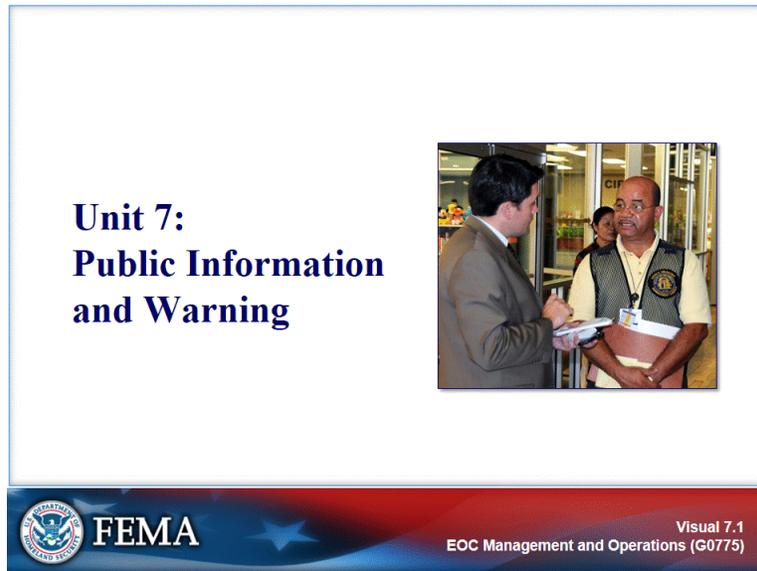

UNIT 7. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING

This page intentionally left blank.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Visual 7.1



Key Points

This unit will introduce you to public information functions, including the role of the Public Information Officer (PIO) and the concepts of the Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC).

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Visual 7.2

Unit 7 Objectives

- Describe the public information role of the EOC before, during, and after disasters.
- Describe the purpose of the Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC).
- Describe the role and responsibilities of the Public Information Officer during EOC activation.
- Identify public information and warning tools.



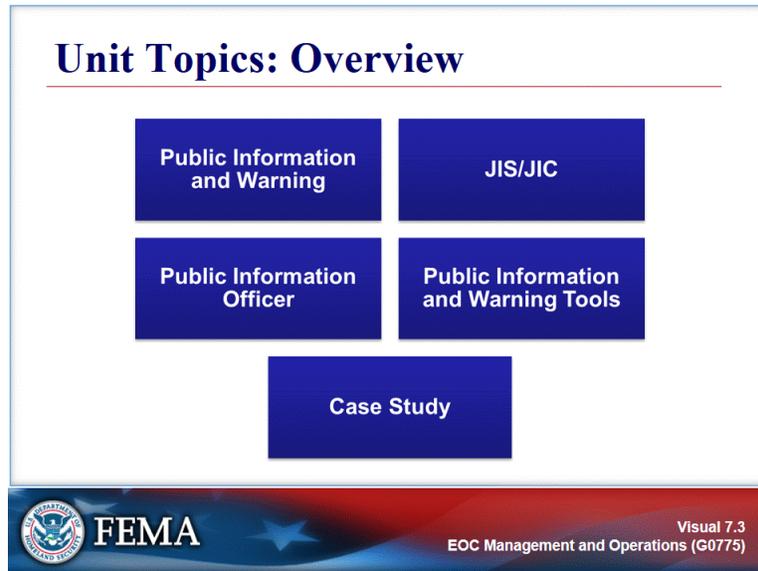
Key Points

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the public information role of the EOC before, during, and after disasters.
- Describe the purpose of the Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC).
- Describe the role and responsibilities of the Public Information Officer during EOC activation.
- Identify public information and warning tools.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Visual 7.3



Key Points

This unit is divided into five topics:

- Public Information and Warning
- JIS/JIC
- Public Information Officer
- Public Information and Warning Tools
- H1N1 Case Study

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Visual 7.4

The 12 Biggest Mistakes (1 of 2)

The 12 biggest mistakes in crisis communications:

1. Play ostrich.
2. Only start work on a potential crisis situation after it is public.
3. Let your reputation speak for you.
4. Treat the media like the enemy.
5. Get stuck in reaction mode (versus getting proactive).
6. Use language your audience does not understand.



Key Points

These 12 Biggest Mistakes in crisis communications summarize mistakes we have either made or seen made in crisis situations. They also underscore the importance of having a properly trained and exercised Public Information Officer in the EOC as it becomes engaged in an incident.

The first six biggest mistakes in crisis communications are:

1. Play ostrich.
2. Only start work on a potential crisis situation after it is public.
3. Let your reputation speak for you.
4. Treat the media like the enemy.
5. Get stuck in reaction mode (versus getting proactive).
6. Use language your audience does not understand.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Visual 7.5

The 12 Biggest Mistakes (2 of 2)



- 7. Don't listen to your stakeholders.**
- 8. Assume truth will triumph.**
- 9. Address only issues and ignore feelings.**
- 10. Make only written statements.**
- 11. Use the "best guess" methods of assessing damage.**
- 12. Do the same thing over and over again expecting different results.**

Adapted from The Biggest Mistakes in Crisis Communications
By Jonathan Bernstein (used with permission)



FEMA

Visual 7.5
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

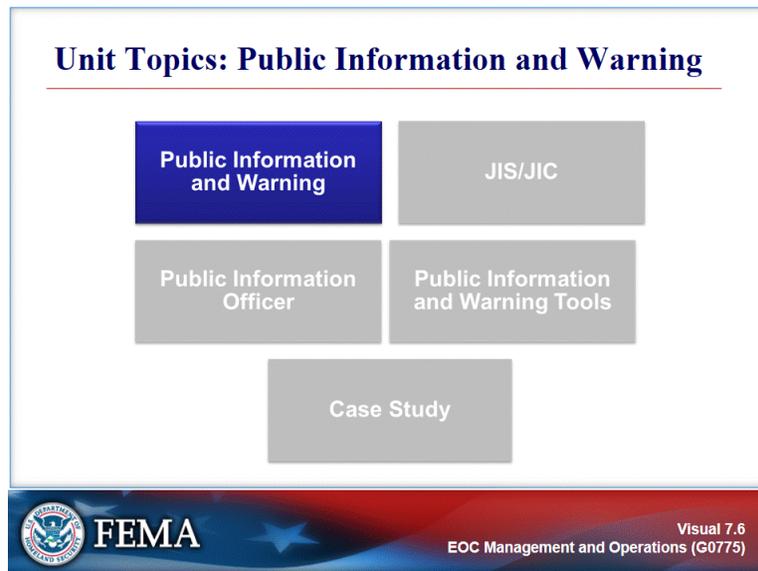
The next six biggest mistakes are:

7. Don't listen to your stakeholders.
8. Assume truth will triumph.
9. Address only issues and ignore feelings.
10. Make only written statements.
11. Use the "best guess" methods of assessing damage.
12. Do the same thing over and over again expecting different results.

— From "The Biggest Mistakes in Crisis Communication" by Jonathan Bernstein.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING

Visual 7.6



Key Points

Let's begin discussing the tools and knowledge that can help us communicate effectively with the public in emergency situations.

The first topic in this unit is Public Information and Warning. The goal of emergency public information is simple: to protect public health and safety. Reaching the public in time with accurate, clear, and precise information that will enable them to protect themselves and their loved ones is always the top priority.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING

Visual 7.7

PPD-8 Core Capability: Public Information and Warning

Definition: The capability to deliver coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable information to the whole community through the use of clear, consistent, accessible, and culturally and linguistically appropriate methods to effectively relay information regarding any threat or hazard, as well as the actions being taken and the assistance being made available, as appropriate.

The diagram features a red horizontal bar at the top with the text "Public Information & Warning" in white. Below this bar are five vertical blue bars, each containing a mission area name: "Prevention", "Protection", "Mitigation", "Response", and "Recovery".

 **FEMA** 

Visual 7.7
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Presidential Policy Directive 8, or PPD-8, describes the Nation's approach to national preparedness. One area PPD-8 focuses on is systematic preparation based on core capabilities. Core capabilities are critical elements essential for the execution of each mission area: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.

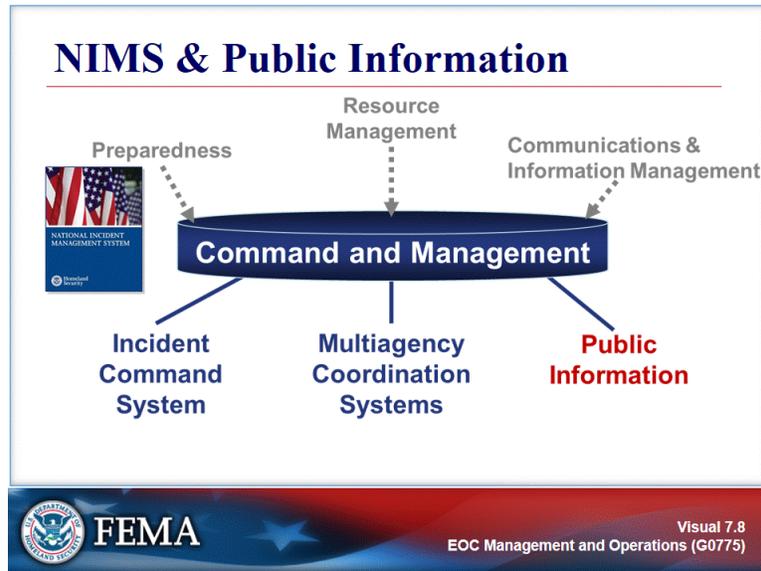
One of the core capabilities needed for all mission areas is public information and warning. Unit 2 discussed the importance of public information before, during, and after an incident. The graphic on this visual reinforces that concept.

As a core capability, public information and warning is defined as:

The capability to deliver coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable information to the whole community through the use of clear, consistent, accessible, and culturally and linguistically appropriate methods to effectively relay information regarding any threat or hazard, as well as the actions being taken and the assistance being made available, as appropriate.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING

Visual 7.8



Key Points

Public information is also an important part of the National Incident Management System, or NIMS. NIMS represents a core set of doctrines, concepts, principles, terminology, and organizational processes that enable effective, efficient, and collaborative incident management. NIMS integrates smart practices into a comprehensive framework for use nationwide by emergency management/response personnel in an all-hazards context.

Public Information is one of the Command and Management elements within NIMS. In earlier units, we touched on two of the other elements: ICS and MACs. This unit will focus on the processes, procedures, and systems for communicating timely and accurate information to the public during emergency situations.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING

Visual 7.9

Importance of Public Information and Warning

Public information and warning includes messages about:

- **Lifesaving measures.**
- **Evacuation routes.**
- **Threat and alert system notices.**
- **Other public safety information.**



 **FEMA** 

Visual 7.9
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Public information and warning help ensure that the whole community receives timely, consistent messages about:

- Lifesaving measures.
- Evacuation routes.
- Threat and alert system notices.
- Other public safety information.

Making sure that the public has timely, consistent messages helps control rumors and reduces fear and uncertainty.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING

Visual 7.10

Benefits of Public Information and Warning



- Lays a foundation for recovery and resilience.
- Tells residents what they can do to help themselves.
- Directs the efforts of volunteers.
- Increases the public's confidence in its leaders.

 **FEMA** 

Visual 7.10
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

In addition to public health and safety, public information and warning help a community to recover more quickly when coordinated effectively. Public information and warning:

- Sets the tone for how a community recovers and lays the foundation for resilience in the community.
- Shares with affected community residents what they can do to help themselves or how best to find recovery assistance.
- Directs the efforts of volunteer groups and individuals who want to help after an event, including assisting the EOC as it establishes Volunteer and Donations Management programs in the community.
- Helps to increase the public's confidence in its emergency management professionals, the EOC, and its elected leadership.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING

Visual 7.11

Activity: Chemical Spill Incident

Instructions: Working in small groups:

1. Read the scenario in the Unit 7 appendix (7.1).
2. Each table will be assigned one of the following groups:
 - The public
 - Elected officials
 - First responders
 - Other key stakeholders
3. Identify what information is needed by the assigned group. Be ready to share your ideas in 5 minutes.



Activity: Chemical Spill Incident 7.1



FEMA

Visual 7.11
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Instructions: Working in small groups:

1. Read the scenario in the Unit 7 appendix (7.1).
2. Each table will be assigned one of the following groups:
 - The public
 - Elected officials
 - First responders
 - Other key stakeholders
3. Identify what information is needed by the assigned group. Be ready to share your ideas in 5 minutes.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING

Visual 7.12

Public Information and Warning

During disasters, people are overwhelmed. Therefore, it is critical that messages are:

- Accurate.
- Timely.
- Consistent.
- Simple and clear.
- Focused on immediate needs.
- Helpful for building confidence in the response.



 **FEMA** 

Visual 7.12
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

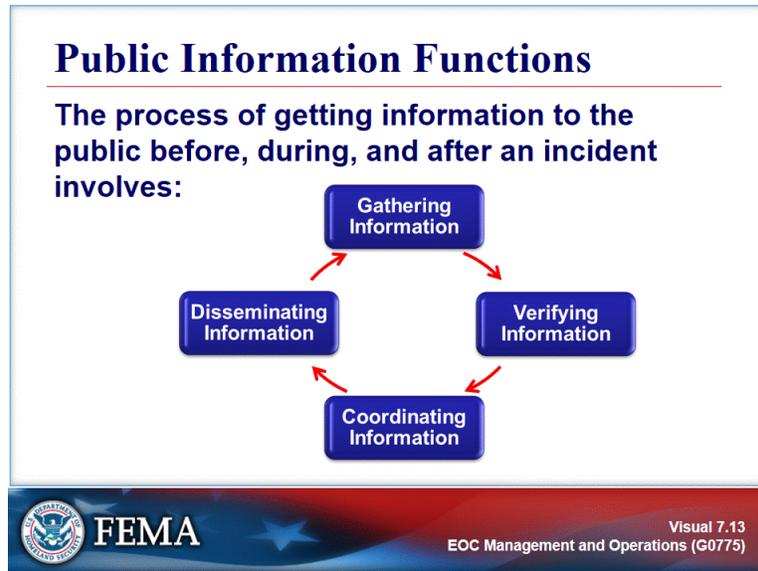
Key Points

People during disasters may be overwhelmed. Therefore, it is critical that the messages going out are:

- Accurate.
- Timely.
- Consistent.
- Simple and clear.
- Focused on the immediate needs.
- Helpful for building confidence in the response.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING

Visual 7.13



Key Points

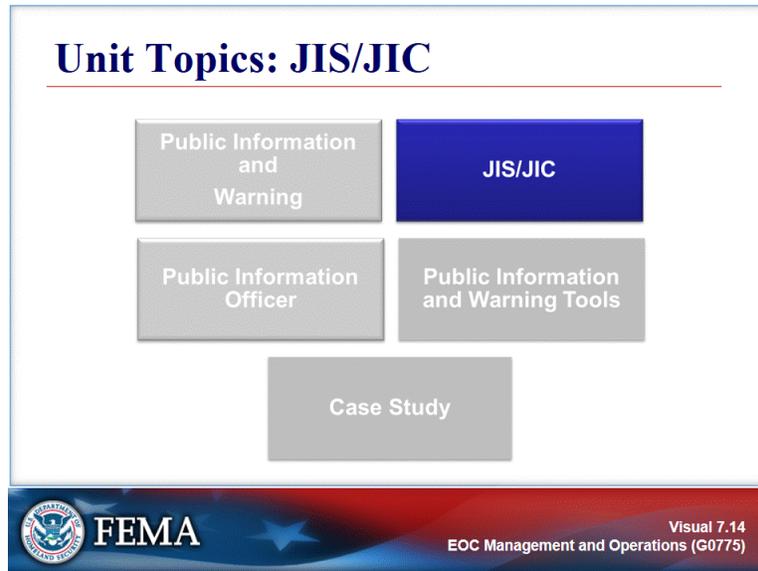
The process of getting accurate information to the public is the same before, during, and after an incident and involves:

- Gathering information.
- Verifying the information.
- Coordinating the information.
- Disseminating the information.

These functions work together to make sure the public gets timely, accurate messages. How the public information process works introduces the next topic: The Joint Information System (JIS) and the Joint Information Center (JIC).

JIS/JIC

Visual 7.14



Key Points

The next topic in this unit is the Joint Information System (JIS) and the Joint Information Center (JIC).

JIS/JIC

Visual 7.15

Joint Information System (JIS)

The JIS:

- Helps organize, integrate, and coordinate information across multiple jurisdictions and/or disciplines with NGOs and the private sector.
- Ensures timely, accurate, accessible, and consistent messaging.
- Includes the plans, protocols, procedures, and structures used to provide public information.



 **FEMA**

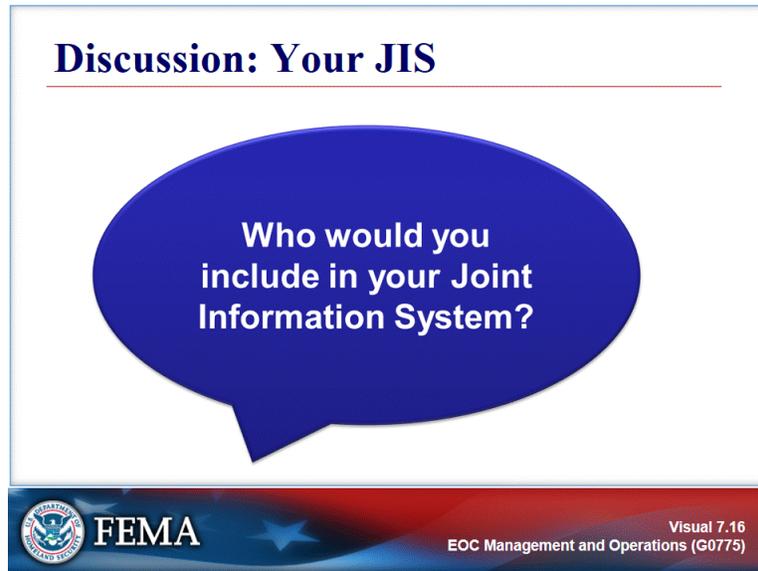
Visual 7.15
EOC Management and Operations (G775)

Key Points

The JIS is the method of operating that allows multiple sources to coordinate efficiently and consistently. The JIS can be as simple as two Public Information Officers (PIOs) talking across the hood of a truck or a multi-location operation with several PIOs from many agencies.

JIS/JIC

Visual 7.16



Discussion: Your JIS

Who would you include in your Joint Information System?

FEMA

Visual 7.16
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

The slide features a blue speech bubble with white text asking 'Who would you include in your Joint Information System?'. The slide is titled 'Discussion: Your JIS' and includes the FEMA logo and course information at the bottom.

Key Points

Discussion Question: Who would you include in your Joint Information System?

JIS/JIC

Visual 7.17

JIS: Challenges



- Ensuring relevant JIS composition
- Finding willing participants
- Sharing information
- Managing egos and turf wars
- Ensuring communication interface and interoperability

 JIS Coordination Strategy 7.2

 **FEMA**

Visual 7.17
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Challenges you may face when establishing an effective JIS:

- Ensuring relevant JIS composition (participants).
- Willingness of each entity to fully participate.
- Sharing of information.
- Personal egos and turf wars.
- Communication interface and interoperability.

There is an example of a JIS Coordination Strategy (7.2) in the appendix to this unit. The JIS Coordination Strategy was used by the 17-member Joint Information System established by Snohomish County, WA for a H1N1 (swine flu) event.

JIS/JIC

Visual 7.18

Joint Information Center (JIC)

The Joint Information Center (JIC) is a physical location where:

- Information is coordinated during and after an incident.
- Personnel with public information responsibilities perform:
 - Emergency information functions.
 - Crisis communications.
 - Public affairs functions.



Key Points

The Joint Information Center (JIC) is a central location designed to facilitate operation of the JIS. The JIC:

- Is a physical location with tools to enhance the flow of public information.
- Provides a central working facility where PIOs can gather.
- Allows PIOs to handle increased information needs by the media and the public during and after a crisis.
- Maximizes communication between different PIOs while minimizing conflicting or inaccurate information being sent to the media and the public.
- Can provide “one-stop shopping” for the media. This makes it more enticing for the media to focus on “official” information rather than scattering for other parts of the story.

While a single JIC location is preferable, the system is flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate virtual or multiple JIC locations, as required.

- If possible, it is advised to have location(s) identified that could be used as a JIC before an incident occurs—ideally, collocated with or in close proximity to the EOC. It is important that these locations meet the working needs of the PIO function and allow easy access for the media.
- Once a JIC has been identified, it is recommended to have appropriate equipment and other resources available and operational. The PIO should develop standard operating procedures on the actual use of the JIC and the equipment and staff that may be needed.

JIS/JIC

Visual 7.19

Discussion: JIC

What are some examples of incidents where you might establish a JIC?



FEMA

Visual 7.19
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Discussion Question: What are some of the examples of incidents where you might establish a Joint Information Center?

JIS/JIC

Visual 7.20

JIC Challenges

- Determining a single, physical location.
- Start-up costs.
- Conflicting and competing commitments by JIC staff.
- Ongoing operational costs.
- Egos and turf wars.



Should an EOC help determine where a JIC is located?

 **FEMA**

Visual 7.20
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Just as with establishing a JIS, you can anticipate some challenges when setting up a JIC:

- Determining a single, physical location (geography).
- Start-up costs for establishment of a JIC.
- Conflicting and competing commitments by JIC staff.
- Ongoing operational costs.
- Egos and turf wars.

Discussion Question: Should an EOC help determine where a JIC is located?

JIS/JIC

Visual 7.21

Emergency Manager's Role

- **Advance organization:**
 - Make sure the Joint Information System (JIS) is in place.
 - Ensure that the Joint Information Center's (JIC) facilities are available and workable.
- **During incident: Activate the JIS/JIC, as needed.**



Managing Emergency Public Information 7.3

 **FEMA**

Visual 7.21
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

How does the emergency manager fit in with the JIS and the JIC?

The emergency manager's main role takes place in advance of any incidents—making sure the system is in place and that JIC facilities are available and ready when the JIC needs to be in operation. This involves planning for accessible work space, electrical systems, phone lines, Internet access, space for camera trucks, and similar planning and logistics.

The Emergency Operations Plan (or an annex to the EOP) should lay out how it all works—who has authority, what each person's responsibilities are, what happens when State and Federal representatives come in, etc.

When an incident occurs, and the incident is of a size and scope to require a JIC, the emergency manager activates the JIC, and the preplanned systems go into effect.

Public Information: The EOC Role

Press releases, public service announcements, press conferences, and advanced warnings are integral to a community's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from incidents.



Coordination and dissemination of public information can be a primary reason for activating an EOC.

 **FEMA**

Visual 7.22
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

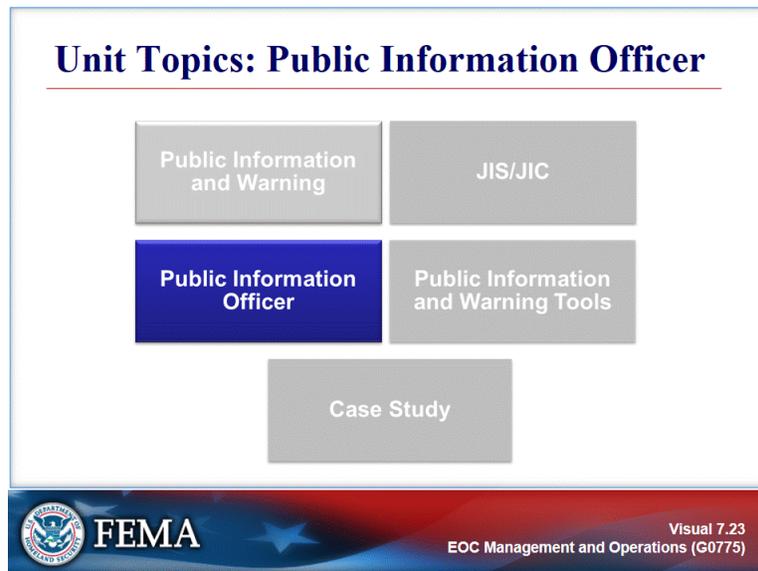
Key Points

Press releases, public service announcements, press conferences, and advanced warnings are integral to a community's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from incidents.

An EOC can be activated primarily or solely for the purpose of coordinating public information. Informing the public or coordinating information in anticipation of an incident (hurricane or flooding) can often drive the initial activation of an EOC.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Visual 7.23



Key Points

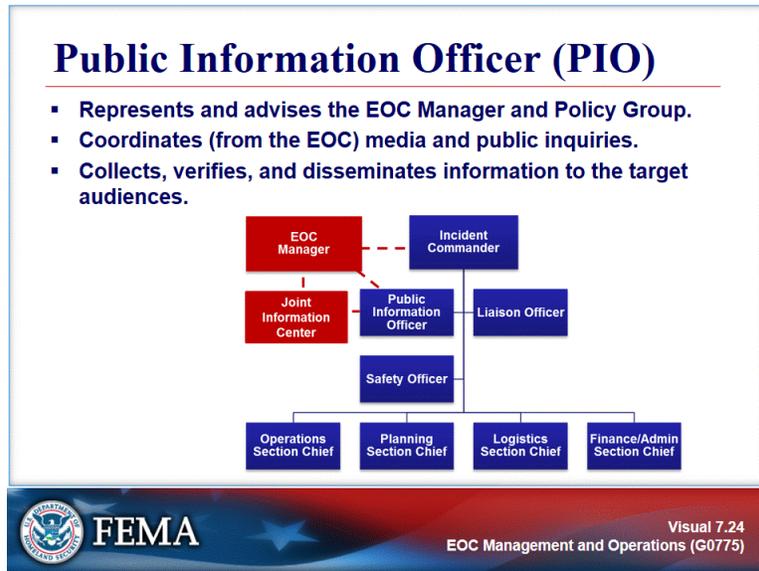
The next topic is the Public Information Officer, or PIO.

The foundation for effective public information within an EOC begins with the PIO who is sometimes referred to as the PIO lead or the ESF-15 lead.

Note: In jurisdictions where there is no PIO function, the emergency manager may have expanded public information responsibilities.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Visual 7.24



Key Points

This visual provides an overview of the PIO in the command structure both offsite of an incident and on-scene. The EOC PIO:

- Represents and advises the EOC Manager and Policy Group (offsite of an incident).
- Coordinates (from the EOC) media and public inquiries.
- Collects, verifies, and disseminates information to the target audiences.

The EOC's PIO has the most frequent interaction with the media during an incident. An individual tasked with the role of EOC-PIO must have in-depth knowledge about:

- The community,
- Emergency management, and
- Media relations.

PIO hierarchy chart description.

A hierarchy chart with Incident Commander at the top and EOC Manager to its left. The level below has four boxes labeled Joint Information Center, Public Information Officer, Liaison Officer, and Safety Officer. There is a bottom row of four boxes labeled Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, and Finance/Admin Section Chief.

The next three visuals will explore why this knowledge is so important for an effective EOC PIO.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Visual 7.25

Community Knowledge



The PIO must know the community, including its:

- Demographics.
- Governmental structure.
- Key players (people and organizations).
- Relevant history.
- Culture.

 **FEMA** 

Visual 7.25
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

The PIO must have community awareness. The better the PIO knows who makes up your community, the more likely he or she will be to see opportunities for educating people and engaging them in the organization’s mission.

The PIO needs to know:

- **Demographics to select the right media to reach the audience.** For example, do you have a non-English-speaking segment you need to reach? Consider radio stations that broadcast in the appropriate language.
- **The jurisdiction’s and State’s governmental structures** and how the various organizations or departments relate.
- **Key players** including those in government, the media, nonprofit organizations, etc. They include those with whom you will interact during an emergency as well as those who have influence in the community.
- **The community’s recent disaster history.** What happened in previous events—especially similar incidents—can have a bearing on the current event, so knowing the relevant history is important. For example, if an area has recently experienced a large fire, the residents may be more receptive to information on fire safety. If a hurricane has repeatedly changed course and left a community unharmed, the residents may be less likely to follow evacuation orders.
- **The community’s culture.** What are the community’s values, concerns, and interests, and how can the population be reached through those interests?

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Visual 7.26

Emergency Management Knowledge

The PIO must know:

- Basic emergency management concepts.
- Incident Command System (ICS).
- National Incident Management System (NIMS).



 **FEMA**

Visual 7.26
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

The PIO should also understand **basic emergency management concepts**, including the role of local, tribal, State, and Federal levels of government. Local government is always first to respond to a disaster. The State will provide support, as needed, and the Governor will request assistance from the Federal Government if the event exceeds the local and State capacity to respond. The PIO also should know the local emergency operations plan and his or her organization's role in an emergency.

In addition to a basic knowledge of emergency management, the PIO must have a working knowledge of EOC operations and protocols. In order to be able to work with the EOC, the PIO must first be able to understand the EOC, its staffing, the operational protocols, etc.

Having knowledge of emergency management concepts is important. Being able to put that knowledge to work in an emergency environment is even more important. Effective PIOs must be able to work in crisis situations, sometimes under stressful conditions. In some cases, the PIO selected for routine positions within a jurisdiction may not be appropriate. Transitioning from a non-emergency environment to the EOC with the demands of being assigned during a major disaster, may prove too much for some PIOs.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Visual 7.27

Media Relations Knowledge

The successful PIO:

- Provides information and access to newsmakers.
- Demonstrates an understanding of media needs and operations.
- Respects media deadlines.
- Maintains open dialogue.

How would you establish credibility with the media?

FEMA

Visual 7.27
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

In conjunction with community knowledge and emergency management knowledge, the PIO must also have media relations knowledge.

The PIO demonstrates strong media relations skills by:

- Providing information and access to newsmakers.
- Demonstrating an understanding of media needs and operations.
- Respecting media deadlines.
- Maintaining open dialogue.

It is important for the PIO to have credibility with established media in the potentially affected area. PIOs who have bad history or experiences with reporters may also have credibility issues that can unintentionally filter into the EOC and critical operations.

Discussion Question: How would you establish credibility with the media?

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Visual 7.28

EOC-PIO: Critical Roles

- Gather, verify, coordinate, compile, and distribute information (contribute to SA/COP).
- Track the accuracy of news reports.
- Look for trends in questions/rumors.
- Coordinate news media and social media interface.
- Serve as a spokesperson.
- Prepare spokespeople for briefings.

The slide footer features the FEMA logo on the left, which includes the text 'FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY' around a central emblem. To the right of the logo is the word 'FEMA' in large, bold, white letters. Further right, there are two blue stars. On the far right of the footer, the text 'Visual 7.28' and 'EOC Management and Operations (G0775)' is displayed in white.

Key Points

EOCs are intense work areas with special demands. Some of the critical roles a PIO may perform in the EOC include:

- Gather, verify, coordinate, compile and distribute information (contribute to SA/COP).
- Track the accuracy of news reports.
- Look for trends in questions/rumors.
- Coordinate news media and social media interface.
- Serve as spokesperson.
- Prepare spokespeople for briefings.

The PIO also carries out other functions required to gather, verify, coordinate, and disseminate accurate, accessible, and timely information related to the incident, particularly regarding information on public health, safety, and protection.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Visual 7.29

PIO Role: A Public Information Plan

Key elements of a Public Information Plan include:

- Concept of operations
- Advanced preparation
- Staffing and requirements
- Activation/deactivation
- Feedback and evaluations
- Post-event education and outreach
- JIS/JIC procedures

Every Public Information Plan should include a PIO Toolkit.

 **FEMA**

Visual 7.29
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

A Public Information Plan is a critical tool to help PIOs navigate their varied roles and responsibilities during an incident. A comprehensive Public Information Plan is a document that “institutionalizes” public information protocols and practices as PIOs change over time.

Creating a plan should occur during non-disaster periods in partnership with the PIO and the emergency management agency or organization.

Key elements of a Public Information Plan include:

- Concept of Operations
- Advanced Preparation
- Staffing and Requirements
- Activation/Deactivation
- Feedback and Evaluations
- Post-event education and outreach
- JIS/JIC Procedures

Concept of operations and JIS/JIC procedures are two elements of a Public Information Plan that should be discussed between the emergency management leadership and the PIO. For example, the emergency management leader and the EOC leadership may need to discuss issues such as how and when the EOC activates and how it relates to a PIO becoming engaged in the EOC process. Other discussions should include potential locations of Joint Information Centers throughout a community and an overview of the PIO role as the EOC helps the community transition to recovery.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Visual 7.30

PIO Role: Rumor Control

Tips for rumor control:

- Identify and train EOC personnel.
- Establish dedicated work area.
- Obtain up-to-date media contact information.
- Ensure consistent and ongoing two-way information flow with media.



 **FEMA** 

Visual 7.30
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

It is easy to see how and even why rumors get started in emergency situations. One of the responsibilities of a PIO is to control rumors so that the public gets accurate information.

PIOs are often the first individuals in the EOC who are questioned or contacted about a potential rumor that could impede or delay EOC operations. PIOs can address the issues of rumor control by working with EOC leadership to develop procedures or an understanding of how rumors evolve during an incident.

Here is an example of a PIO coordinating within the EOC to address a rumor:

- A county's EOC is activated to coordinate a large flood that impacts several communities within the county. During the event, a local fire chief in a small city that is situated directly below a well-known dam, directly contacts the EOC Operations Section Chief to confirm that the dam is slowly breaching. He explains that there has been a rumor that is quickly spreading about dam breaching and the schools may only have 20 minutes to evacuate if this is true.
- The EOC has had no reports of potential breaching of the dam. Additionally, the technical equipment monitoring the dam do not demonstrate a problem. However, the rumor is spreading rapidly. Other calls start to come into the PIO within minutes.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Visual 7.30 (Continued)

- The PIO, in conjunction with other PIOs, determines through his/her pre-established contacts that the potential breach issue was actually a rumor started by the students of the local High School, a ploy to get out of taking mid-term exams. The PIO has confirmed the rumor, coordinated with others to determine the source, and has been assured that it is indeed a rumor. He then quickly works with the EOC Manager and the Operations Section Chief to develop a succinct but effective message that can be sent via Reverse Notification to several communities around the dam to stop the rumor.

This scenario shows how a PIO can assist the EOC by reaching out to pre-established contacts and confirm or deny certain issues such as a rumored dam breach. It also demonstrates how the PIO can assist the EOC in quick development of messaging to squelch rumors.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Visual 7.31

PIO Role: Journalist Proximity to EOC

Tips for managing the proximity of media to the EOC and incident operations:

- Set up the media work area near the action (not in the middle of it).
- Make sure reporters understand and follow EOC ground rules up front.
- Allow periodic access to main EOC operations.
- Let the public view what you're doing for them.



Visual 7.31
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

PIOs should be the primary interface with the media and should be making key decisions about the proximity of the media to the EOC, if not already pre-determined within an EOC's Emergency Operations Plan or within a Public Information Plan.

PIOs should be advocates for maintaining the operational flow of EOCs, in part by keeping the media at a safe distance.

PIOs who are well-known and have established relationships with the media should be empowered (and trusted) by the EOC leadership to make decisions about the media/EOC interface, including when and where members of the media may have access to the EOC for the purposes of showing them, and those you serve, how the EOC works in a disaster event.

EOC managers need to trust their trained PIOs to make these critical decisions which allow for the EOC to conduct its business without the distraction of "managing the media" with internal EOC personnel.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Visual 7.32

PIO Role: News Release Distribution

Media releases from the EOC should be approved, when practicable, by the EOC manager and/or Policy Group and distributed to:

- Local and regional news organizations.
- All emergency services agencies involved.
- Volunteers answering public information phone lines.
- All groups working in the EOC.
- Real-time operations management software (EOC web tools).



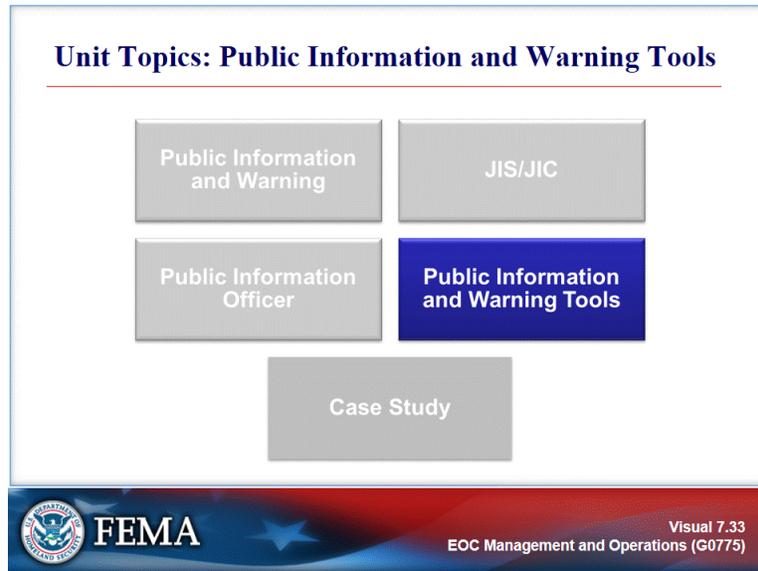
Key Points

The most expected role of a PIO is to develop and release news releases. Releases should be reviewed and approved from the EOC leadership prior to being vetted through any elected officials or senior decisionmakers.

- Local and regional news organizations.
- All emergency services agencies involved.
- Volunteers answering public information phone lines.
- All groups working in the EOC.
- Real-time operations management software (EOC web tools).

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING TOOLS

Visual 7.33



Key Points

The next topic is Public Information and Warning Tools. Just as technology rapidly changes, the tools available to EOCs for communication with the public constantly evolves. This section examines some of those tools.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING TOOLS

Visual 7.34

Public Information and Warning: Support Tools

- Call Centers
- Early Warning Technology
 - Reverse Notification
 - Emergency Alert System (EAS)
- Internet-Based Communications (dedicated Web sites)



<http://www.CapitalAlert.gov>

 **FEMA**

Visual 7.34
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Communication and public information flow should be “two-way,” with tools and mechanisms for sending and receiving information.

Some examples of tools include:

- Call Centers – both internal and external to the EOC.
- Early warning technologies including Reverse Notification and the Emergency Alert System.
 - Check your jurisdiction’s authorities and your responsibilities before proceeding with purchase, activation, and utilization of such technologies.
- Internet-based communications such as dedicated Web sites for specific events.
(<http://www.CapitalAlert.gov>)

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING TOOLS

Visual 7.35

External Call Centers

Many communities have developed non-emergency call centers.

- Examples: 211, 311

What challenges can you envision when an EOC uses an external call center?

External call centers can reduce unnecessary 911 call volume before, during, and after disasters.

FEMA

Visual 7.35
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Many communities in the United States have developed non-emergency call centers (i.e. 211, 311, etc.) to lessen unnecessary 911 call volume before, during, and after disasters. These call centers can provide a valuable tool for EOCs.

An underutilized resource in many States and communities, and within the EOC, is a State or local non-emergency call center.

Non-emergency call centers may already exist in a community and could be available to EOCs if planned ahead of time.

Discussion Question: What challenges can you envision when an EOC uses an external call center?

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING TOOLS

Visual 7.36

Internal Call Centers

Benefits of internal call centers include:

- Interoperability with existing EOC technology.
- Faster situational awareness during response.
- A centralized mechanism for public interaction after a disaster strikes and through recovery.



Internal call centers are an emerging trend in emergency management.



FEMA

Visual 7.36
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Emergency management professionals should consider (when building or enhancing their EOC), adding space and technology for a small but effective call center dedicated solely for the use of the EOC.

The benefits of creating a dedicated internal call center include:

- Interoperability with existing EOC technology.
- Faster situational awareness during response.
- A centralized mechanism for public interaction after a disaster strikes and through recovery.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING TOOLS

Visual 7.37

Web Sites and Social Media



The State Emergency Operations Center is activated due to severe weather moving into the state #okwx

- Reaching the public.
- Allowing the public to reach an EOC when in need.

FEMA

Visual 7.37
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

As the public becomes more technology dependent, emergency management organizations and their EOCs must adapt and evolve to remain effective.

Consider purchasing and dedicating Web sites with catchy phrases for incidents that may occur within a community.

These Web sites were purchased for consolidating specific incidents into one useable and easy-to-remember Web site to strengthen and simplify communications with residents.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING TOOLS

Visual 7.38

Examples of Social Media



- Blog
- Citizen journalism
- Micro-blog
- Photo/video sharing
- Podcast
- Really Simple Syndication (RSS)
- Smartphone
- Social networking
- Video blog
- Web 2.0
- Webcast
- Wiki

 Social Media Descriptions 7.4

 **FEMA**

Visual 7.38
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

New social media tools are being developed and implemented all the time. Some examples are listed on the visual and described in the Unit 7 appendix: Social Media Descriptions 7.4.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING TOOLS

Visual 7.39

Video: A Closer Look at Social Media



A tornado strikes in the Midwest.

Click image to play video.

 **FEMA**

Visual 7.39
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

This brief video discusses the use of social media in emergency management.

Video Transcript:

A tornado strikes in the Midwest. Within minutes pictures, videos, and messages about the destruction are available on social media sites, Web sites, and throughout the news media.

The news media and local government ask the community to send videos and photos via social media, email, and text messages.

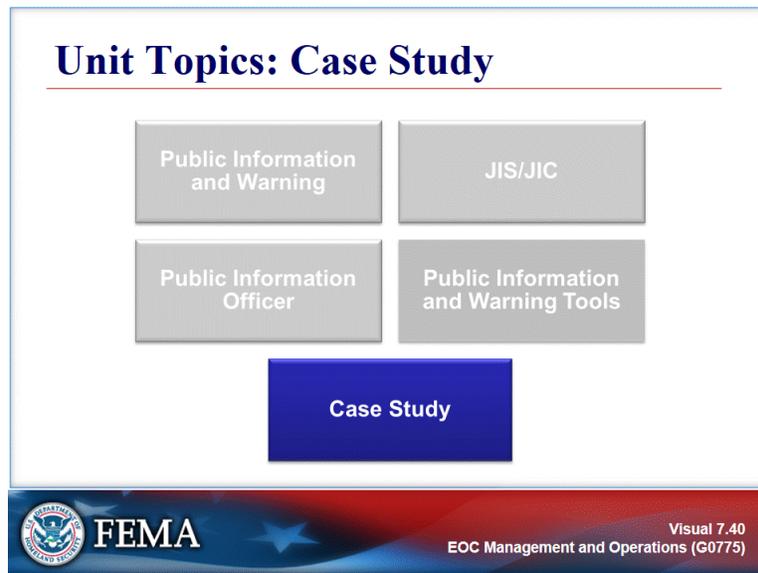
People use technology to tell others that they are okay. Social media sites help disaster survivors look for lost family members and pets, and provide information on where to get assistance, where to find shelter, and how to give aid. Social media have changed how quickly information about a disaster is available.

The widespread use of social media means you and your organization need to include social media in your communication strategy. For example, you can post videos, use social networking sites, and/or create a blog.

In your communication strategy, identify how you will use social media by itself and together with traditional media to prepare your community for emergencies, and to provide them with life-saving information when an incident occurs.

H1N1 CASE STUDY

Visual 7.40



Key Points

To see what public information looks like in the “real world,” this topic examines a case study from Snohomish County, WA.

H1N1 CASE STUDY

Visual 7.41

H1N1 Public Information Case Study

April 26, 2009 – the U. S. Government determined that the H1N1 virus constituted a public health emergency nationwide.

Snohomish County, WA was prepared for the potential pandemic and issued a media release letting the public know when vaccines were to arrive, who should receive one, and where they would be available.

The bottom of the slide features a decorative banner with a red-to-blue gradient. On the left is the FEMA logo, which includes the text 'U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY' around a circular emblem and the word 'FEMA' in large letters. On the right, the text 'Visual 7.41' and 'EOC Management and Operations (G0775)' is displayed.

Key Points

In April 2009, the U.S. Government determined that the H1N1 virus (commonly known as swine flu) constituted a public health emergency nationwide. Snohomish County issued a media release letting the public know when vaccines were to arrive, who should receive one, and where they would be available.

H1N1 CASE STUDY

Visual 7.42

H1N1 Case Study: Dedicated Web Site

- In preparation for H1N1, the Snohomish County EOC developed a single, easy-to-remember Web site.
- The Web site streamlined public information for 17 organizations and included wait times at 10 vaccination clinics.
- In only two weekends, the new Web site had been visited more than 275,000 times.



 **FEMA** 

Visual 7.42
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

The county also developed a single, easy-to-remember Web site. The Web site streamlined public information for 17 organizations and included wait times at 10 vaccination clinics.

In only two weekends, the new site had been visited more than 275,000 times.

H1N1 CASE STUDY

Visual 7.43

H1N1 Case Study: Talking Points

From the Snohomish County, WA JIS:

- There has been a slow rise in reports of H1N1 in county/area.
- H1N1 flu and seasonal flu require separate vaccines.
- Seasonal flu vaccines are available now.
- CDC has identified specific target groups for H1N1 vaccine that will become available within the month.



Talking Points make sure all entities within the JIS are on the same page.

 **FEMA** 

Visual 7.43
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

The Snohomish County JIS issued talking points to make sure residents were receiving consistent messages. These talking points benefited residents, healthcare professionals, elected officials and decisionmakers as they prepared for a possible pandemic.

H1N1 CASE STUDY

Visual 7.44

H1N1 Case Study: Coordinated Contacts

Public Information Officers for H1N1 Mass Vaccination Clinics

October 31, 2009

Clinic location	Name	From	Cell number
Mill Creek	Cheri Russum (10:00am)	Providence	425-
	Teresa Wentz (afternoon)	Providence	425-
Everett (Wergren Middle School)	April Zapeda	The Everett Clinic	425-
Marysville	Doug Buell	City of Marysville	425-
Monroe	Monica Sylta	Valley General	425-
Snohomish	Matt Smith	Sno. Family Med. Center	425-
Everett (Community Health Center)	LuAnne Kay	Community Health	425-
Tulalip	Herbert Smith	Tulalip Tribes	206-
Stanwood	Darin Reid	Camano Fire	425-
Edmonds	Steve Kaiser	Stevens Hospital	360-

Arlington
Emergency Operations Center
(Unified Command)

A contacts list can help you efficiently coordinate public information and strategies.



Visual 7.44
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

The visual shows a unified contacts list from Snohomish County's H1N1 JIS. This is a good example of coordinating public information and public information strategies.

H1N1 CASE STUDY

Visual 7.45



Key Points

This video offers a first-hand account of the H1N1 public information strategies employed by Snohomish County.

Christopher Schwarzen is the Public Information Officer and ESF-15 lead for Snohomish County, WA. He is a former Seattle Times reporter who organized the JIS for Snohomish County during its H1N1 preparation and response.

Video Transcript:

Question: In 2009, you created a Joint Information System for Snohomish County in response to the H1N1 public health emergency. What make the Snohomish County JIS so successful?

Christopher: Well it was a very important time. We knew we had a huge event on our hands. There were multiple players who were involved and the first thing that we wanted to make sure we did was have a consistent message, and the only way to have a consistent message was by incorporating all the PIOs from the different hospitals, the different clinics, the school districts, because there were a lot of people, parents who were concerned about their kids going to school, and the county and its role in the health district, wanted to make sure that everybody had a consistent message.

H1N1 CASE STUDY

Visual 7.45 (Continued)

Question: You began as a JIS working in conjunction with the Emergency Operations Center. What preparations did you take regarding a Joint Information Center (JIC)?

Christopher: Right, so it's very important to recognize the difference between a JIC and JIS, as they say. Joint Information System is just the concept of PIOs working together to have a consistent message through the Emergency Operations Center. It is not necessarily a physical place. It is a group of people who are working to distribute a message during a particular event; in this case it was the H1N1 event. So, we also knew we had the likelihood of having, especially once we ... Snohomish County had the first death related to H1N1 in the State of Washington, we knew that that was not just a local/regional media issue, that was a national media issue. We expected that we would have a lot more national media on scene, we knew we needed a place to actually house them, and that's where a Joint Information Center comes into play. We are very lucky and blessed to have a nice facility near a local airport that has a hotel, has a lot of conference rooms, has the opportunity for large trucks and a large parking lot, large media satellite trucks could come in, so we started scoping out a place called The Future of Flight that would provide us all those needs.

Question: How did your background as a former news reporter help you integrate into the Public Information Officer role within an EOC environment?

Christopher: Well you don't have to be a former reporter to be a good PIO. But, I will say that most of the PIOs that I work with, in the industry, actually do have some kind of news background and there are reasons for that, but it's not completely necessary. I think what is important regardless of whether you are from the media or not, you've been a full time PIO, you have to understand how the news cycles works. You have to understand the timing of the news stories whether that be TV, whether that be newspaper, at this point whether that be online blogging, social media. That was one thing that we used a lot of during our H1N1 response was while we knew we had to feed the media the information, and it was important to us to utilize media in a way to get that message across. We also went outside of that, used all the social networking. Created our own Facebook page, created the new Web page, used Twitter on a regular basis, at one point very quickly. I think the day that we created our Facebook page and Twitter account we had over 500 people who were signed up right away, wanting to know what the latest on the H1N1 response in Snohomish County was. In fact, I think that, as I recall that model was then followed by King County and Pierce County and some of the other larger counties in the State. You've got to look to all of those methods in order to get that message out. You cannot just rely on TV and newspapers anymore. People are looking other places for their news and so you have to make sure you're part of that.

SUMMARY

Visual 7.46

EOC-PIO Training and Exercise

- FEMA offers the following courses for Public Information Officers:
 - IS-42 Social Media in Emergency Management
 - IS-29 PIO Awareness Training
 - E-388 Advanced Public Information Officer
- For more information about PIO training to enhance your EOC operations, visit <http://www.training.fema.gov>.



The slide footer features the FEMA logo on the left, the text 'FEMA' in the center, and 'Visual 7.46 EOC Management and Operations (G0775)' on the right.

Key Points

Where can a newly appointed or selected Public Information Officer seek training to become an effective component of an EOC operation?

FEMA offers several courses geared toward the development of the PIO function within an EOC:

- IS-42 Social Media in Emergency Management
- IS-29 PIO Awareness Training
- E-388 Advanced Public Information Officer

For more information about PIO training to enhance your EOC operations, visit <http://www.training.fema.gov>.

SUMMARY

Visual 7.47

Unit 7 Summary

We discussed:

- The public information role of an emergency manager during an incident.
- The purpose of the Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC).
- The role and responsibilities of the Public Information Officer (PIO) during an incident.
- Public information and warning tools.



The slide footer features the FEMA logo on the left, the text 'FEMA' in the center, and 'Visual 7.47 EOC Management and Operations (G0775)' on the right, all set against a blue and red background with a white star.

Key Points

In this unit, we discussed:

- The public information role of an emergency manager during an incident.
- The purpose of the Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC).
- The role and responsibilities of the Public Information Officer during an incident.
- Public information and warning tools.