

Part 6 - Emergency Public Information

6.0 Mission

To disseminate pre and post-incident emergency information to the public accurately and rapidly to ensure public safety and welfare.

6.1 Objectives

- To describe the nature, scope and impact of the emergency, thereby countering fear and rumors.
- To provide information regarding potential threats, hazards, and protective action for those hazards that threaten the community.
- To provide information to the community of how they will be alerted and notified if they are at risk to a threat.
- To address public safety issues.
- To describe the City's response.
- To provide information on available sources and locations of relief.
- To describe what the public can do to help themselves and others.
- To provide information on the status of the City's recovery.
- To coordinate with Operational Area, Urban Area, Regional, State and Federal public information officers according to Joint Information System(JIS) protocols outlined in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the National ResponsePlan (NRP)

6.2 Pre-Incident Public Awareness & Education

The Community Emergency Management Division (CEMD) in the Emergency Preparedness Department (EPD) coordinates community outreach and training programs. Division objectives are to prepare the residents and businesses of Los Angeles for emergencies. CEMD is responsible for the following tasks:

- Promote emergency preparedness by working with neighborhood associations, schools, faith-based organizations and other community groups.
- Participate and staff City and other agency sponsored public emergency preparedness outreach events, expos and community meetings, and provide emergency preparedness information through the publication and distribution of brochures and other educational material.
- Provide emergency preparedness information to the public through various City agency websites such as the EPD, LAFD, LAPD, EOO UpdateLA, and others.

- Chair the Community Preparedness Subcommittee, which provides a forum where City departments, other governmental and community-based nonprofit organizations can join the private sector and neighborhoods to develop preparedness programs.
- Coordinate the City's Annual Emergency Preparedness Fair and Chair the Emergency Preparedness Fair Task Force.

6.3 Post-Incident Public Awareness & Education

Due to widespread media interest, the development of public information will often be done at the incident (field), DOC and EOC levels (when activated). Information from city departments, agencies and bureaus shall be shared with the EOC Information and Public Affairs Section.

In the event of an emergency, the Mayor's Office has the primary responsibility for coordinating emergency public information for the City of Los Angeles. It is essential in the interest of public safety and welfare that the development and dissemination of public information related to an emergency be thoroughly coordinated at all levels.

Public Information Officers (PIOs) from unaffected departments shall be used as support staff as appropriate. Trained and experienced PIOs from EOO divisions may assist the Mayor's Office in developing public information announcements. EPD staff will also assist as required.

During a local emergency, official public information announcements are developed by the EOC Information and Public Affairs Section. This section is coordinated by the Mayor's Office and is the principal point of coordination for City-wide public service announcements and emergency broadcasts. Other EOO divisions may provide support staff as necessary. Specific staff requirements will be determined by the nature of the emergency. If the emergency is primarily related to natural hazards such as fires, floods, earthquakes etc., the Fire Division will provide primary support staff to the Information and Public Affairs Section. If the emergency relates to issues associated with civil disorder, other criminal activity or major planned events, the Police Division will provide primary support staff, EPD and other EOO divisions may also be called upon to augment the staff within the Information and Public Affairs Section.

6.4 Development of Public Information

Development of City public information announcements will be accomplished by using a variety of information sources. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Directives of the Mayor;

- Directives of the EOB;
- Information obtained from the EOC Planning and Intelligence Section, Situation Assessment Unit;
- Information obtained from other EOC divisions, DOCs and Incident Command Posts (ICPs);
- Information obtained from other City departments and agencies;
- Information obtained through verified media or other sources; and
- Information obtained from non-City organizations, e.g., County, OES, FEMA, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers etc.

6.5 Coordination With Other Agencies

A major emergency affecting the residents of the City of Los Angeles will also undoubtedly affect residents of adjacent jurisdictions. In addition, for an emergency which occurs during normal work hours, thousands of people who live in other jurisdictions will be at work within the City. Recognizing this, the EOC Information and Public Affairs Section will make every effort to coordinate public information with other potentially affected jurisdictions prior to dissemination in accordance with Joint Information System (JIS) protocols as required by the NIMS and NRP.

The principal coordination point for operational area-wide public information broadcasts will be the Los Angeles County EOC. Under level two or three emergency activations, the City may assign a public information representative to the County EOC to assist in the coordination of public information.

All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that emergency public information announcements that could impact non-Los Angeles residents will first be coordinated with the operational area to ensure that the information does not conflict with another jurisdiction's emergency public information prior to release.

6.5.1 Federal Coordination - Joint Information Center

If there is an disaster of national significance in or near the City of Los Angeles, emergency public information announcements would be conducted at the Federal Joint Information Center (JIC). The JIC develops, coordinates, and disseminates unified news releases. News releases are cleared through the JFO Coordination Group to ensure consistent messages, avoid release of conflicting information, and prevent negative impact on operations. This formal approval process for news releases ensures protection of law enforcement sensitive information.

The PFO is supported by a dedicated DHS Public Affairs Officer who functions as the Press Secretary for the PFO, coordinating media activities for the PFO, providing strategic communications guidance to the JIC, and serving as a designated spokesperson when directed by the PFO.

The following elements should be represented at the JIC: (1) FBI Public Information Officer and staff (when activated in support of a terrorist incident), (2) FEMA Public Information Officer and staff, (3) other Federal agency Public Information Officers, as required, and (4) State and local Public Information Officers.

The Mayor's Office will designate a Public Information Officer that will report to the JIC. In addition, the Mayors Office and/or the EOC Director may request specific City department PIOs to report to the JIC.

6.6 Means of Dissemination

There are several methods by which emergency public information may be disseminated. The method(s) used will be determined by the EOC Information and Public Affairs Section and constitute the City's Joint Information System (JIS) protocols.

6.6.1 Responding to Direct Media Requests

During an emergency, the broadcast and print media from a variety of sources will make direct requests for information about the City's response to the emergency. All incoming media requests will be coordinated through the EOC Information and Public Affairs Section.

Depending upon the number of requests, the section coordinator acting as the City's PIO, may respond individually, or establish a media center to address media inquiries.

In addition, the City may join with the County of Los Angeles, State of California and other jurisdictions and operate a Joint Information Center (JIC) at a designated location.

6.6.2 Coordinating Through the Operational Area

Every effort will be made to coordinate emergency public information announcements through the operational area at the time of a local emergency . This may entail providing the information to the operational area for subsequent dissemination, or as necessary, coordinating the content of such announcements. The content of emergency public information announcements should be made available to the operational area through the most efficient means possible.

6.6.3 Public Information Announcements

Public information announcements affecting the residents of the City can be made by three primary means.

A. Emergency Alert System (EAS)

The Los Angeles County Emergency Alert System (EAS) is broadcasted by TV and radio to the LA County Operational Area from the LA County EOC. EAS uses TV and radio stations to broadcast emergency related messages to the public. The City of Los Angeles can request the County to broadcast messages to City residents and business owners if necessary.

B. Direct Contact with Media Outlets

The EOC Information and Public Affairs Section may directly contact local media outlets and provide the text of emergency public information announcements. If a local emergency has been declared, the EOC Information and Public Affairs Section will ensure that there is coordination with the County of Los Angeles PIO on any news releases related to a disaster which includes information about the County of Los Angeles. Care must be taken to ensure that information provided to the media be internally coordinated at all field, department and EOC levels.

C. Direct Dissemination to the Public

Information can be disseminated directly to the public via television channel 35 and through the 311 Call Center (when the public calls).

6.6.4 Procedures

Detailed procedures for the EOC Information and Public Affairs Section can be found in the EOC Procedures Manual.