

Mississippi Emergency Support Function #15 - External Affairs Annex

ESF #15 Coordinator:

Mississippi Emergency Management
Agency

Office of Attorney General
Mississippi Department of Human
Services
Mississippi Department of Medicaid
Mississippi Department of Mental
Health
Mississippi Department of Public Safety
Mississippi Department of
Transportation
Mississippi Development Authority
Mississippi Gaming Commission
Mississippi Military Department
Mississippi Public Broadcasting
Mississippi Institutions of Higher
Learning
Mississippi Department of Archives &
History
Mississippi Forestry Commission
Office of the State Auditor
Office of the Secretary of the Senate

Mississippi Primary Agencies:

Office of the Governor
Mississippi Emergency Management
Agency

Mississippi Support Agencies:

Office of the Governor
Mississippi Department of Agriculture
and Commerce
Mississippi Department of Corrections
Mississippi Department of Education
Mississippi Department of Employment
Security
Mississippi Department of
Environmental
Quality
Mississippi Department of Finance and
Administration
Mississippi State Department of Health
Mississippi Insurance Department

**All State Agencies that may require
Public affairs support or whose public
affairs assets may be employed during an
incident**

Introduction

Purpose

There are two main functions of ESF#15: crisis and non-crisis public information.

1. During a crisis or emergency, ESF# 15 will disseminate information to both the general public and the news media during natural, technological, health-related or man-made emergencies.
2. During non-crisis times, ESF#15 will disseminate information on all aspects of emergency management that includes preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation.

Scope

1. **Preparedness:** The MEMA PIO, along with any additional state agency or non-profit organization's PIO support, will implement a public information program, which includes planning and directing public awareness campaigns for such items as severe weather, earthquakes, hurricanes, flooding and tornadoes. The MEMA PIO will also update and monitor the agency's Web site and provide a link to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Web site so that citizens may read the most up-to-date information on preparedness activities in English, Spanish and any other languages available.
2. **Response:** ESF#15 will publicize response activities that directly benefit affected communities. Such activities will include: shelter and feeding locations, road closure information, boil water notices, school closings, health and mental health information, environmental hazards or any other type of information that may be required to assist citizens during an emergency.
3. **Recovery:** ESF#15 will respond to reporter/public inquiries for damage assessments and will publicize any disaster declarations. ESF 15 will help support a Joint Field Office, or if needed, will contract with a public information officer for this help.
4. **Mitigation:** ESF#15 will publicize MEMA's projects and accomplishments in the area of mitigation.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS DURING CRISIS/EMERGENCY

General:

ESF#15 will disseminate information through a Joint Information Center that will be located in the State Emergency Operations Center in Pearl. The JIC will be staffed by primary and support state agency PIOs.

The scope of information that must be provided will exceed the resources of a single state agency. Support from state agency communicators is critical and all information must be disseminated from a central source – the Joint Information Center at the State Emergency Operations Center.

ESF#15 will coordinate with local counterparts when disseminating information about state activities and will seek assistance from local Public Information Officers when trying to confirm reports about local actions.

In the event of a Grand Gulf or River Bend Nuclear Station incident, an Emergency News Media Center may also be established at an alternate location with company officials. Detailed descriptions of the PIO roles and responsibilities during a nuclear incident are outlined in the Grand Gulf Nuclear Station and River Bend Nuclear Station Standard Operating Procedures plan which are on file at MEMA.

In the event that federal agencies are working in a JIC with state PIOs, it will be a combined effort in determining which messages are released to the public and the media, with the state taking the lead role in such specifics as: message mapping, news releases, media interviews and all printed promotional material so to ensure that Mississippians are receiving the most timely information in regards to recovering from a disaster or emergency of any type.

Notification:

1. The State Warning Point will notify the Lead PIO and/or designee of incidents that may require the State Emergency Operations Center to become activated. The Lead PIO will also notify key state agency PIOs of the potential incident through electronic mail, facsimile or telephone.
2. When the State Emergency Operations Center is activated, the Lead PIO will notify all state agency PIOs and alert them of impending public information operations.
3. The Lead PIO or assigned designee will request that each agency's designated PIO report to the State Emergency Operations Center as needed to staff the JIC.

Organization:

Lead Public Information Officer: The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency's Public Information Officer will serve as the lead PIO and will oversee the information flow to the media/public by coordinating all PIO activity. The MEMA PIO is responsible for initiating the actions required to implement and organize ESF# 15.

Lead State Agency (ies) PIO(s): This will be the state agency or key agencies that take the lead in messaging at the JIC, depending upon the type of disaster that has occurred.

Support Agencies: All designated support agencies shall provide an individual to serve in the JIC in a capacity as assigned by the Lead PIO. Such capacities may include assisting with media/public inquiries, preparing for news conferences, writing talking points and news releases, providing information to congressional, legislative or local elected officials, coordinating releases and messaging with federal, state, local or tribal PIOs or gathering information from the Emergency Operations Center.

ESF#15 will be divided into the following categories to more effectively manage inquiries of information from the media/public/government leaders:

<p>Public Affairs: Functions include, but are not limited to the following:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overseeing the key function of media relations. • Coordinating messages and news releases with federal, state, local and tribal governments. • Gathering information on the incident. • Using a broad range of resources to disseminate information. • Monitoring news coverage to ensure that accurate information is disseminated. • Schedule news conferences & update MEMA Web site.
<p>Governmental Affairs: Functions may include, but are not limited to the following:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing contact with state, federal and congressional offices representing affected areas to provide information on the incident. • Arranging for incident site or SEOC visits for governmental leaders and their staffs. • Responding to legislative/congressional inquiries.
<p>Rumor Control: Functions may include, but are not limited to the following:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will answer questions from members of the public who call in on the emergency public information line. • Should a rumor be identified, the appropriate answer will be provided by SEOC staff and then shared with all JIC members. • Be conscious of rumor patterns. More than three calls on the same general subject should be brought to the attention of the Lead PIO.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

It is the responsibility of all primary and support state agencies to:

1. Designate a primary and alternate PIO to report to the JIC, or other areas of operation as the emergency situation requires.
2. Coordinate the release of agency specific public information with the JIC.
3. Participate in news conferences as the emergency situation requires.

Additional responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

<p>MEMA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Standard Operating Procedure and checklist in cooperation with supporting agencies for this ESF. • Ensure technical, administrative and staff support of JIC. • Provide Governor's Office with updates on disaster situation. • Receive, compile and prepare authoritative information with other local, tribal, state and federal agencies. • Coordinate the release of disaster-related information with other agencies of the Local, Tribal, State and Federal governments. • Coordinate with local jurisdictions in providing EPI support. • Assign task responsibilities based on qualifications and expertise of state agency PIOs. • Provide MEMA Director with needs assessment and information activities. • Maintain media listings and contact information.
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Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide emergency public information through mediums Mississippi available at the state's institutions of higher learning.
Office of State Attorney General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information regarding violations of consumer protection laws and other related issues. • Provide information on statements to the Lead PIO on the consequences of price gouging or consumer fraud.
Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate information pertaining to response and recovery of agricultural interests with JIC.
Mississippi Department of Archives and History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate information between the JIC and the Department of Archives and History regarding the condition of historic properties.
Mississippi Department of Corrections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about cancellation of visitation schedule at local and/or state prison facilities. • Provide information concerning evacuation of prisoners to alternate facility only after evacuation mission is completed due to security concerns. • Provide information of alternate parole check-in locations in the event that normal offices are in the disaster area. • May also operate an information phone line for inmate family members. • Provide information to MDOC employees as to locations for mass transportation in order to report to work.
Mississippi Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep Lead PIO and JIC apprised of all school closings.
Mississippi Department of Employment Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information regarding state and federal programs Mississippi for employment opportunities, unemployment insurance benefits, Disaster Unemployment Assistance benefits and job-training opportunities in disaster-stricken areas. MDES is primary contact agency for the U.S. Department of Labor.
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on environmental degradation resulting from the disaster/emergency, possible destruction of ecologically sensitive areas, water treatment plant probable Mississippi and other related issues. • Provide information on public health and safety inquiries on issues of hazardous materials being released into the

	environment or other environmental questions following the disaster.
Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide administrative and finance support to the JIC manager relative to the fiscal, clerical and logistical needs of JIC and staff members.
Mississippi Department of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on any public health statements or precautions. • In case of a radiological emergency, provide technical spokesperson to ENMC in addition to other support, as required.
Mississippi Department of Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on efforts to locate and identify missing or endangered persons. • Provide information on efforts to maintain law and order.
Mississippi Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During an evacuation, will operate traffic control hotline either at the JIC or at MDOT headquarters. • Provide information on evacuations and status of state transportation and infrastructure public information.
Mississippi Development Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate information regarding need for financial assistance, energy-related shortfalls and other economic issues in disaster-stricken communities.
Mississippi Forestry Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forestry Commission logistic teams that deploy through ESF #4 will include public information officers who will relay media and rumor information back to JIC.
Mississippi Gaming Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise public information staff of casino closings for issuance to the general public. • Coordinate information with casinos that could be affected by the disaster or emergency.
Mississippi Insurance Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to questions on loss and claim Mississippi from licensed insurance agents.
Mississippi Military Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide personnel for ESF #15. • Staff a military JIC at the Forward EOC location. • Develop news releases about Mississippi National Guard response as required from MEMA. • Develop daily talking points for the Adjutant General, National Guard Bureau, MEMA, and additional public affairs officers in the forward AO. • Provide daily media escorts.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed news media with military operations both ground and air operations. • Ensure that leadership is present at daily news briefings from local/state EOC. • Document with photos and video military response to any natural or man-made disaster. • Support POTUS, CODEL, state legislative visits to forward AO.
Office of State Auditor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide communications support to facilitate the dissemination of information to the public.
Office of the Governor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate information between the Governor's Office and the JIC. • Respond to questions concerning the Governor's responses to the disaster/emergency situation and expected activities.
Mississippi Office of the Secretary of the Senate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate information between the Lt. Governor and the JIC.
Mississippi Public Broadcasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical broadcast and production support to JIC operations. • Provide communications support to facilitate the dissemination of information to the public. • When local governments issue evacuations, will broadcast evacuation information from the JIC.

SPECIAL NEEDS PUBLIC AFFAIRS SUPPORT:

It is the mission of ESF 15 to ensure that all Mississippians, regardless of their language, culture or disability, receive the disaster preparedness and response information. During both crisis and non-crisis events, ESF 15 will make all efforts possible to reach special and diversified populations within the state. Such efforts will include, but may not be limited to: providing disaster preparedness information in more than one language through the MEMA and FEMA Web sites, having sign-language interpreters at emergency news conferences, maintaining contact with non-English publications and broadcast stations to ensure their information needs are being met and providing links on the MEMA Web site that can be accessed by visually impaired individuals. If needed, ESF 15 may also contract with individuals to ensure that news releases are properly translated from English to another language, or to ensure that any other special-need population receives the most up-to-date information possible.

ESF REVIEW AND MAINTENANCE:

MEMA will coordinate the annual revision of this annex with input from public information representatives of all State agencies. Changes will be submitted to MEMA for review, approval, publication, and distribution to all plan holders.

