

EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION # 15 - PUBLIC INFORMATION

Primary

ESF 15 Coordinator: Campbell County Public Information Officer (PIO)

Local Support

- Chief Elected Official's Office
- Office of Emergency Management (OEM)
- County Road Department / Public Works
- County Health Department (NKY Health)
- County EMS
- County Fire Departments
- County Agriculture Extension Office

Local Resources

- Board of Education
- County Finance
- County & City Law Enforcement
- American Red Cross – Kentucky Region

State / Federal / NGO Resources

- Kentucky Division of Emergency Management (KyEM)
- Kentucky National Guard
- Public Service Commission (utilities)
- Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)

Engagement scales up or down based on incident needs; not all partners will be activated for every event.

Purpose

Coordinate the timely, accurate, and accessible release of information to the public, stakeholders, and media before, during, and after incidents. When established, manage or support a **Joint Information Center (JIC)** as the hub for coordinated messaging within the **Joint Information System (JIS)**.

Scope

- Warning and public information across all hazards
- Media relations, news conferences, briefings, and press logistics
- Social/digital communications, rumor control, and misinformation management
- Public inquiry management (hotlines/211) and community engagement
- Accessible communications (LEP/ADA/ASL) and equity-focused outreach

- Support to mass notification (e.g., EAS/IPAWS/WEA and county systems)
 - Coordination of spokespersons and message approval under ICS/UC
 - Documentation, after-action reporting, and records retention
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Situation & Assumptions

- The ESF 15 Coordinator may or may not also serve as the incident PIO. If not, the **Chief Elected Official(s)** appoint the PIO.
 - Public perception often shapes behavior; information must be **fast, factual, and frequent** to maintain trust and drive protective actions.
 - Emergency public information will scale with incident complexity.
 - The **Emergency Alert System (EAS)**—and, when available, **IPAWS/WEA**—are primary channels for urgent, life-safety warnings.
 - All agency PIOs/PAOs coordinate messages through the JIS/JIC to ensure a **single, consistent voice**.
 - Social media can rapidly amplify both accurate information and rumors; continuous monitoring is required.
 - Information must be **accessible** (languages, readability, captions/ASL, alt text) and distributed through channels that reach at-risk and underserved communities.
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Mission

Keep the public informed; provide clear protective action guidance; counter rumors and misinformation; support life safety, incident stabilization, and property/environmental protection; and provide recovery information that helps individuals, businesses, and communities return to stability.

Direction & Control

- Under ICS, the **PIO** (ESF 15) operates within the **Command Staff**, coordinating with ESF 5 (Information & Planning) and ESF 2 (Communications).
- When a **JIC** is activated, the County PIO serves as JIC Manager (or designates), coordinating all agency PIOs in the **JIS**.
- Message approval follows the **Incident Commander/Unified Command (IC/UC)** approval process; life-safety alerts may use pre-approved templates for speed.
- The County PIO is the default spokesperson for county agencies unless IC/UC designates otherwise.

Core facts to release ASAP (as available):

- What happened, where, when; hazards and impacted areas
 - Protective actions and evacuation/shelter guidance
 - Agency roles, resources committed, response progress
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- Damage snapshot and service restoration priorities
 - Assistance locations (DRCs, shelters, PODs), how to help/volunteer/donate safely
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Concept of Operations

Activation Triggers

- Significant or sensitive incidents; high public/media interest; multi-jurisdictional events; fatalities; evacuations/shelters; major utility disruptions; declared emergencies; or whenever coordinated messaging is needed.

Joint Information System (JIS) / JIC

- **JIS:** Network of PIOs from county, municipal, special districts, NGOs, and private utilities coordinating messaging (virtual or in person).
- **JIC:** Physical/virtual hub for message development, approval, and release; media monitoring; rumor control; briefing support; and documentation. The JIC normally operates from the EOC or designated alternate.

Channels (PACE model)

- **Primary:** County website & social media; news releases; live/recorded briefings; **IPAWS/EAS/WEA** (with OEM/KyEM); County mass notification system (e.g., Communicator/GEOcast, if available).
- **Alternate:** Local radio/TV; cable crawls; partner websites; school district & utility channels.
- **Contingency:** Amateur radio (ARES/RACES), field PAs, flyers, bulletin boards, canvassing.
- **Emergency:** Door-to-door notification with responders, mobile loudspeakers.

Message Development & Approval

- Use **message maps** and plain language (6th–8th grade reading level).
- Include **who/what/where/when/why/what to do next**, and where to get help.
- Coordinate technical content with ESF 8 (health), ESF 10 (hazmat), utilities, and law enforcement before release.
- **Pre-approved templates** (evacuation, shelter-in-place, boil water, severe weather, hazmat, road closures) speed life-safety messaging.

Accessibility, Equity & Language Access

- Provide **ASL interpreters** for live briefings; closed captions on video; alt text on images; large-print/PDF accessibility.
- Translate priority messages into prevalent local languages; coordinate with schools, community leaders, faith-based groups, and NGOs to reach LEP populations and people with disabilities.
- Ensure shelter/recovery information is accessible (physical and digital).

Rumor Control, Monitoring & Misinformation

- Stand up a **Rumor Control** page and hotline FAQ; maintain a rumor log.
- Monitor social and traditional media; correct inaccuracies rapidly with facts and tone of respect.
- Coordinate with law enforcement (ESF 13) for OPSEC-sensitive topics; avoid releasing investigative/protected details.

Media Operations

- Establish media staging, check-in, and safety guidelines.
- Schedule regular briefings; keep them short, on time, and accessible (streamed, recorded, archived).
- Credentialing process during large events; escort media in restricted areas when safe.
- Provide b-roll, maps, and infographics where possible.

Public Inquiry & Community Engagement

- Coordinate a public information hotline/211; create and update **FAQs**.
- Capture public feedback and unmet information needs; feed to ESF 5 for planning.
- Support community meetings, virtual town halls, and neighborhood briefings.

Data, Privacy & Records

- Protect PII/health information; comply with open records laws.
- Maintain **ICS-214** activity logs, copies of all releases/posts, approval records, and metrics for AAR/IP.

Phases of Management

Preparedness

- Maintain ESF 15/JIC **SOPs**, contact rosters, media lists, social handles, and partner distribution lists.
- Pre-load a “**dark site**” or recovery page framework and **pre-scripted** alert templates.
- Train PIO staff and backups; exercise JIC/JIS and IPAWS/EAS procedures with OEM/KyEM.
- Build translation/ASL vendor lists; identify community messengers for targeted outreach.
- Coordinate with ESF 2 on redundant comms (sat/swap radios) and with ESF 5 on common operating picture inputs/outputs.

Response

- Activate JIS/JIC; issue **initial holding statement** within minutes if details are limited.
- Push **protective actions** and critical updates at regular, predictable intervals.
- Launch rumor control; coordinate with shelters/PODs for on-site signage and flyers.
- Support family assistance and casualty information in coordination with Coroner/ESF 8/ESF 13.

Recovery

- Shift to recovery messaging: re-entry, debris, permitting, assistance deadlines (FEMA IA/SBA/PA), and **mitigation** opportunities.
 - Promote mental/behavioral health resources, volunteer/donation guidance, and long-term recovery group (VOAD/COAD) services.
 - Document metrics and conduct **after-action review**; update templates/SOPs.
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Organization & Assignment of Responsibilities

ESF 15 Coordinator / County PIO (Primary)

- Manage JIS/JIC and serve (or designate) spokesperson(s).
- Establish message approval workflow with IC/UC; coordinate with ESF 5 for situational data.
- Prepare, approve (via IC/UC), and release alerts, advisories, updates, graphics, and FAQs.
- Coordinate EAS/IPAWS/WEA with OEM/KyEM; ensure synchronization across channels.
- Lead media monitoring, rumor control, and misinformation countermeasures.
- Ensure accessibility, translations, and inclusive outreach.
- Coordinate news conferences, media logistics, and VIP press operations.
- Maintain records, logs, and post-incident documentation; contribute to AAR/IP.

Supporting Agencies (selected duties)

- **Chief Elected Official's Office:** Policy guidance; designate spokesperson(s); participate in briefings.
 - **OEM (ESF 5/2):** COP inputs; EAS/IPAWS technical support; JIC facilities/IT; mass notification systems.
 - **Health Dept (ESF 8):** Health risk messaging; disease control guidance; POD/shelter health info.
 - **Fire/EMS/LE (ESF 4/9/13):** Safety/warning content; road closures; perimeter/media safety; investigative sensitivities.
 - **Public Works/Utilities (ESF 3/12, PSC liaison):** Service restoration updates; boil/burn/conservation notices.
 - **Board of Education:** School closures, reunification, buses as comms channels.
 - **Finance:** Procurement/records guidance for paid notices/translations/call centers.
 - **ARC/VOAD:** Shelter status; assistance/referrals; volunteer/donations messaging.
 - **KyEM/State Partners:** Amplify/localize state/federal guidance; coordinate JIS across jurisdictions.
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Plan Maintenance

- ESF 15 is reviewed **annually** and after each activation/exercise. Update contact lists, templates, SOPs, and accessibility/translation resources.
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References

- KRS 39A–G
- National Response Framework (NRF)
- National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- KyEM SEOC Standard Operating Procedures
- ESF 15 Standard Operating Procedures
- Campbell County Joint Information System Protocol

Quick-Use Checklists (Attachments suggested)

- **A. Activation & First Hour:** holding statement → channels update → media advisory → rumor log → briefing schedule
- **B. Life-Safety Templates:** evacuation, shelter-in-place, boil water, HAZMAT, severe weather, road closures
- **C. Accessibility & Language Access:** interpreters, captions, translations, alt text, large-print, LEP partner list
- **D. JIC Setup:** location/virtual, staffing matrix, equipment, credentials, safety, signage
- **E. Documentation:** ICS-214, release archive, approval records, metrics, AAR/IP inputs