used to cause undue public concern.

❖ Provide maps, charts, status sports, photos, schematics, or other displays that clarify the emergency or disaster situation in support of press conferences and/or briefings.

❖ Monitor media broadcasting articles to check for accuracy. Monitor and log incoming calls for information and rumor control.

❖ Notify all affected jurisdictions and stakeholders of the operational and situational conditions and provide frequent and regular status updates.

❖ Provide information updates to the EOC and/or JIC regarding the scope of the emergency or disaster, the impacts to partners and stakeholders, emergency action steps, evacuation requirements, collection sites, water and food distribution, etc..

❖ Coordinate communication resource requests outside of mutual aid agreements with the EOC.

❖ Document costs for reimbursement and auditing purposes.

❖ Evaluate and review procedures/guidelines to ensure operational readiness.

❖ Assist in identifying personnel and resources to support this Annex.

❖ Work with LCCO DES to keep this Annex up-to-date.

Support Agencies

Montana Disaster & Emergency Services (MTDES)

❖ Coordinate assistance to local governments and mobilization of resources per the provisions of the Montana Emergency Response Framework.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

❖ Administers assistance to the state pursuant to PL 93-288 of the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, Section 417.

All Support Agencies

❖ Develop applicable SOPs, guidelines and/or checklists detailing the accomplishment of their assigned functions.

❖ Maintain up-to-date rosters for notifying personnel and 24-hour staffing capabilities.

❖ Maintain updated resource inventories of supplies, equipment, and personnel resources, including potential resources for surge capacity.

❖ Participate in drills and exercises to evaluate local capability.

❖ When requested, deploy a representative to the EOC to assist with ESF 15 activities.

❖ Provide ongoing status reports as requested by the ESF 15 Coordinator.

❖ Assist the PIO and JIS by providing pertinent public information for dissemination to media sources and, as appropriate, fact sheets for distribution to the public.

❖ Participate in news conferences and briefings upon request.

❖ Monitor and log incoming calls for information and rumor control. Monitor media reports for accuracy. Notify the PIO of any information needs or misinformation that needs to be corrected.

❖ Interrupt regular programming and report emergency information as requested by the IC/PIO.

❖ Perform other emergency responsibilities as assigned.

❖ Document all costs and expenses associated with response and recovery activities taking care to clearly separate disaster related work from daily work in the event that State and Federal reimbursement becomes available.

5.0 Authorities and References

5.1 Authorities

❖ *See Section 5.1 of Basic Plan.*

5.2 References

❖ *See [Section 5.2](#) of Basic Plan.*

❖ **Lewis & Clark County Montana EOP. May 2011:** ESF-15 – Public Information

❖ **National Response Framework. January 2008:** ESF 15 – External Affairs.

❖ **Core Capabilities List. October 2015.**

6.0 Attachments

Attachment 1: Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
ARES	Amateur Radio Emergency Services
CCRC	Capital City Radio Club
COOP/COG	Continuity of Operations/Government
DES	Disaster & Emergency Services
DESC	DES Coordinator
DRC	Disaster Recovery Center
EAS	Emergency Alert System
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
ESF	Emergency Support Function
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
IC	Incident Commander
ICS	Incident Command System
IMT	Incident Management Team
JIC	Joint Information Center
JIS	Joint Information System
LCCO	Lewis & Clark County
MTDES	Montana Disaster & Emergency Services
NWS	National Weather Services
PIC	Public Inquiry Center
PIO	Public Information Officer
SOP/SOG	Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines

Attachment 2: Definitions

Emergency Alert System (EAS): The Emergency Alert System is a broadcast warning system that can provide 24-hour disaster and emergency alerts to residents of Lewis and Clark, Jefferson, and Broadwater counties.   KCAP Radio Station (950 AM) is the primary EAS station, with simulcast capability to other participating local stations. Generators make use of the EAS system possible during power outages. This makes it essential for people to have battery-powered radios to receive these important messages during times of emergency.

Joint Information Center (JIC). A facility established to coordinate all incident-related public information activities.

Joint Information System (JIS): A system integrating incident information and public affairs into a cohesive organization designed to provide consistent, coordinated, timely information during an incident. The mission of the JIS is to provide a structure and system for developing and delivering coordinated interagency messages; developing, recommending, and executing public information plans and strategies on behalf of the IC; advising the IC concerning public affairs issues that could affect a response effort; and controlling rumors and inaccurate information that could undermine public confidence in the emergency response effort.

Public Information: Information provided to the general public before, during, and after emergency situations that includes instructions on how to protect personal health, safety, and property and on how to obtain assistance.

Public Information Officer (PIO): A member of the Command Staff responsible for interfacing with the public and media or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements. Also known as the Information Officer or IO.

Functional Needs Populations: This term is used to describe specific populations that may have unique needs, including the elderly, medically fragile, mentally and/or physically challenged or handicapped, individuals with mental illness, and the developmentally delayed. These groups may need to have specialized health-care providers to care for them, facilities equipped to meet their needs, and vehicles and equipment for transport. Public information efforts must take these specialized needs into account and provide public information through channels accessible to these populations.

Target Notification System: A system that uses landline telephones to alert residents of vital emergency information in specific target areas. The system is operated by the 911 Dispatch Center. Residents may voluntarily sign up to get notifications by cell phone.

Attachment 3: Sample Messages

Sample Message #l: Home Shelter

This is a message from the Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operations Center:

1. Due to an emergency at _____, officials are advising people who live or work within a _____ mile radius of this location to take shelter indoors to protect their health and safety.

2. There is no need to evacuate the area. Residents are advised to shelter in their home or workplace.

3. Once indoors,:

    a. Close all doors and windows.

    b. Disconnect air conditioners or fans.

    c. Lower the thermostat setting of any heater or turn off air conditioner/evaporative cooler to minimize the intake of external air.

    d. Keep pets inside and, to the extent possible, bring farm animals into covered facilities.

4. People living, working or traveling in the following areas are affected by this request:

(Repeat the list of areas one time, then continue the message.)

5. People living, working or traveling in this area should take shelter to protect their health and safety. People traveling to home or work should proceed to their destination in an orderly fashion obeying all traffic regulations. Non-residents traveling in motor vehicles should leave the area in an orderly fashion.

6. If unable to take immediate shelter indoors, protect lungs and breathing by placing a handkerchief, towel, or other similar item snugly over the nose and mouth.

7. If in a motor vehicle, roll up windows, close air vents, and turn off air conditioners.

8. Emergency officials ask that you do NOT do the following:

(Read statement A., below, if school is in session.)

    A. If you have children attending school, do NOT telephone or go to the school.   The school is a covered, protected environment, and students will be bused home when it is safe to do so.

    B. Do not telephone city, county, state or federal officials involved in responding to this emergency. They will keep you informed of the situation through this and other media.

    C. Do NOT use the phone except for medical emergencies.

9. The preceding has been an announcement from the Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operations Center. Everyone living or working within a _____ mile radius of _____

is advised to take immediate shelter indoors. For further information, stay tuned to this station.

(This message should be repeated as often as possible until no longer needed.)

Sample Message #2: Evacuation

This is a message from the Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operations Center:

1. Due to an emergency at _____, officials are advising everyone living or working within an approximate _____ mile radius of this location to evacuate the area.

2. This advisory affects people living or working in the following area:

(Repeat the list of affected areas one time, then continue the message.)

3. Please use the following evacuation routes for your neighborhood. If you need a temporary place to stay, report to the mass care center located at _____.

(Repeat the list of affected areas one time, then continue the message.)

4. If you or a member of your household needs help to evacuate, contact the Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operations Center at _____

5. Please consider checking on individuals who may live alone in your neighborhood. If they have no way of providing for their own transportation, please assist them if possible.

6. People who are evacuating should prepare to spend a minimum of three days (72 hours) away from home. Take enough clothing, sleeping bags or blankets, personal care items and prescription drugs to last at least this long. Food and sanitary facilities will be provided at mass care centers. Pets will **not** be allowed inside mass care centers.

7. Farmers and ranchers affected by this evacuation advisory should shelter their animals and contact the County Extension Agent at _____ for further instructions regarding protection of livestock.

8. Before evacuating:
    A. Secure your home and property.
    B. Turn off all lights and electrical appliances.
    C. Turn down any heating systems (or turn off air conditioning systems).
    D. Proceed calmly and safely to your destination, obeying all traffic laws and instructions of law enforcement officers who are directing traffic along the evacuation route.

9. The preceding has been an announcement from the Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operations Center. Everyone living or working within a _____ mile radius of _____ should evacuate the area immediately. For further information, please stay tuned to this station.

(This message should be repeated as often as possible until no longer needed.)

Sample Message #3: School Evacuation

1. The following message has been released by the Lewis & Clark County Emergency Operations Center. It supplements instructions given to the public concerning the evacuation announcement for an approximate _____ mile radius of _____ .

2. Parents with children attending schools within a _____ mile radius of _____ are advised that their children are subject to a separate evacuation plan while school is in session. These schools are _____. Children at these schools will be taken directly to shelter areas. Parents are to meet their children at these shelter areas outside the emergency zone. *I repeat*, _children will be taken directly to areas outside the risk area where parents are to meet their children_. Parents are not to report to their children's schools.

3. Children attending the schools in the risk area will be taken to the following areas where they may be picked up:

School: **Evacuation Area:**

1.

2.

3.

4.

(Repeat list one time and continue the message.)

4. Parents are urged not to telephone or to go to the schools their children attend. To do so will only create confusion. Parents are to meet their children at the previously announced evacuation areas. *I repeat*, parents are urged **not** to telephone or to go to the schools that their children attend, but to meet their children at the evacuation areas.

5. The preceding has been an announcement from the Lewis & Clark County Emergency Operations Center giving parents instructions on where to meet their children who are attending schools within an approximate _____ mile radius of _____ .

(Repeat entire message one time.)

Alternate Message:

"The _____ School has just been evacuated because of a (problem) at the (location). The students have been taken to _____ where they are safe and will be held until it is safe to return to school or to go home at the end of the regular school day."

Sample Message #4: HazMat Incident

Lewis & Clark County Disaster & Emergency Services brings you the following message:

An accident involving a hazardous material has occurred at: _____.

Due to the toxic nature of the chemical involved, people living or working in the following areas are advised to evacuate immediately. Those people between _____ (north/south) and _____ (east/west) should leave the area immediately.

Be sure to lock your homes and businesses before leaving. If you need a temporary place to go, you may go to the following information/reception center _____.

Those needing assistance evacuating should call: _____.

Sample Message #5: Street Closures / Flooding

This is an emergency message from the Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operations Center.

The following roads/streets are closed due to severe/moderate flooding: _____

_____.

Please avoid these roads/streets. If you must travel, use alternate routes. Roadblocks will block access to the affected area.

For your safety, avoid low-lying roads near streams, creeks, and rivers. Do not drive over a flooded road or bridge. Do not try to walk or drive through swift-moving floodwaters.

Again, the following roads/streets are closed due to flooding:_____

_____

_____

_____.

Sample Message #6: Flooding Evacuation

This is an emergency message from the Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operations Center:

Due to flooding, you are strongly urged to evacuate the following areas as soon as possible for your safety:

_____

_____

_____.

If time permits, take essential items such as -- **medicine, special foods, personal items, baby supplies, money, and valuable papers**. Secure your home or business before you leave. Check on neighbors who might need assistance.

If you need temporary shelter, go to the following shelter:_____.

If you have no form of transportation or are physically unable to evacuate on your own, ask a neighbor to help or call the following number: _____.

Sample Message #7: Snow Emergency

This is an emergency message from the Lewis and Clark County Disaster & Emergency Services, in cooperation with the National Weather Service.

A Winter Storm Warning is in effect until _____ for the following areas:

_____

_____

_____.

At least _____ inches of snow are expected. Please stay indoors and travel only if necessary. If you must travel, take an emergency supplies kit with you.

(Repeat message as needed)

Attachment 4: JIC Initiating Checklist

COMPLETED	TASK	DATE/TIME/INITIALS
	Incident Notification Received	
	JIC Location Selected	
	JIC Staffing Call-Out Begun	
	JIC Staffing Call-Out Completed	
	JIC Operational	
	Initial News Release Issued	
	Initial Media Briefing Held	

Primary EAS Station

KCAP - 950 AM

110 E. Broadway, Helena

(the EAS is initiated by contacting the National Weather Service (NWS) at
(453-8429)

Attachment 5: Public Information Officer (PIO) Checklist

Mitigation Phase

❑ Stay current or familiar with the latest techniques for managing emergency information.

❑ Meet regularly with members of the media to foster a close working relationship.

❑ Conduct public education and media programs as needed.

Preparedness Phase

❑ Maintain close liaison with local, state, and federal PIOs as well as media representatives to enhance public preparedness and awareness prior to an emergency and to facilitate dissemination of actual incident information.

❑ Participate in emergency drills and exercises to test plans for effective and consistent information release.

❑ Attend PIO conferences and training sessions.

❑ Compile and prepare emergency information for the public in case of emergency.

❑ Become aware of the procedures to utilize the Emergency Alert System. *PIOs may assist in preparation of EAS messages and should monitor all EAS announcements*.

❑ Coordinate public education/awareness campaigns with the DES office.

Response Phase

❑ Report to the EOC, upon activation.

❑ Contact the media and informs them about the emergency.

❑ Serve as an official Lewis & Clark County spokesperson and the sole source for dissemination of official emergency related materials to the public. *Remind agency heads to clear all releases through you.*

❑ Supervise preparation of emergency announcements for broadcast.

❑ Get approval for all public announcements from the Incident Commander or his/her designee.

❑ Issue news releases from the EOC or Joint Information Center (JIC), if activated. News releases should emphasize the following:

- A clear identification of the affected area
- Timely, accurate and easy-to-understand information on the situation.
- Recommended or ordered protective actions.
- Descriptions of local, State and Federal response to the emergency.
- Identification of media channels and times for information updates.

❑ When the emergency situation has ended. Arrange media briefings and identify appropriate spokespersons. If necessary, brief spokespersons in advance of the briefings.

❑ Ensure that the Public Hotline staff has the most current incident information.

❑ Coordinate news releases with parties involved in an emergency and the State DES PIO.

❑ Verify the authenticity of incoming information.

❑ Verify that contradictory information is not being released.

❑ Take action to control rumors and misinformation.

❑ Coordinate with the American Red Cross to establish a single point of contact for the public to obtain information concerning missing relatives.

❑ Maintain records of all information released to the public and media. This should include:
- Name, agency, and phone number of the release initiator.
- Text, tape, or video of the news release.
- Substantiating information for the release.
- Date and time information received.
- Date and time information released.
- How and to whom the news release was issued.

Recovery Phase

❑ Maintain status board.

❑ Continue to brief the media about recovery operations.

❑ Critique the public information response to the emergency with the media, DESC and agency heads.

❑ Incorporate appropriate revisions to this annex and the Emergency Operations Plan.

❑ Release available statistics on disaster damage, injuries, and fatalities.

❑ Inform the public on available assistance and the location of shelters and disaster assistance centers.