

Emergency Support Function # 15 – External Affairs

ESF Coordinator

Public Information Officer or Designee

Primary Agencies

Floyd County 911
Sheriff's Office/Public Affairs
Emergency Management Coordinator

Secondary/Support Agencies

Virginia Department of Emergency Management
Virginia Department of Health
Local Television/Radio Stations
Local Newspaper

Introduction

Purpose:

Provide for efficient and coordinated continuous flow of timely information and instructions to the public using all available communications media prior to, during, and following an emergency or disaster.

Scope:

Provide emergency public information actions before, during, and following any emergency. Potential public information response could involve personnel from all jurisdictions, organizations, agencies, and areas within the affected area.

Concept of Operations

General:

The Public Information/Affairs Office is responsible for providing the community with information on impending or existing emergencies, to include immediate protective actions they should take such as sheltering or evacuation.

Floyd County participates in disaster public education and awareness activities on a regular basis, in conjunction with local Fire, EMS, Virginia Department of Emergency Management, Virginia Department of Health, VDOT, National Weather Service, etc. Programs include fire prevention, animal care and control, weather spotter training, disaster preparedness for seniors, public health issues (i.e. seasonal influenza, pandemic influenza), etc.

Translators are available through the Department of Social Services, the Migrant Health Network, and the Health Department. Disaster preparedness, response, and recovery information is available in Spanish through the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM). Public Health information is also available in Spanish.

Emergency Public Information may be disseminated to special populations through use of interpreters (non-English speaking and hearing impaired), public address systems, closed caption television, door-to-door, Braille (visually impaired), etc.

All agencies and organizations are responsible for providing the PIO with appropriate timely information about the incident and actions needed to save lives and protect property.

A Joint Information Center (JIC) may be activated, if the situation warrants. The JIC will likely be at an off-site location. Agencies involved will staff telephones and coordinate media activities under the supervision of the EPIO.

Organization:

The Emergency Management Director or designee may be appointed to serve as the primary ESF #15 coordinator. Other local and/or state officials will serve within the JIC.

The Public Information Officer (PIO) will represent and advise the Incident Commander on all public information. This includes rumors that are circulating the area, what local media are reporting, as well as warnings and emergency public information

Press releases will be coordinated and disseminated from the JIC, in conjunction with the Emergency Manager Coordinator, County Administrator, and appropriate lead agency and/or ESF. Individual agencies will **NOT** issue separate press releases. Media briefings will be conducted from the JIC, and scheduled accordingly.

Additionally, Floyd County will establish a Community Relations (CR) plan which will include incident specific guidance and objectives at the beginning of the incident. Conducting the CR function is a joint responsibility between local, state, and federal personnel. The composition of field teams should involve a variety of local, state, and federal personnel. These teams assist in the rapid dissemination of information, to identify unmet needs, to establish an ongoing dialogue and information exchange, and to facilitate collaborative community, local, state, and federal planning and mutual disaster recovery support.

Responsibilities/Actions

- Develop standard operations procedures (SOPs) to carry out the public information function also to include social media networks;
- Develop and conduct public information programs for community/citizen awareness of potential disasters, as well as personal protection measures for each hazards present, which may include shelter in place;
- Develop Rumor Control Procedures;
- Prepare advance copies of emergency information packages for release through the news media during actual emergencies;
- Brief local news media personnel, community officials, local, state, and federal agencies on External Affairs policies, plans, and procedures;
- Maintain current lists of radio stations, television stations, cable companies, websites, and newspapers to be utilized for public information releases;
- Maintain support agreements and liaison arrangements with other agencies and the news media, if needed;
- Maintain arrangements to provide a briefing room for the media in the vicinity of the EOC or at the location of the disaster;
- Coordinate with VDEM PIO, Governor's Press Secretary and the Secretary of Public Safety to prepare initial press releases;

- Assist with the preparation/transmission of EAS messages, if needed;
- Disseminate news releases and daily Situation Reports from the State EOC via the agency's website;
- Disseminate information to elected officials through the legislative liaison function;
- Establish, with assistance from VDEM and other agencies, the Virginia Public Inquiry Center for the general public to call for information;
- Monitor the media to ensure accuracy of information and correct inaccuracies as quickly as possible;
- Plan and organize news conferences with the Governors staff, if necessary;
- Provide information to the public about available community disaster relief assistance and mitigation programs;
- Coordinate efforts to provide information to public officials, and;
- Facilitate communications between the public and other agency officials to ensure that affected people have access and knowledge about benefits for which they may be eligible.

**Tab 1 to Emergency Support Function #15
Emergency Public Information Resources**

Newspaper	Address	Contact	Phone Number(s)
Landmark Media	110 Peppers Ferry Rd Christiansburg VA 24073	Editor	540-382-4905
Galax Gazette	PO Box 88 Galax, VA 24333	Editor	276-236-5178
Roanoke Times	201 W. Campbell Ave. Roanoke, VA	Editor	800-346-1234 540-981-3340
Floyd Press	710 East Main Street Floyd VA 24091	Editor	540-745-2127
Radio Stations	Address	Contact	Phone Number(s)
WBRF	Galax	Station Manager	276-236-7198
Television Stations	Address	Contact	Phone Number(s)
WDBJ 7 – Roanoke – New River Newsroom	3601 Holiday Lane Blacksburg, VA 24060	Bureau Chief	540-951-7304
WSLS 10 – Roanoke	401 3 rd Street Roanoke, VA 24011	News Director	800-SEE-NEWS 540-981-9126
WSET TV 13- Lynchburg	2320 Langhorne Road Lynchburg VA 24501	News Director	434-528-1313

Table 15.1 – Media Contacts

**Tab 2 to Emergency Support Function #15
Emergency Public Information
PIO Prearranged Messages**

**LOCAL PUBLIC INFORMATION NOTIFICATION OF AN INCIDENT
Release or Spill
(No explosion or fire)**

At _____(AM/PM) today, an incident/accident occurred on _____ highway/street).
Certain dangerous materials have been spilled/leaked/released from a tank/car/truck. Due
to the toxicity of material released into the atmosphere, all traffic on _____
(highway/street) is being re-routed via _____(highway/street until
further notice.

Follow directions given by emergency personnel, Virginia State Police and local law
enforcement.

You will be notified when it is safe to return to your homes. Stay tuned to this station for
additional information.

Table 15-2 – PIO Message # 1

**Tab 3 to Emergency Support Function #15
Emergency Public Information
PIO Prearranged Messages**

**LOCAL PUBLIC INFORMATION NOTIFICATION OF AN INCIDENT
Release or Spill
(FIRE AND/OR EXPLOSION IMMINENT)**

At _____(AM/PM) today, an incident/accident occurred on _____ highway/street).
Certain dangerous materials have been spilled/leaked/released from a tank/car/truck. Due
to the toxicity of material released into the atmosphere, all traffic on _____
(highway/street) is being re-routed via _____(highway/street until
further notice.

Due to the possibility of an explosion and major fire, all residents living within _____feet of
the site are urged to leave immediately and report to (shelter, school, church, etc.)

Follow directions given by emergency personnel, Virginia State Police and local law
enforcement.

You will be notified when it is safe to return to your homes. Stay tuned to this station for
additional information.

Table 15-3 – PIO Message # 2

**Tab 4 to Emergency Support Function #15
Emergency Public Information
Sample Health Advisory for Shelter Centers**

Date: _____

To: _____

From: NEW RIVER VALLEY Health District Director

Subject: Health Risks Resulting from _____
(event, site, and date)

The _____(event) at _____(site) in Floyd County on _____(date) released chemical particles into the environment in concentrations sufficient to cause health problems in some persons. Individuals suffering from chronic respiratory conditions, the elderly, infants, and young children, and other individuals highly sensitive to air pollutants are at increased risk. Although residents were evacuated, it is possible that some evacuees may experience symptoms which are characteristic of over exposure to these chemicals.

Shelter residents should be monitored for symptoms which are characteristic of exposure to the chemicals which necessitated the evacuation. These symptoms are (enter symptoms from MSDS or other sources):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In addition to specific information on patient's medical condition and treatment, record specific information related to the incident such as patient's location when exposed to contaminants, estimated distance of that location from site of incident, and estimated time of onset of symptoms. Report information to the Floyd County Health Department.

Table 15-4 – PIO Message # 3

**Tab 5 to Emergency Support Function #15
Emergency Public Information
Sample Health Advisory for Chemical/Biological Event**

Date: _____

To: _____

From: NEW RIVER VALLEY Health District Director

Subject: Health Risks Resulting from _____
(event, site, date)

The Floyd County Public Health Department has issued a Public Health Advisory concerning possible chemical/biological contamination by _____(event) at the _____(location) in Floyd County.

The chemical release occurred at _____(AM/PM) on _____(date). Substances released into the environment during this incident can present health risks to susceptible persons. Persons who have been exposed to these chemicals may experience one or more of the following symptoms (enter symptoms on the MSDS):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Any person who was in the vicinity of this location between the hours of _____(AM/PM) on _____(date) should be alert to symptoms indicating exposure to the chemicals released. Persons experiencing symptoms of contamination are advised to consult their physician or go to the nearest hospital emergency department for evaluation.

For additional information, contact Floyd County Health Department.

Table 15.5 – PIO Message # 4

**Tab 6 to Emergency Support Function #15
Emergency Public Information
Sample Health Advisory for Physicians**

Date: _____

To: Primary Care Physicians in NEW RIVER VALLEY Health District

From: NEW RIVER VALLEY Health District Director

Subject: Health Risks Resulting from _____
(event, site, and date)

The _____ (event) at _____ (site) in Floyd County released chemical particles into the environment in concentrations sufficient to cause health problems in some persons. Individuals suffering from chronic respiratory conditions, the elderly, infants and young children, and other individuals highly sensitive to air pollutants are at increased risk. Although precautions were taken, it is possible that some residents in the area may experience symptoms which are characteristic of over exposure to these chemicals.

Exposure to _____ (list names of chemicals involved) should be considered with patients experiencing the following symptoms:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In addition to specific information on patient's medical condition and treatment, record specific information related to the incident such as patient's location when exposed to contaminants, estimated distance of that location from the incident site and estimated time of onset of symptoms. Report incidents to the Floyd County Health Department.

Table 15.5 – PIO Message # 5

**Tab 7 to Emergency Support Function #15
Emergency Public Information
Sample Health Advisory for Primary Health Care Facilities**

Date: _____

To: Primary Health Care Facilities in NEW RIVER VALLEY Health District

From: NEW RIVER VALLEY Health District Director

Subject: Health Risks Resulting from _____
(event, site, and date)

The _____ (event) at _____ (site) in Floyd County released chemical particles into the environment in concentrations sufficient to cause health problems in some persons. Individuals suffering from chronic respiratory conditions, the elderly, infants and young children, and other individuals highly sensitive to air pollutants are at increased risk. Although precautions were taken, it is possible that some residents in the area may experience symptoms which are characteristic of over exposure to these chemicals.

Exposure to _____ (list names of chemicals involved) should be considered with patients experiencing the following symptoms:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In addition to specific information on patient's medical condition and treatment, record specific information related to the incident such as patient's location when exposed to contaminants, estimated distance of that location from the incident site and estimated time of onset of symptoms. Report incidents to the Floyd County Health Department.

Table 15.6 – PIO Message # 6