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Umatilla County Emergency Management
Morrow County Emergency Management
Benton County Emergency Services
Oregon CSEPP, Oregon Emergency Management
Emergency Management Division, Washington Military Department
Department of Homeland Security, Infrastructure Protection
Umatilla Chemical Depot

UMATILLA JOINT INFORMATION SYSTEM/CENTER Overview Document

*“Flexibility,
Modularity,
Adaptability”*

April 4, 2007 Version

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Overview Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is two-fold:

- 1) First, to provide an overview of how various documents/materials support Emergency Public Information (EPI) plans, procedures, and job aids work together during the activation and operation of the Umatilla Joint Information System/Center;
- 2) Secondly, to provide information on **general responsibilities and tasks** of the PIO functional team during response and recovery.

There are Six Levels of Supporting Materials

1) Overview Document purpose: Tie together national, CSEP program, and local guidance and procedures to portray a broad perspective of Umatilla site emergency public information for response and recovery phases of emergency management.

Intended Audiences: Stakeholders; elected officials; CSEPP managers; CSEPP and EOC staffs; first responders; PIOs; federal, state and local agencies; and others who need to know how emergency public information is integrated with Incident Command plans and operations.

2) Guidance References:

- [National Incident Management System, \(NIMS\)](#) March 2004
- [National Response Plan, \(NRP\)](#) November 2004
- **Local and Tribal NIMS Integration, Version 1.0**
- [CSEPP Public Affairs Guidance, Compendium Workbook](#), plus Glossary of relevant CSEPP and Public Affairs terms, 2005

3) Emergency Public Information Annexes to Site Emergency Operations Plans (EOPS): (Under Development) Provide integration of Umatilla CSEP Program public information plans with overarching local plans for response and recovery to all emergencies, including a real or perceived accident or incident at the Umatilla Chemical Depot.

Intended Audiences: Stakeholders; elected officials; CSEPP managers; CSEPP and EOC staffs; first responders; PIOs; federal, state and local agencies; and others who need to know how emergency public information is integrated with Incident Command plans and operations.

4) Umatilla Joint Information System/Center Standard Operating Procedures (SOP):

Provide “how to” procedures for activating and operating the Joint Information System (JIS), the Umatilla Joint Information Center (UJIC), the Umatilla Virtual JIC (UVJIC), and the Umatilla Mobile JIC (UMJIC).

Intended Audiences: Umatilla CSEPP-PIOs; UJIC staff; JIS partners; UVJIC staff; UMJIC staff; Umatilla County, Morrow County and Benton County EOC staffs; CSEPP Contractors.

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5) Field Operations Guides (FOGs): Provide “how to” JIS/JIC procedures for the UJIC functional ICS Groups, to include Virtual and Mobile JIC procedures; Gathering, Writing & Production Group, Dissemination Group, and Field Information Group. These FOGs are components of the UJIC/UVJIC/UMJIC SOP, and packaged as a section in the pocket field guide and online accessible guides.

Intended Audiences: UJIC group staffs.

6) Position Task Books and Job Aids: Every individual who works the Umatilla JIC, UVJIC, UMJIC has a job task book for each of the positions that individual is qualified to fill. The Task Book lists all job skills that position requires, training requirements, and certifications needed for fully qualified or trainee status. Each position also has one or more Job Aids to assist in the performance of the position. These include: ICS Vest Card with critical tasks; implementing instructions and/or checklist cards; and required ICS forms that need to be maintained and turned in for documentation.

Intended Audiences: Individual UJIC, UVJIC, UMJIC staff members.

Emergency Public Information Background Information

Emergency Public Information (EPI) supports the Incident Command System (ICS) by communicating critical health and safety information during emergencies or disasters. This responsibility falls on local, state and federal agencies to provide accurate, timely, appropriate, and easily understood information to the external audiences like the media and public, as well as internally to local, state, and federal agencies, jurisdictions, responders, and elected officials at all levels. Meeting this responsibility requires a Joint Information System (JIS) where all affected or supporting jurisdictions and agencies communicate using “one voice” to provide coordinated information. The JIS is designed to support the ICS under the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and National Response Plan (NRP). It works equally well for Single, Unified and Area Command structures.

Public Information Officers (PIOs) from affected agencies and jurisdictions have the primary task of effectively and rapidly communicating what happened, the impact, what is being done in response, and what the public needs to do to protect itself.

Public welfare calls for a coherent, overall response in an emergency and—at the same time—clarity in what may be differing safety messages from responding jurisdictions. Recognizing this, PIOs practice interagency coordination and cooperation to ensure consistency in the flow of accurate and timely information.

Gathering and disseminating emergency information in a multi-jurisdictional response requires an extremely well-organized coordination process. When jurisdictional PIOs coordinate from their respective emergency operations centers (EOCs), from out in the community, or within the walls of a physical JIC, they are using JIS. When PIOs cannot physically relocate to the physical JIC location, they can still operate in JIS using technology in what is called the Umatilla Virtual JIC (UVJIC). In an emergency, PIOs can become overwhelmed quickly by public and media

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queries about the nature of the emergency, and the UVJIC allows the local PIO team to reach out to other PIO resources around the region or country for assistance performing a number of critical JIC/JIS tasks. An important additional tool for many types of emergencies may be the Umatilla Mobile JIC (UMJIC), which is housed in Benton County but can be deployed to an on-scene emergency to provide PIO support to the Incident Commander.

Principal EPI Partners

The Public Information and Public Affairs Officers for the following jurisdictions comprise the core team of the Umatilla Joint Information Center (UJIC): State of Oregon, State of Washington, Benton County, Washington, Morrow and Umatilla Counties, Oregon, The U.S. Army Umatilla Chemical Depot, and the Department of Homeland Security, Hermiston Field Office.

Functions of the JIC

The UJIC is responsible for gathering, producing and disseminating information, and for conducting field operations. The UJIC staff is comprised of CSEPP principle PIOs, program administrative and technical staff, and local volunteers. Additional staff may be activated from other CSEPP sites using the UVJIC or from other states using the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, (EMAC). UJIC Groups are comprised of a number of functional Units, which may be activated as necessary.

For each function, information management is critical.

Information Management Cycle

Within the UJIC, information is considered a tangible commodity. In a real sense, information is the “fuel” that runs the engine of the JIC. Without information, the JIC cannot move; with too much information, the JIC will falter. Successful information management depends upon seven steps:

Step One: Gather – The JIC must gather information from as many sources as possible. When information comes to the JIC, it must be collected in an organized way. This requires trained, experienced staff that can look at information and put it into a useful form.

Step Two: Analyze – Information arrives from multiple sources and must be verified and analyzed. Information analysts will spend much of their time evaluating incoming information and deciding which pieces are critical to internal and external audiences. Analysts must also share information with the JIC staff responsible for producing informational products.

Step Three: Organize, Write, Produce – The public needs information presented in a useable form, organized by category, priority and value. In the early stages of an emergency, a “one

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sheet” concept can be used in which one sheet of paper is maintained with critical information listed in bullet format. Public information also is produced in other forms, such as maps, pictures and videos.

Step Four: Review/Coordinate – A quick yet thorough review of all information to be released is an essential part of the information management process. Reviewers should look for inconsistencies, inaccuracies, clarity and completeness. Most important, reviewers must coordinate with all agencies that have information to be released.

Step Five: Document – Proper documentation is mandatory for all ICS/NIMS functions, including public information. In order to resolve a miscommunication or dispute, or in the case of litigation, decisions and activities must be documented. Each supervisor should maintain a personal log. It may also mean that dates, times and notes from certain actions are kept for each shift. At the end of each shift, supervisors must file the documentation.

Step Six: Dissemination – JIC staff must use every means available to provide prompt information to those who need it, in the proper format. Dissemination also must include internal audiences involved in the response.

Step Seven: Monitor – Monitoring the media is a crucial function of the JIC. Ideal candidates for this job are experienced former reporters, producers, editors and public affairs professionals. Staff must know what to watch and listen for, and spot issues and inaccuracies that could cause problems for people in affected areas, as well as for emergency officials.

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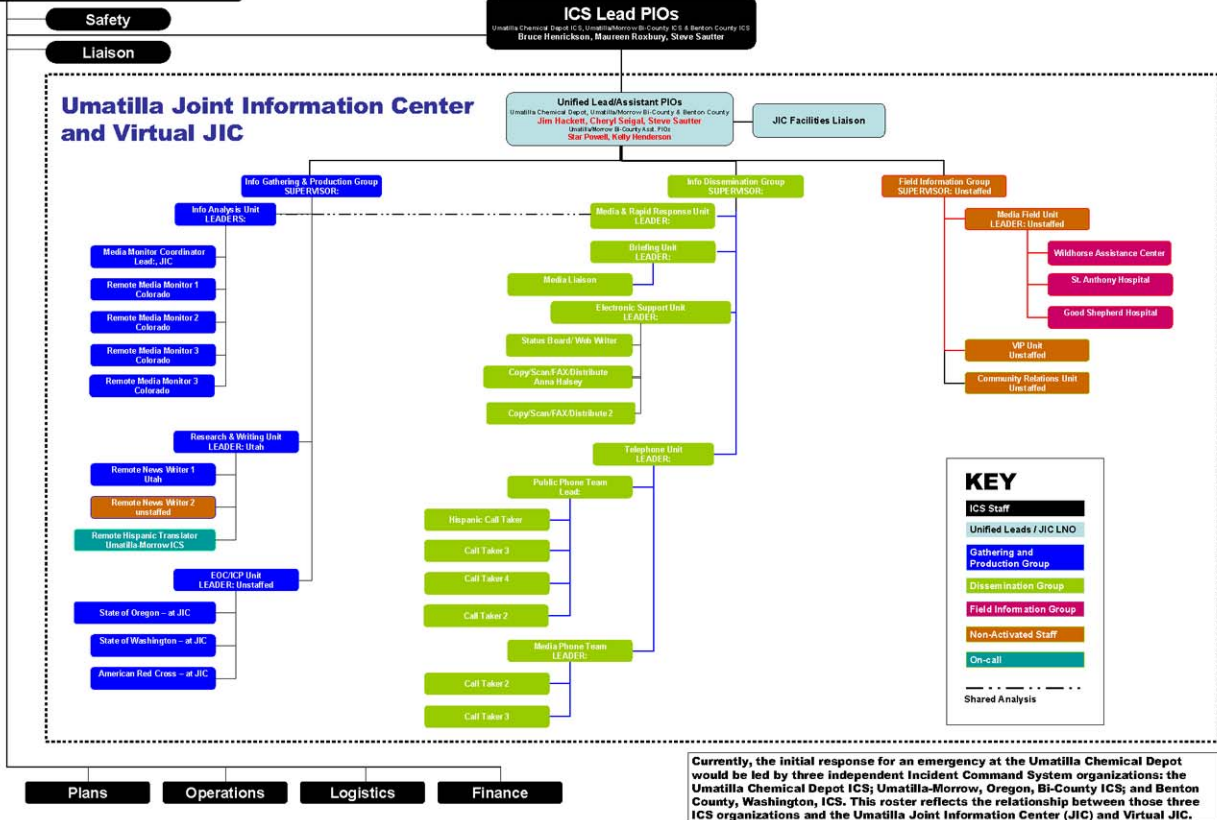
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Umatilla Joint Information Center

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Umatilla JIC and Virtual JIC, CSEPP

Incident Commands



Lead Incident Public Information Officer / Unified Public Information: The Lead Incident PIO, or the Unified PIO Team if under Unified Command or even individual Incident Commands with a Unified PIO structure, is charged with ensuring that timely, accurate and appropriate information reaches the public, partner agencies and other constituent audiences. The Lead PIO is responsible for coordinating public information at or near the incident site and serving as the on-scene link to the JIS and JIC. The Lead PIO provides overall direction for the JIC and makes policy decisions while advising the Incident Commander about public information strategies. The Lead PIO also advises command staff regarding the public affairs implications of decisions and identifies constraints on the release of incident information.

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JIC Facilities Liaison: The JIC Facilities Liaison reports to the Lead Incident PIO, Unified PIOs, or a delegated assistant and is responsible for the JIC facility and its operation. The liaison keeps the JIC running from a logistical standpoint and provides support to the Lead Incident PIO, agency public affairs staff, group leaders and all JIC functional areas. The JIC Facilities Liaison may make Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) requests to the IC logistics section to request resources for 24-hour staffing.

Gathering, Writing, and Production Group (GWPG): In a chemical emergency, the JIC serves as the primary information resource for the public and the media. The information the JIC gathers and produces will help guide the community through the response, recovery and mitigation phases of an emergency. The Gathering, Writing and Production Group is responsible for the development of all written, print, photographic, audio, video and web-based material for use by the JIC and partner agencies.

A key responsibility is monitoring newspapers, television and radio broadcasts, and the Internet to ensure the accuracy of news stories. To gather and produce accurate and timely information, mechanisms must be in place for CSEPP public affairs staff to receive information directly from the scene, participating EOCs and the media. The JIC must also ensure a coordinated and prompt transfer of information from the various command posts. Information must then be packaged into meaningful, useful products for the public.

Dissemination Group (DG): Information Dissemination helps to keep the community informed through news conferences and briefings, on-camera interviews, written news releases, fact sheets, website communications and telephone calls to the public and the media. Spokespersons should concentrate on issuing protective action recommendations and other lifesaving information. In disseminating information, staff should be mindful of the various rules, regulations and guidelines that govern handling information in the context of disclosure requirements, privacy laws, and standards for liability and public review.

Staff must have the authority to release verified and approved information. Group operating procedures address the required coordination of information among public affairs representatives before its release and any division of responsibilities among representatives for the release of specific types of information. Agencies and their spokespersons should only speak about subjects under their direct authority and responsibility. Before its release, information must be coordinated among each agency's public affairs staff and shared with partner agencies. This reduces the potential for the release of conflicting or erroneous information.

Field Group (FG): PIOs who operate in the field are an essential element of the JIC. Field Information provides face-to-face contact with the public, special interest groups, public officials and other VIPs, and gives crucial support to the media at high-profile sites in the field. Field PIOs provide intelligence about what is happening on-scene or in the community, identify information gaps, and report rumors and misinformation. Because of their remote locations, field PIOs require significant resource and information support from the JIC. A group leader facilitates support and coordinates field movements.

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Field PIOs are the public face of emergency response. In the aftermath of an emergency, reporters and members of the public will often remember the contact they had with field officers. Field staff must be highly trained, experienced and sensitive to the needs and perceptions of the public and the media. They must link with other agency public affairs representatives at shelters, hospitals and schools to maintain the flow of accurate information. The Field Group may be heavily reliant on use of UVJIC and UMJIC technology to aid operations.

Terms and Acronyms – see UJIC/UVJIV/UMJIC SOP

Glossary and Definitions

For terms see the Public Affairs Planning Guidance, Compendium Workbook, 2005

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