



Emergency Support Function 15 External Affairs



Coordinating Agency

West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (WVDHSEM)

Support Agencies and Organizations

All agencies of the State of West Virginia

Purpose

Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 ensures sufficient state communication systems capacity that will maintain visibility regarding public and internal communications; coordinate routine and special communications; ensure accurate, useful, timely, synchronized, targeted communication; and provide continuous messaging are deployed during a potential or actual incident. ESF 15 ensures state agencies, local jurisdictions, elected officials, the media, the private sector, and the local populace including the special needs population remain informed during a perceived or actual incident. WVDHSEM serves as an advisor to all support agencies on decision-making, development, and maintenance of policies and programs to ensure that activities are responsive, inform, and educate local jurisdictions, elected officials, the media, the private sector, and the local populace including the special needs population in support of the State emergency operations.

Scope

A. ESF 15 coordinates state actions to provide the required external affairs support to state and local jurisdictions. ESF 15 applies to all state agencies that may require public affairs support or whose public affairs assets may be employed during an incident. The provisions of this annex apply to incidents where significant interagency coordination is required.

B. ESF 15 integrates the West Virginia Office of the Governor, Public Affairs, Legislative Affairs, Intergovernmental Affairs, Local Jurisdiction Affairs, Community Relations, and the private sector under the coordinating auspices of External Affairs. This annex ensures the Joint Information Center (JIC) or Public Information Officer (PIO), coordinate all releases of information under WVDHSEM.

Policies

A. All departments and agencies assigned responsibilities within ESF 15 will develop and maintain the necessary plans and standard operating procedures needed to accomplish their tasks.

B. The external affairs efforts are coordinated in support of a unified message as directed by WVDHSEM, in consultation with the Office of the Governor. The state in planning for external affairs functions recognizes local government responsibilities for providing information to their citizens. Nothing in this document should be construed as diminishing or assuming those responsibilities. In the event that a local jurisdiction is unable, or lacks the capability, to perform these responsibilities, the state may coordinate with the impacted local jurisdiction to provide vital health and safety information to the affected population.

C. ESF 15 integrates various functional areas, all ESF supporting agencies, local jurisdictions, elected officials, the media, the private sector, and the local populace. These groups are strongly encouraged to participate in ESF 15 training and exercises to ensure that their personnel are able to execute their responsibilities and to achieve unity of effort when the ESF 15 provisions are implemented.

Organizational Structure

During normal operations, WVDHSEM ensures that public information regarding preparedness is coordinated among state and local agencies. The WVDHSEM Director assigns a Public Information Officer (PIO) to work with news media and social networks to communicate preparedness messages. During emergencies and disasters, the PIO assigned (according to the situation) is responsible for establishing and coordinating messages through the WVSEOC to disseminate information to the public. Designated state agencies will be asked to provide qualified personnel to augment the staff at the WVSEOC and could serve as a JIC if one is formed. The JIC/PIO will report directly to WVDHSEM at the time of the incident and may establish an alternate location as the situation dictates. In the event of a substantial disaster, which will trigger a Presidential Declaration, the WVSEOC will work with federal personnel to expand the JIC to include federal staff. The JIC/PIO will be responsible for establishing relationships and coordinating with the local public relations organizations, to include all social media approved accounts, to facilitate the direct dissemination of WVSEOC- approved information to the public.

Concept of Operations

A. Primary Goals

1. Make the public aware of potential emergency situations and of appropriate protective actions.
2. Keep the public informed about an ongoing emergency or disaster situation and to provide protective action guidance as appropriate.

3. Keep public officials, including elected officials, informed of the processes of coordinating the response to and facilitating the recovery from emergencies and disasters.
4. Keep leadership informed about public information issues and media trends.
5. Track and correct rumors and misinformation.
6. Monitor Social Media.

B. Standard Operations

1. During normal operations, the WVDHSEM Director assigns a PIO for preparedness and mitigation efforts. A JIC will be formed dependent upon the situation or incident.
2. PIO/JIC will implement a public education and awareness program with realistic and measurable objectives. Local governments will be encouraged and assisted in making the public aware of potential hazards and of appropriate protective measures.

C. Emergency Operations

1. The PIO/JIC will coordinate the release of information on emergencies and disasters at the WVSEOC when they occur. The PIO will coordinate all such information with the Governor's Communications Office, other state agencies, the federal government, local governments, and volunteer organizations.
2. Designated state agencies will provide qualified professional personnel to assist with public relations, as requested.
3. The PIO/JIC may be asked to supplement local government efforts or to provide public information support in the field at the disaster site.
4. If the disaster warrants a Presidential Declaration, the PIO/JIC will co-locate, space permitting, with other State and Federal response personnel in the WVSEOC. The PIO/JIC will ensure coordination with federal personnel.
5. The West Virginia Emergency Alert System (EAS) is an established medium for the receipt and/or distribution of emergency information to the general public at the local, state, and national levels. The PIO/JIC will create WVDHSEM and WVSEOC- approved messages for broadcast over the EAS system.

6. If an incident has the potential for statewide impact, the PIO/JIC may activate a memorandum of understanding to manage a call center with state or local authorities.

7. During response operations, the PIO/JIC will work with the Governor’s Legislative Office to make contact with the state and federal legislators who represent impacted cities and counties. As response operations move into recovery operations, the Legislative Liaison will coordinate with the federal Congressional Liaison, the Office of the Governor, and the state staff in the WVSEOC to keep elected officials informed of recovery efforts.

Agency Responsibilities Matrix

Supporting Agency	Acronym	Responsibilities
West Virginia Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management	WVDHSEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with the news media, localities, and others to promote emergency preparedness. • Coordinate the community relations function to facilitate disaster victims’ access to disaster assistance. • Manage information sharing with local and state elected officials through the Legislative Liaison function.
All agencies of the State of West Virginia		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate emergency-related public information with WVSEOC and provide public relations staff when necessary

Authorities & References

Authorities

State of West Virginia Emergency Services and Disaster Laws

Chapter I, Code of Federal Regulations, Federal Communications Commission References

References

State of West Virginia Emergency Operations Plan, Basic Plan as amended

Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) 4.10: Communications and Warning

Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) 4.15: Crisis Communications, Public Education, and Information