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 involved 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, televisions stations, cable companies, websites, and newspapers to be utilized for public information releases;
- Maintain support agreements and liaison arrangements with other agencies and the new 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 Governor's 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Phone Number(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landmark Media</td>
<td>110 Peppers Ferry Rd</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>540-382-4905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christiansburg VA 24073</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galax Gazette</td>
<td>PO Box 88</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>276-236-5178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Galax, VA 24333</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roanoke Times</td>
<td>201 W. Campbell Ave.</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>800-346-1234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roanoke, VA</td>
<td></td>
<td>540-981-3340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floyd Press</td>
<td>710 East Main Street</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>540-745-2127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Floyd VA 24091</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radio Stations</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Phone Number(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WBRF</td>
<td>Galax</td>
<td>Station Manager</td>
<td>276-236-7198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Television Stations</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Phone Number(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WDBJ 7 – Roanoke – New River Newsroom</td>
<td>3601 Holiday Lane Blacksburg, VA 24060</td>
<td>Bureau Chief</td>
<td>540-951-7304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSLS 10 – Roanoke</td>
<td>401 3rd Street Roanoke, VA 24011</td>
<td>News Director</td>
<td>800-SEE-NEWS 540-981-9126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSET TV 13- Lynchburg</td>
<td>2320 Langhorne Road Lynchburg VA 24501</td>
<td>News Director</td>
<td>434-528-1313</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 15.1 – Media Contacts*
# 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.

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*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.
Tab 4 to Emergency Support Function #15

Emergency Public Information

Sample Health Advisory for Shelter Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>__________________________________________</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To:</td>
<td>__________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From:</td>
<td>NEW RIVER VALLEY Health District Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>________________________________</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To:</td>
<td>__________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From:</td>
<td>NEW RIVER VALLEY Health District Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Health Risks Resulting from ___________________________ (event, site, date)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To:</td>
<td>Primary Health Care Facilities in NEW RIVER VALLEY Health District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From:</td>
<td>NEW RIVER VALLEY Health District Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Health Risks Resulting from ________________________________ (event, site, and date)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*