

ESF 15 - External Communication

Coordinating Agency:

Harvey County Administration

Primary Agency:

Harvey County Administration

Support Agencies:

City of Burrton

City of Halstead

City of Hesston

City of Newton

City of North Newton

City of Sedgwick

City of Walton

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Harvey County Emergency Management

Kansas Division of Emergency Management

Newton Medical Center

I. Purpose and Scope

A. Purpose

1. The purpose of ESF 15 is to disseminate information on emergencies to the public through the news media in Harvey County.

B. Scope

1. This ESF coordinates actions to provide the required external affairs support to county and incident management elements. This Annex details the establishment of support positions to coordinate communications to various audiences. This ESF applies to county departments and agencies that may require public affairs support or whose public affairs assets may be employed during an emergency. This scope describes:
 - a. Quickly relay critical and potentially lifesaving information to those at risk
 - b. Provide timely, consistent information on the status of emergency operations
 - c. Coordinate the release of public information from all responding agencies
 - d. Assure the public that government is responding effectively to the emergency
 - e. Make credible and consistent information available to answer citizen inquiries

- f. Provide ongoing and useful information regarding recovery activities
- g. Ensure a system is in place to provide information and guidance to County, City and if appropriate, State and Federal, elected and appointed officials

II. Concept of Operations

A. General

1. ESF 15 is organized consistent with the State of Kansas EOC and the requirements of the National Response Framework, the National Incident Management System, and the Incident Command System to provide incident assessment, planning, procurement, deployment, coordination and support operations to the County Emergency Response Team, Area Operations and Regional Incident Management Teams (IMTs) to assure a timely and appropriate response to an emergency or situation.
2. Procedures protocols and plans for disaster response activities are developed to govern staff operations at the Harvey County EOC and in the field. These are in the form of Emergency Operations Plans (i.e. Base Plan) and corresponding Appendices, Incident Annexes, Support Annexes and Standard Operating Guidelines, which describe ESF 15 capabilities
3. In a large event requiring local or state mutual aid assistance, ESF 15 will coordinate with support agency counterparts to seek, procure, plan, coordinate and direct the use of required assets.
4. The Harvey County Administration will act as the lead agency for ESF 15. Depending on the severity of the situation, other local public information officers and County staff will assist with media advisories and releases. Lead or support agency public information staff will operate from the Harvey County EOC on a 24-hour schedule to help maintain the flow of public information.
5. Depending on the severity of the disaster, the Harvey County Emergency Management may activate a 24-hour citizen information center to handle citizens' inquiries.
6. In a catastrophic disaster, ESF 7 (Resource Support), ESF 14 (Long Term Recovery) and ESF 15 will work together to release information regarding volunteer goods and services that need to be sent to the disaster area, and where volunteers and donors may go to deliver such goods or services. All ESFs will routinely provide information to ESF 15 to keep Harvey County officials and citizens aware of current events.
7. The Harvey County Communications Department has assigned as a staff member as collateral duty as the County Public Information Officer (PIO), responsible for the overall coordination of public information activities at the county level. A support staff of trained departmental PIOs will assist the County PIO, as required, in this effort. In the absence of the County PIO, the Harvey County Communications Department will appoint an acting County PIO from

among the PIO support staff.

The local media is a logical extension of the disaster operation and recognized as the best means to quickly get information to the majority of the public. The County counts on the local media to provide emergency instructions and potentially lifesaving information to the public following a disaster. A partnership role will be maintained with the media by making every attempt to provide timely and accurate information throughout the disaster situation. In most cases, contact with the media will be maintained using landline and cellular telephones, facsimile, and email.

Emergency information efforts will focus on specific event-related information. The public information program requires a coordinated flow of information from all levels of government and private agencies through a central release point to ensure that only accurate information is presented. Close coordination and exchange of information with all key staff and department heads is vital. This will be accomplished through the following:

- a. Close coordination and exchange of information with all key staff and department heads.
 - b. Collecting, compiling, and verifying information at the Inquiry Center (Rumor Control) before authorizing releases.
 - c. An Inquiry Center may be established where citizens having questions concerning missing relatives, continued emergency services, restricted areas, etc. may call to receive accurate and verified information. The telephone numbers will be released by the media.
 - d. The PIO will obtain verbal approval from the Chief Executive of the appointing jurisdiction prior to requisitioning any supplies or equipment which would result in expenditures of local government funds.
 - e. Information will be released to members of the press at the Media Release Point by the Public Information Officer or authorized representatives.
8. The Media Release Point for Harvey County will be in the Commissioner's Office in the County Courthouse. The PIO will conduct news briefings and conferences. Briefings and conference will be held at regularly scheduled intervals which will be determined at the time, depending upon the current situation.
 9. If the situation dictates, emergency public information activities will be coordinated from a Joint Information Center (JIC). Activating a JIC will help County departments and participating organizations coordinate their activities and help to ensure consistent and accurate information is disseminated.

Since many emergencies strike rapidly, the public information system cannot always react swiftly enough to properly inform the public about the hazard and for this reason, it is important that citizens are made aware of potential hazards and

appropriate protective measures prior to the occurrence of an emergency. The County will make every effort to provide ongoing public education to its citizens regarding Emergency Management activities.

Every effort will be made to provide emergency public information to special needs groups, such as the hearing and visually impaired and non-English speaking populations. Close coordination will be required with the government, volunteer and community agencies described further ESF #6 –Mass Care, Housing and Human Services.

A large disaster will result in state, national and international media coverage, and in the aftermath of a disaster, media personnel may attempt to obtain information from other than official sources.

10. Joint Information System (JIS)

The Joint Information System (JIS) describes all public information activities being conducted regarding the event, including those outside the EOC and the JIC (i.e., public information functions being carried out at the scene and from departmental offices or other remote offices and locations).

The ESF #15 Coordinator will work to establish communications with all Joint Information System (JIS) components to facilitate the exchange of information. The use of an organized JIS will help to ensure interagency communication and the release of consistent information.

As part of the JIS, the on scene agency PIO will address media representatives at the incident site and keep the EOC and the JIC informed of these briefings. Contact with JIS components will be maintained primarily by telephone and radio.

11. Joint Information Center (JIC)

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

In most cases, the JPIC 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 via telephone, radio, the Internet, facsimile and/or face-to-face communications. Once a JIC is activated, all emergency public information activities, including media inquires, should be coordinated through the JIC. The JIC will become the central coordination point for all emergency public information and external communications activities. To the extent possible, the JIC will be staffed with Public Information Officers (PIOs) from all agencies and organizations involved in the event.

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

The PIOs working in JIC will 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 will ensure an adequate number of PIOs are available to support emergency public information activities.

Regardless of the incident, the function of the JIC remains essentially the same, while the number of departments and agencies involved as well as the location and the quantity of information to be disseminated will vary greatly. At a minimum the following functions must be performed regardless of these variables:

- a. Establish and maintain contact with local radio, television and print media
- b. Develop and disseminate written information such as news releases, fact sheets and other reports as needed
- c. Schedule news conferences or interviews with department heads and other officials; brief them if appropriate
- d. Provide interview opportunities that meet the unique needs of each medium (television, radio, print)
- e. Establish and maintain a communications link or a Joint Information System (JIS) with field PIOs and all remote sites performing public information activities
- f. Monitor the information being released by the media to ensure appropriate information is being released and take steps to correct any inaccurate information
- g. Exchange information with elected officials, voluntary organizations, industry representatives, State and Federal PIOs and all other involved agencies as the situation dictates
- h. Provide ongoing information to and coordination with County, City, State and Federal elected officials

PIOs working in the JIC retain the autonomy to represent the public information needs of their respective agencies, while working closely with the EOC Team and/or JIC to ensure consistent information is being disseminated in a timely manner by all departments.

12. **Dissemination Process:** Many methods are used to disseminate information to the public during an emergency or disaster. Warning systems, in general, are described in Annex ESF #2 Communications. Considerations for special populations are outlined below.

- a. General Public: Radio, television, print media, fliers, posters, brochures, information brochures are all established methods for providing information to the public. Use of a particular medium(s) will be situation dependent, based upon the urgency of the information and the intended audience.
- b. Special Populations
 - i. Hearing impaired: The Emergency Alerting System (EAS) provides trailers on TV screens provide weather watch and warning messages and other emergency information.
 - ii. Visually impaired - The Emergency Alerting System (EAS) provides audio alerting via radio and television stations. Some emergency planning and disaster information brochures are available in Braille.
 - iii. Non-English speaking - Many televisions have the capability to provide closed-captioning in Spanish.
 - iv. Schools –District-wide notifications will be made through the District offices
 - v. Hospitals & Nursing Homes – Notifications will be made throughout the facilities relaying local media outlet information.
 - vi. Correctional Facilities –Notifications will be made from the Sheriff Office

13. Specialized Information Protocols

- a. Restricted Areas & Reentry - Information on restricted areas, as well as the process for reentry into an area after it has been declared safe, will be obtained from the Harvey County EOC and disseminated immediately to the media and the public
- b. Emergency Assistance - - Information on any federal, state or local disaster assistance that might be available will be obtained from the agency offering the assistance. In some cases this information may given directly to the media and the public. In others cases, a telephone number will be provided for obtaining additional information.
- c. Casualties - - Information on the number of fatalities, injured and missing will be obtained from the Harvey County EOC and disseminated immediately to the media and the public. The identity of victims will be released only after confirmation of proper next-of-kin notifications.

14. Pre-Scripted Information

- a. The County PIO will collect and maintain a file of fact sheets, instructions & procedures, and other readily available prescribed information on a

wide range of topics to support the rapid dissemination of public information. This pre-scripted information will usually be generic in nature and non-specific to the event, but may still prove valuable to both the media and the public in the early stages of an emergency or disaster. Examples of such pre-scripted information include:

- i. Chemical Fact Sheets -- for known chemical hazards
- ii. Public Health Guidance -- for disease prevention after flooding
- iii. Red Cross Press Releases

B. Direction and Control

1. The ESF 15 Coordinating Agency is Harvey County Administration which is appointed by the Harvey County Emergency Management , in coordination with local planning partners. The staff serving as ESF 15 Coordinator is appointed by and located in the Harvey County Administration. When ESF 15 support is necessary, the ESF 15 Coordinator coordinates all aspects of ESF 15.
2. ESF 15 complies with the National Response Framework, and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The NIMS guides the direction and control system adopted by the Harvey County Emergency Management , which functions as the official disaster prevention, protection, response, preparedness, recovery, and mitigation organization within Harvey County.
3. The ESF 15 system operates at two levels: 1) Harvey County EOC; 2) field locations.
4. The Harvey County Emergency Management serves as the focal point for ESF 15 activities. It is responsible for ensuring that all appropriate program departments, support agencies, other ESF and other private voluntary agencies have knowledge about the system and ESF 15 expectations, as well as coordinate and cooperate efficiently during an event.

C. Organization

1. County
 - a. During an activation of the Harvey County EOC, primary and support agency staff is integrated with the Harvey County Administration staff to provide support.
 - b. The Public Information function will be a part of the Command Staff. The Public Information Officer is responsible for interfacing with the public and media and/or agencies with incident-related information requirements.
 - c. During a disaster, the Harvey County EOC will act as the central coordinating facility for receiving and disseminating public information. Information flow to the Harvey County EOC will occur directly from news media reports and citizen public information phone calls. Information will

flow from the Harvey County EOC in the form of media briefings, news releases and situation reports. Information will also flow from ESF 15 to the State of Kansas EOC.

- d. The Harvey County Administration will develop and maintain ESF 15 and accompanying Appendices, Annexes and Standard Operating Guidelines that govern response actions related to emergencies. Primary and support agencies should develop and maintain their own similar documents for internal use, which must be compatible with and in support of the overall Emergency Operations Plan. All such documents will be in compliance with the National Response Framework, The National Incident Management System, the Incident Command System, and the Harvey County EOP.

2. State of Kansas

- a. During an activation of the State of Kansas EOC, the Adjutant General's Department, Office of Public Affairs is designated as the state lead for Public Information and will provide a liaison to facilitate requests for State PIO resources to local Emergency Operations Centers.
- b. During an emergency or disaster event, the primary and support agencies of ESF 15 at the State of Kansas EOC will report to the SEOC Manager.
- c. The Adjutant General's Department, Office of Public Affairs develops and maintains ESF 15 and accompanying Appendices, Annexes and Standard Operating Guidelines that govern response actions related to emergencies. Primary and support agencies should develop and maintain their own similar documents for internal use, which must be compatible with and in support of the overall Kansas Response Plan. All such documents will be in compliance with the National Response Framework, the National Incident Management System, the Incident Command System and the Kansas Response Plan.
- d. The primary and supporting agencies working for the State ESF 15 will report directly to the State of Kansas EOC.

D. Alerts and Notifications

1. The Harvey County Administration and/or Harvey County Emergency Management will notify the County Warning Point (Harvey County EOC) when information comes to their attention indicating that an emergency or disaster situation is developing.
2. The County Warning Point (Harvey County EOC), will notify the "on call" Emergency Duty Officer and/or Emergency Coordinating Officer (ECO) for ESF 15 when Harvey County has been threatened or impacted by an emergency or disaster event as provided in the County Warning Point procedure.
3. ESF 15 will be activated or placed on standby upon notification by the Harvey County EOC. The representatives or designees of the coordinating agency will

manage the emergency activities of ESF 15. If additional support is required, the ESF 15 coordinating and primary agencies may jointly manage ESF 15 activities.

4. Upon instructions to activate or placement of ESF 15 on standby, Harvey County Administration will implement procedures to notify all ESF 15 planning team members and, if necessary, mobilize all personnel, facilities, and physical resources likely to be needed, based on the emergency circumstance.

E. Actions

1. Actions carried out by ESF 15 are grouped into phases of emergency management: Preparedness, Response, Recovery and Mitigation. Each phase requires specific skills and knowledge to accomplish and requires significant cooperation and collaboration between all supporting agencies and the intended recipients of service.

Overall Actions Assigned to All Members	
<i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Ensure adequate space and equipment is available for the operation of a JIC.
2	Identify public information needs required for individuals with vulnerable needs.

Overall Actions Assigned to All Members	
<i>Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	In coordination with the EOC team, release emergency information.
2	Implement a proactive public information strategy to meet media needs.
3	Activate and staff management functions of the JIC.
4	Resolve any conflicting information and dispel rumors.

Overall Actions Assigned to All Members	
<i>Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Return borrowed resources and those obtained through agreement, lease, or rental when those resources are no longer required.
2	Evaluate response and recommend changes to ESF-15 Annex to correct shortfalls and improve future response activities.
3	Provide documentation for possible financial reimbursement process for recovery activities.
4	Participate in after action meetings and prepare after action reports as requested.
5	Continue all emergency public information activities based on the circumstances and the organizations involved in the recovery efforts.
6	Distribute information on what to do when returning to your damaged home.
7	Distribute information on how and where to apply for different types of disaster assistance.
8	Participate in briefings, incident action plans, situation reports and briefings.
9	Release information concerning the need for volunteer goods and services.
10	Provide information regarding available disaster recovery programs and resources to the media and the public.
11	Maintain records of all news releases to support documentation after the disaster.

12	Compile a written record of events, including any printed materials, news releases, tapes and clippings.
13	Assess effectiveness of information and education programs.

Overall Actions Assigned to All Members	
<i>Mitigation Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Provide information and increase awareness about safe rooms and other shelter methods.
2	Conduct all-hazard safety visits to increase home hazard prevention actions.
3	Promote preparedness information that will lessen the impact of disasters, such as having a disaster preparedness kit and family disaster plan.
4	Establish contacts and develop working relationships with the media.
5	Provide ESF-15 representative for update of mitigation plan.

III. Responsibilities

- A. The following list identifies the responsibilities designated to each agency/organization for this ESF. The Coordinating and Primary Agency and their responsibilities are listed first. The Supporting Agencies follow in alphabetical order.

Coordinating: Harvey County Administration	
<i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Identify who is responsible for initial notification of ESF-15 personnel.
2	Identify responsibilities for liaison roles with state and adjacent county PIOs.
3	Develop standard operating guides and checklists to support ESF-15 activities.
4	Participate in training, drills, and exercises.
5	Identify all viable methods to reach the public including but not limited to radio, television, print media flyers, posters, brochures, informational booths and the Internet.
6	Provide continuous and accessible public information about disasters and recovery activity.
7	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
8	Identify personnel or process used to provide public information to individuals with limited English language ability.
<i>Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Participate in EOC briefings, incident action plans, situation reports and meetings to support ESF15.

Primary: Harvey County Administration	
<i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Identify who is responsible for initial notification of ESF-15 personnel.
2	Identify responsibilities for liaison roles with state and adjacent county PIOs.
3	Develop standard operating guides and checklists to support ESF-15 activities.
4	Participate in training, drills, and exercises.
5	Identify all viable methods to reach the public including but not limited to radio, television, print media flyers, posters, brochures, informational booths and the Internet.
6	Provide continuous and accessible public information about disasters and recovery activity.
7	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
8	Identify personnel or process used to provide public information to individuals with limited

	English language ability.
Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Participate in EOC briefings, incident action plans, situation reports and meetings to support ESF15.

Supporting: Harvey County Emergency Management	
Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Maintain a central personnel roster, contact, and resource lists to support ESF-15 tasks.
2	Identify who is responsible for initial notification of ESF-15 personnel.
3	Identify responsibilities for liaison roles with state and adjacent county PIOs.
4	Develop standard operating guides and checklists to support ESF-15 activities.
5	Train personnel on EOC operation, JIC operation, the Incident Command System (ICS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).
6	Collect, process, and disseminate information to and from the EOC.
7	Develop and maintain ESF-15 Annex.
8	Participate in training, drills, and exercises.
9	Develop mutual aid and other support agreements with surrounding jurisdictions and the private sector.
10	Identify all viable methods to reach the public including but not limited to radio, television, print media flyers, posters, brochures, informational booths and the Internet.
11	Provide continuous and accessible public information about disasters and recovery activity.
12	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
13	Identify public information needs required for facilities that serve vulnerable needs populations.
14	Identify personnel or process used to provide public information to individuals with limited English language ability.
Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Designate personnel to coordinate ESF-15 activities in EOC and JIC.
2	Manage the collection, processing, and dissemination of information between ESF-15 and EOC or incident command.
3	Participate in EOC briefings, incident action plans, situation reports and meetings to support ESF15.
4	Inform the public of health and/or safety concerns, status of emergency situation, and ways to reduce or eliminate the associated dangers.

Supporting: Kansas Division of Emergency Management	
Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Identify all viable methods to reach the public including but not limited to radio, television, print media flyers, posters, brochures, informational booths and the Internet.
2	Develop pre-scripted media releases and public advisories.
3	Pre-identify media outlets, establish contact lists, and provide training on emergency public information procedures.
4	Train emergency responders on public information procedures on referring media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
5	Provide continuous and accessible public information about disasters and recovery activity.
6	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	

1	Inform the public of health and/or safety concerns, status of emergency situation, and ways to reduce or eliminate the associated dangers.
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Harvey County Board of County Commissioners	
<i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Participate in training, drills, and exercises.
2	Provide continuous and accessible public information about disasters and recovery activity.
3	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
4	Identify personnel or process used to provide public information to individuals with limited English language ability.
<i>Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Participate in EOC briefings, incident action plans, situation reports and meetings to support ESF15.

Harvey County Communications	
<i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Identify all viable methods to reach the public including but not limited to radio, television, print media flyers, posters, brochures, informational booths and the Internet.
<i>Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Provide field support for emergency responders at the scene.
2	Participate in EOC briefings, incident action plans, situation reports and meetings to support ESF15.

Harvey County Data Processing	
<i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Participate in training, drills, and exercises.

Harvey County Health Department	
<i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Participate in training, drills, and exercises.
<i>Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Inform the public of health and/or safety concerns, status of emergency situation, and ways to reduce or eliminate the associated dangers.

Harvey County Sheriff Office/Detention Center	
<i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Participate in training, drills, and exercises.

Kansas Department of Health and Environment	
<i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Develop pre-scripted media releases and public advisories.
2	Train emergency responders on public information procedures on referring media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
<i>Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Inform the public of health and/or safety concerns, status of emergency situation, and ways to reduce or eliminate the associated dangers.

Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Division of Environment	
<i>Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Inform the public of health and/or safety concerns, status of emergency situation, and ways to reduce or eliminate the associated dangers.

IV. Financial Management

- A. ESF 15 is responsible for coordinating with Harvey County Administration to manage ESF 15 expenses relevant to an event.
- B. During a response, each agency/department funds disaster operations from their current operating budget and are responsible for recording and tracking agency expenditures. If a federally declared disaster exists, each agency is responsible for seeking reimbursement in accordance to the formula has established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency via the FEMA/State Agreement.
- C. Expenditures by support entities will be documented by those entities and submitted directly to the Harvey County Administration or a designated Finance Service officer as soon as possible.

V. References and Authorities

REFERENCES

AUTHORITIES

