

Northampton County Emergency Operations Plan

3.15 ESF #15 - External Affairs

Primary Department

Northampton County Emergency Management

Support Department

None

Purpose

The purpose of ESF #15 (External Affairs) is to ensure that sufficient County assets are deployed to provide accurate, coordinated, and timely information to the public, the media, and local, state, and federal governmental partners.

Scope

In Northampton County, the Director of Emergency Management will disseminate emergency public information. The PIO will work jointly with, and have official access to, local radio stations and newspapers. The PIO role may shift to the County Administrator, the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, the Fire Department Representative, or other department heads, depending on the type of incident and the circumstances involved.

Potential operations include the following:

- Reaching out and coordinating with external agencies
- Coordinating with the state PIO
- Coordinating with disaster relief organizations

Northampton County Emergency Operations Plan

ESF #15 (External Affairs) Primary Department	Roles/Tasks
<p>Preparedness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop SOPs to carry out the public information function. • Develop a public information protocol to assist with citizen preparedness in nonemergency times and ensure the ability to swiftly implement these protocols during an emergency. • Establish a working arrangement between the County PIO, the local EOC, and local radio stations and newspapers. • Work with local newspapers to publish general information about specific hazards most likely to occur. • Work with agencies to assist in citizen response and protective action campaigns during nonemergency times. • Prepare and provide general information as appropriate to special groups such as the visually impaired, the elderly, etc. • Develop plans to conduct a multi- jurisdictional coordinated public information program during emergencies and disasters. • Address issues of rumor control in public information campaigns. • Prepare advance copies of emergency information packages for release through the news media during actual emergencies. • Develop plans and programs to educate news media that ESF #15 (External Affairs) is the primary information center during emergency situations. • Maintain pre-scripted EAS messages, news releases, and public service announcements for all hazards, including hurricanes and coastal storms, rainwater flooding, storm surges, and tornados. • Encourage the development of disaster plans and kits for the public. • Conduct or participate in exercises and training to validate this annex and supporting SOPs. • Notify all appropriate personnel regarding the status of the situation. • Update telephone and fax number lists for all local news organizations and remain accessible by telephone until there is an activation or a request to stand down. • Monitor national and state-level news coverage of the situation, if applicable. • Prepare locally unique, supplementary public information news releases and update them as appropriate. • Contact local media and maintain an open dialog throughout the Alert/Notification phase. • Review and revise public messaging templates as needed and necessary to support rapid turnaround of information. • Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and the state to ensure a one-voice message. • Brief local news media personnel, community officials, and local, state, and federal agencies on ESF #15 (External Affairs) policies, plans, and procedures.

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ESF #15 (External Affairs) Primary Department	Roles/Tasks
<p>Response – Initial Actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to the EOC or make initial contact with the EOC via telephone within one hour of activation, or as directed. • The PIO will be the primary and sole source of contact for the release of information to the media. • Continue to maintain constant communication with news and media for situation updates, as necessary and appropriate. • Upon arrival at the EOC, coordinate information with all responding entities regarding incident cause, size, current situation, and resources committed. • Create public message and prepare for dissemination through appropriate channels. • Develop a schedule for media and press briefings as appropriate for the situation.
<p>Response – Continuing Actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with all ESFs to ensure appropriate situational awareness for the development of a locally appropriate public message. • Provide for the rapid verification, approval, and clearance of information for swift release to the public and the media, including verification of information from all sources for accuracy prior to distribution of the information. • Continue to keep the public informed of the situation and of recommended protective actions. • Coordinate with ESF #4 (Firefighting) and ESF #13 (Public Safety and Security) to address any issues or complaints by emergency personnel concerning actions by members of the press. • Organize and operate a press briefing area, if needed. • Coordinate with state PIO to ensure that appropriate information for Northampton County is given to the media and press for an incident that impacts multiple areas of the state. • Assist with the preparation/transmission of EAS messages, if needed. • Disseminate news releases and daily Situation Reports via the County's website. • Disseminate information to elected officials through the legislative liaison function. • Establish, with assistance from VDEM and other agencies, the Virginia Public Inquiry Center for the general public to call for information. • Monitor the media to ensure accuracy of information and to correct inaccurate information as quickly as possible. • Provide information to the public about available community disaster relief assistance and mitigation programs.
<p>Recovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to keep the public informed concerning local recovery operations. • Assist state officials with disseminating information concerning relief assistance. • Continue to assist with needs assessment and requests for post-disaster assistance, as required. • Compile incident documentation for After- Action/Corrective Action planning and recovery reporting purposes. • Conduct leadership and staff debriefing to identify single points of failure in response operations. • Write an After- Action Report/Improvement Plan for future planning initiatives.