
Mississippi Emergency Support Function #15 - External Affairs Annex

ESF #15 Coordinator

Mississippi Emergency Management Agency

Primary Agencies

Office of the Governor
Mississippi Emergency Management Agency
Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services

Support Agencies*

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 Commission on Volunteer Services

Mississippi Insurance Department
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 Rehabilitation Services
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 State

(*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:

- 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.
- During non-crisis times, ESF #15 will disseminate information on all aspects of emergency management that includes preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.

Scope

- **Preparedness**-The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Public Information Officer (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 preparedness campaigns for such items as severe weather, earthquakes, hurricanes, flooding, and tornadoes. The MEMA PIO will also update and monitor the agency's website and social media platforms and provide a link to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) website so that citizens may read the most up-to-date information on preparedness activities in English, Spanish, and any other languages necessary.

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The MEMA PIO also activates the State Joint Information Center (JIC) within the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).

- **Response**-ESF #15 will publicize response activities that directly assist 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. It is also the responsibility of MEMA's PIO to disseminate Emergency Alert Systems and wireless Emergency Alert messages.
- **Recovery**-ESF #15 will respond to reporter/public inquiries for damage assessments and will publicize any disaster declarations. ESF #15 will support a Joint Field Office (JFO), or if needed, contract with a public information officer for this help, utilizing the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).
- **Mitigation**-ESF #15 will publicize MEMA's projects and accomplishments in the area of mitigation.

Relationship to the Whole Community

Individuals/Community Organizations

The public, both individuals and community organizations, have an important role in assisting with rapid dissemination of information, identifying unmet needs, and mutual support.

Local, State, Tribal, Territorial, and Area Governments

Local, state, tribal, territorial, and area authorities retain the primary responsibility for communicating health and safety instructions for their population. Nothing in this annex limits the authority of these authorities to release information regarding an incident under their jurisdiction, particularly if it involves immediate health and safety issues. In the unlikely event that local, state, tribal, territorial and area governments are unable to perform these responsibilities, the State may provide vital operational health and safety information to the affected population. Nothing in this document should be construed as diminishing or usurping those responsibilities.

Private Sector/Nongovernmental Organizations

The private sector is a component of external affairs. Coordinated communication and collaboration with the private sector supports effective incident response by integrating private sector capabilities and information into response operations. Information must be coordinated across various levels of government to identify needs, convey resources available for business recovery, and facilitate collaborative support for support for economic recovery.

ESF Role Aligned to Core Capabilities

The following table lists the Response core capability that ESF #15 most directly supports, along with the particular ESF #15 actions related to that core capability. Though not listed the table, all ESFs support the core capabilities of Planning and Operational Coordination.

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Core Capability	ESF #15 – External Affairs
<p>Public Information and Warning</p>	<p>External Affairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides accurate, coordinated, and timely information to affected audiences during incidents requiring a coordinated State response. • Provides communications support and advice to the leaders during an incident. • Conducts communications planning. • Coordinates messages with local, state, tribal, territorial, insular area, and Federal governments from a JIC. • Gathers information on the incident. • Provides incident-related information through the media and other sources in accessible formats and multiple languages to individuals, households, businesses, and industries directly or indirectly affected by the incident, including those with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. • Monitors news coverage to ensure that accurate information is disseminated. • Disseminates incident information to new media (official Web sites, social networking platforms) to ensure wide delivery of life saving information. • Maximizes the use of video and digital imagery to communicate during incidents. • Handles appropriate special projects, such as news conferences and press operations, for incident area tours by government officials and dignitaries. • Provides basic services, such as communications and supplies, to assist the news media in disseminating information to the public. • Oversees media relations. • Ensures effective communication of incident information to individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs through the use of appropriate auxiliary aids and services, such as sign language and other interpreters; captioning of audio and visual materials; and accessible Web site communications. • Establishes contact with congressional offices representing affected areas to provide information on the incident.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responds to congressional inquiries.• Disseminates information with the assistance of state municipal leagues, county associations, and tribal governments.• Ensures inclusion of tribes in all aspects of incidents requiring a coordinated State response that affect tribes and incident response operations.• Educates the public in the aftermath of an incident requiring a coordinated State response through news advisories, press releases, prepared materials, fliers, and talking points.• Develops new media products for dissemination, such as blog posts, messages for social media, update messages, video, and digital imagery.• Provides strategic counsel and guidance to response leadership in actual or potential incidents.• Conducts outreach and education.• Promotes operational integration with the impacted private sector entity to support local economic response and recovery.• Supports situational awareness by engaging the private sector in information sharing efforts. <p>Joint Information Center - Serves as a central point for coordination of incident information, public affairs activities, and media access to information regarding the latest developments.</p> <p>Incident JIC - The physical location where all public affairs professionals involved in the response work together to provide critical emergency information, media response, and public affairs functions</p> <p>Virtual JIC - Links all participants through technological means (secure or non-secure) when geographical restrictions, incident management requirements, and other limitations preclude physical attendance by public affairs leadership at a central location.</p>
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Concept of Operations

General

- ESF #15 will disseminate information through a Joint Information Center (JIC) that will be located in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Pearl. The JIC will be staffed by primary and support state agency PIOs. If necessary, a Virtual JIC, through the use of technology can be imported, if colocation is not feasible.
- 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 JIC at the SEOC.
- 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 Nuclear Station (GGNS) or River Bend Nuclear Station (RBNS) incident, nuclear company officials will staff the Joint Information Center at the SEOC and be a part of emergency messaging. Detailed descriptions of the PIO roles and responsibilities during a nuclear incident are outlined in the GGNS and RBNS Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which are on file at MEMA.
- In the event that State 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 to ensure that Mississippians are receiving the most timely information in regards to recovering from a disaster or emergency of any type.
- Copies of the MEMA External Affairs Standard Operating Guidelines and the Joint Information Center Operations Plan are on file at MEMA.

Notification

- The State Warning Point (SWP) will notify the Lead PIO and/or designee of incidents that may require the SEOC to become activated. The Lead PIO will also notify key state agency PIOs of the potential incident through electronic mail, facsimile, or telephone.
- When the SEOC is activated, the Lead PIO will notify all state agency PIOs and alert them of impending public information operations.
- The Lead PIO or assigned designee will request that each agency's designated PIO report to the SEOC as needed to staff 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 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 are not limited to:

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- Providing disaster preparedness information in more than one language through the MEMA and FEMA websites.
- Utilizing 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 website that can be accessed by visually impaired individuals.
- Contracting with individuals to ensure that news releases are properly translated from English, or to ensure that any other special-needs population receives the most up-to-date information possible.

Organization

Lead Public Information Officer

MEMA's External Affairs Director will serve as the Lead PIO and will oversee the information flow to the media/public by coordinating all PIO activity. The MEMA Emergency Action Officer (EAO) is responsible for initiating the actions required to implement and organize ESF #15. MEMA's PIO will serve as the Deputy Lead PIO and assume duties as assigned.

Lead State Agency 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 State, state, local, or tribal PIOs or gathering information from the SEOC.

ESF #15 will ensure the effective management of inquiries of the media/public/government leaders, including:

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- Overseeing the key function of media relations.
- Coordinating messages and news releases with State, 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 and social media.

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- Establishing contact with state, State, 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.
- 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

The responsibility of all primary and support state agencies is to:

- Designate a primary and alternate PIO to report to the JIC, or other areas of operation as the emergency situation requires.
- Coordinate the release of agency specific public information with the JIC.
- Participate in news conferences as the emergency situation requires.
- **Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services will provide sign language interpreting services.**

Support Agencies

Agency	Functions
Mississippi Emergency Management Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) and checklists 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 State agencies. • Coordinate the release of disaster-related information with other agencies of local, tribal, state and State governments. • Coordinate with local jurisdictions in providing emergency public information support. • Assign task responsibilities based on qualifications and expertise of state agency PIOs. • Provide MEMA Executive 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 available at the state's Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL).
Office of the 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 the JIC.
Mississippi Department of Archives and History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate information between the JIC and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) 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. • Provide information to Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) employees. • May operate an information phone line for inmate family members' 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 State programs for employment opportunities, unemployment insurance benefits. • Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) benefits and job-training opportunities in disaster-stricken areas. Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) is the 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 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 State 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 Rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide sign language interpreting services.

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Services	
Mississippi Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During an evacuation, will operate traffic control hotline either at the JIC or at the Mississippi Department of Transportation (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 claims 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 Emergency Operations Center (EOC) location. • Develop news releases about Mississippi National Guard (MSNG) response as required from MEMA. • Develop daily talking points for The Adjutant General (TAG) for the State of Mississippi, the National Guard Bureau, MEMA, and additional public affairs officers in the forward area(s) of operation (AO). • Provide daily media escorts. • 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 the President of the United States (POTUS), Congressional Delegation (CODEL), and/or state legislative visits to forward AO.
Office of the 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. • Coordinate participation of the Governor in scheduled news conferences.
Mississippi Office of the Secretary of State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the JIC and disseminate office specific information.
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. • Will broadcast evacuation information from the JIC when local governments issue evacuation notices. • Provide technicians to staff production control room.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broadcast all news conferences statewide and provide access of the broadcast to out-of-state and national media outlets.
Mississippi Commission on Volunteer Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide all volunteer information to the JIC to ensure efficient efforts.

ESF #15 Review and Maintenance

As a minimum, the state agency contact will coordinate and conduct an annual review of this annex with all support agencies. Additional reviews may be conducted if experience with an incident or regulatory changes indicate a need. Recommendations for change will be submitted to MEMA for approval, publication, and distribution.