

# EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION (ESF) #15 ANNEX – EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

State of Indiana

Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)

ESF Annex

March 2025



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## PLANNING AGENCIES

Within each Emergency Support Function (ESF) annex, an agency or organization has been given the designation of primary, supporting, non-governmental or local agency based on their authorities, resources and capabilities. The primary agency identifies the appropriate support agencies that fall under this annex. The primary agency collaborates with each entity to determine whether they have the necessary resources, information and capabilities to perform the required tasks and activities within each phase of emergency management. This includes activations in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) and impacted areas. Though an agency may be listed as a primary agency, it does not control or manage those agencies identified as supporting agencies. The agencies listed below are members of the Whole Community Planning Team for this annex.

### PRIMARY AGENCY

Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS)

### PRIMARY SUPPORTING STATE AGENCIES

Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH)	Indiana State Police (ISP)
Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM)	Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)	Indiana National Guard (INNG)
Indiana Department of Health (IDOH)	

### NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Red Cross of Indiana (ARC)	Salvation Army of Indiana
Indiana Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (IN-VOAD)	Professional Fire Fighters Union of Indiana (PFFUI)
Indiana Fire Chiefs Association (IFCA)	Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association (IVFA)
Indiana EMS Commission	

### LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

County Emergency Management Agencies	Local Elected Officials
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## **PURPOSE, SCOPE, SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of Emergency Support Function #15 (ESF-15) – External Affairs is to support the distribution of accurate, coordinated, timely and accessible information. This information must be available to the whole community including but not limited to affected citizens, the media, private sector, governments, individuals with limited English proficiency and those with access and functional needs. Effective and accurate communication promotes the health, safety and welfare of humans and animals during the response and recovery phases of an incident, as well as ensures credibility and public trust.

### **SCOPE**

The state of Indiana and the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) recognize fifteen (15) Emergency Support Functions (ESF). This annex focuses on ESF-15, External Affairs. The ESF-15 Annex is intended to be utilized in conjunction with the State Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).

During an incident, local, state, tribal, and federal authorities share responsibility for communicating information to the public. The Joint Information System (JIS) provides a supporting mechanism to develop, coordinate and deliver messages. State agency communicators develop, coordinate and deliver information and instructions to the public related to:

- State assistance to the incident-affected area
- State emergency response
- National preparations
- Protective measures
- Impact on non-affected areas

Dissemination of incident information must be accessible to those with disabilities and other access and functional needs, and individuals with limited English proficiency. These actions are a critical component of incident management and must be fully integrated with all other operational actions.

### **SITUATION**

ESF-15 may be needed in any of the five (5) phases of emergency management (prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery). In the event that the state determines the need for ESF-15, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) Public Affairs Section will act as the primary agency to assist with implementation. ESF-15 will be responsible for implementing internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and/or Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) to ensure adequate staffing and administrative support for both field operations and coordination efforts in the SEOC. ESF-15 personnel will coordinate with the on-scene Public Information Officer (PIO) and the Joint Information Center (JIC) to initiate and manage the activation of public information assets to fulfill specific mission assignments that support emergency management.

## Mission Areas and Core Capabilities

The National Preparedness Goal (NPG) identifies 32 core capabilities that are essential for the execution of the five (5) mission areas of prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery. ESF-15 supports the overarching core capabilities of Public Information and Warning, Planning and Operational Coordination, which apply to all mission areas. Table 1 describes the core capability actions that ESF-15 most directly supports.

Table 1. ESF-15 CORE CAPABILITY ACTIONS

CORE CAPABILITY	ESF #15 – EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
<b>PUBLIC INFORMATION AND WARNING</b>	<p><b>External Affairs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather information from all SEOC ESFs and disseminate it to appropriate audiences.</li> <li>• Gather information on the incident.</li> <li>• Monitor news coverage to ensure that accurate information is disseminated.</li> <li>• Provide basic services, such as communications and supplies, to assist the news media in disseminating information to the public.</li> <li>• Coordinate with congressional affairs staff from all federal agencies involved in the response to ensure consistency and transparency in communicating with members of Congress.</li> </ul> <p><b>Intergovernmental Affairs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote federal interaction and implement information sharing with local, state, tribal, territorial and insular area governments.</li> <li>• Inform local, state, tribal, territorial and insular area elected and appointed officials on response efforts and recovery programs.</li> <li>• Disseminate information with the assistance of state municipal leagues, county associations and tribal governments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Joint Information Center (JIC)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in and support incident information, public affairs activities and media access to information regarding the latest developments.</li> <li>• Serve as a liaison between the SEOC and JIC.</li> </ul>
<b>PLANNING</b>	Conduct a systematic process engaging the whole community, as appropriate, in the development of executable strategic, operational and/or community-based approaches to meet defined objectives.
<b>OPERATIONAL COORDINATION</b>	Assist the on-scene PIO to establish and maintain a unified and coordinated operational structure and process that appropriately integrates all critical stakeholders and supports the execution of core capabilities.

## PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

- There will be a strong need for the public to obtain disaster assistance information. Timely dissemination of accurate, accessible and well-coordinated emergency public information will reduce the impact to life and property, as well as help maintain public trust and confidence.
- Communication methods and systems relied upon to inform the public are operational and tested on a regular basis.
- Many disasters or emergencies occur rapidly, hampering the ability of response organizations, local and state government to provide comprehensive information to everyone impacted at the onset.
- A disaster or emergency may create a significant demand for information from a wide variety of sources which may exceed local or state capabilities. Some situations may require the provision of enhanced or supplemental public information resources.
- Interest generated by a disaster or emergency may lead to requests for information or visits from public officials, dignitaries or VIPs. Such requests will require coordination and resources.
- A disaster or emergency may impact individuals' ability to receive public information due to displacement, or limited access to television, phone, newspaper, the internet, social networks, etc.
- Some individuals may require information through different methods and may need more time to process emergency messages before they decide to take protective action.
- Audience factors (i.e., personal perception, language, cultural beliefs, age, etc.) will impact what an individual hears, how they will interpret the emergency information and how they will act on that emergency information.
- Public information efforts will rely heavily upon the cooperation of commercial media organizations.
- Effective response, as well as ongoing support efforts, will be contingent upon the availability of resources and the extent/impact of the incident upon the state.
- In the aftermath of a disaster, information is often erroneous, outdated, vague, difficult to confirm and contradictory.
- Rumors or misinformation may be spread before, during and after a disaster. This can cause unnecessary distress among the public, provoke counter-productive public actions and impede response and recovery efforts.

## CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

### GENERAL CONCEPT

The role of the state of Indiana in emergency response is to supplement local efforts before, during and after a disaster. Emergency Support Function #15 (ESF-15) shall coordinate with the on-scene Public Information Officer (PIO), incident management teams (IMT) and the other stakeholders within the Joint Information System to manage and support the immediate and long-term needs of state and local jurisdictions.

ESF-15 shall ensure and promote a common operating picture (COP) through communicating with all ESFs, the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) Operations Section, the on-scene PIO as well as the Joint Information Center (JIC), if applicable.

### SEOC ACTIVATION

During an SEOC activation, ESFs may be activated depending on the incident and activation level. During a disaster response, each ESF representative in the SEOC will remain under the administrative control of their agency head; however, they will function under the supervision of the SEOC Manager. Notification of activation will be made via phone, email and/or text message.

The SEOC is always activated at a Level IV for Daily Operations; however, the activation level will be elevated for planned events, incidents, disasters or other response operations as needed. A Joint Information Center may be established during a Level III activation and will be set up during Level I-II activations. Activation level details are outlined in the State Emergency Operations Plan.

### DEMOBILIZATION OF THE SEOC

Emergency Support Functions will be demobilized from emergency response as objectives are accomplished and the need for their participation diminishes. During demobilization, it is the responsibility of the ESF primary agency to ensure all paperwork, such as equipment time records, personnel time records, accident reports and mechanical inspections have been completed, are accurate and are submitted to the appropriate SEOC personnel.



# ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

## ORGANIZATION

Emergency Support Function #15 (ESF-15) – External Affairs works under the Human Services Group in the Operations Section of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). This position may be staffed by the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) Public Affairs Section and/or Public Information Officers (PIOs) from other primary supporting agencies.

Each primary and supporting agency shall maintain internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Standard Operating Guides (SOGs), or other documents that detail the logistical and administrative priorities deemed necessary to assist in overall state prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery activities.

Specific roles and responsibilities of primary and supporting agencies during an incident or event are described below. Tasks include but are not limited to:

## ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

### Primary Agency Responsibilities

- Provide state public information resources to assist in critical functions and tasks before, during and after emergency events and disaster situations.
- Provide recommendations for maintaining a Joint Information System (JIS) and, if necessary, establishing a Joint Information Center (JIC) to support gathering, verifying, coordinating and disseminating accurate, accessible and timely information.
- Provide training to essential personnel who may be called upon to work in impacted areas.
- Work with other state and local public information sources to determine the impact of the incident and public information resource gaps that may exist.

### Supporting Agency Responsibilities

- Identify new equipment, technologies or capabilities required to prepare for or respond to new or emerging threats and hazards.
- Provide information or intelligence regarding trends and challenges to Indiana's public information capability.

### SEOC ESF-15 Responsibilities

See primary agency responsibilities above and additional responsibilities below:

- Activate and staff the SEOC, as requested. An IDHS Public Affairs PIO fills this role.
- Responsible for developing incident-related messaging strategy and decisions at the state level and approves all messaging and products related to the incident.

- Coordinate with the on-scene PIO regarding state actions to provide the required external affairs support to local, state, tribal, territorial, insular area and federal incident response entities.
- Integrate the components of public affairs, Congressional affairs, intergovernmental affairs (local, state and tribal coordination) and the private sector.
- Coordinate within the SEOC, as well as other incident structures to release information under the joint information system. These structures include the on-scene PIO, incident management assistance teams (IMAT), Incident Management Teams (IMT) and Joint Information Centers (JICs).
- Provide situation reports through WebEOC as identified in the incident battle rhythm.
- Participate in briefings, as needed.
- Liaise between the SEOC and JIC, if a JIC is established.
- Follow the ESF-15 Just-in-Time Training checklist when arriving at the SEOC.
- Manage the financial aspects of ESF-15.

### Joint Information Center Responsibilities

At the direction of the Governor or the IDHS Executive Director, a Joint Information Center (JIC) may be established. There are four (4) primary functions of a JIC: gathering information, developing informational products, media relations and community relations. Information on JIC activation levels, responsibilities and staffing, operations, location and contact information, job aids and checklists can be found in the State of Indiana JIC Operations Manual, 2020.

## EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION GENERAL TASKS

The following tables are comprised of essential tasks that may need to be completed by Emergency Support Function #15 (ESF-15) in all phases of emergency management. These tasks have been created as a guide to follow for the primary and support agencies of ESF-15. They have been developed as a tool to address potential challenges and unique risks that may be faced during times of emergency and disaster in Indiana. It is the responsibility of ESF-15 to ensure the tasks outlined here are accurate and reflect their overall ability to manage, support and deploy resources.

Table 2. ESF-15 PREVENTION TASKS

ESF #15 – PREVENTION TASKS	
TASK #	TASK SUMMARY
1	Initiate a time-sensitive, flexible planning process that builds on existing plans and incorporates real-time external affairs intelligence.
2	Establish and maintain a unified and coordinated operational structure and process that appropriately integrates all critical stakeholders and supports executing core capabilities.
3	Anticipate and identify emerging and/or imminent external affairs threats through observation and situational awareness.
4	Make appropriate assumptions to inform decision makers.
5	Establish and maintain partnership structures among protection elements to support networking, planning and coordination.
6	Share relevant, timely and actionable information and analysis with local authorities through a pre-established reporting system.
7	Maintain situational awareness of possible external affairs targets and vulnerabilities. Ensure the security of equipment, facilities and personnel through assessing capabilities and vulnerabilities.
8	Implement, exercise and maintain plans to ensure continuity of operations.

Table 3. ESF-15 PROTECTION TASKS

ESF #15 – PROTECTION TASKS	
TASK #	TASK SUMMARY
1	<p>Develop, validate and maintain SOPs or guidelines for both routine and emergency operations. Key operational concerns include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying and assessing equipment, supplies, resources and critical infrastructure.</li> <li>Alerting and activating personnel for work in the field or SEOC.</li> <li>Emergency communications and reporting procedures.</li> </ul>
2	<p>Develop and conduct training and education programs for ESF-15 personnel. Program considerations include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessing equipment, supplies and resources.</li> <li>Working in an EOC during emergency conditions.</li> <li>WebEOC or other computer applications.</li> <li>National Incident Management System / Incident Command.</li> <li>Continuity of Operations.</li> <li>Mapping, GIS and other computer applications.</li> <li>Emergency transportation and evacuation planning.</li> </ul>
3	Develop and maintain a roster of essential primary and support agency contacts for ESF-15 to be used in the event of emergency operations. Ensure critical information is captured.
4	Develop and maintain a database or system to collect information on essential resources and equipment.
5	Develop lists of resource needs and work toward eliminating these shortfalls by funding, partnerships or taking other essential actions.
6	Coordinate mutual aid agreements, memorandums of understanding or contracts with departments, organizations or private entities that may offer rapid deployment of resources or services as they relate to short and long-term emergency public information needs.
7	Train ESF-15 personnel on technical standards and specifications for essential pieces of equipment related to short and long-term emergency public information needs.
8	Train ESF-15 personnel on routine and emergency safety standards for both field operations and SEOC support.
9	Exercise alternate public information facilities, equipment and assets for continuity of operations and essential public information services statewide.
10	Train ESF-15 personnel on policies and administrative rules that relate directly to public information, this ESF, and its ability to provide emergency assistance.

Table 4. ESF-15 MITIGATION TASKS

ESF #15 – MITIGATION TASKS	
TASK #	TASK SUMMARY
1	Provide communication about areas that have been or are currently prone to significant hazards.
2	Identify public information resources within the state of Indiana and potential shortfalls or gaps that may exist.
3	Identify potential partnerships or funding sources to reduce or eliminate resource shortfalls or gaps for public information issues and concerns.
4	Establish partnerships with other federal, state, local and municipal entities that share public information responsibilities.
5	Identify needs for agreements, memorandums of understanding or contracts with departments, organizations or private entities that may offer rapid deployment of resources or services as they relate to short and long-term emergency public information needs.
6	Identify, establish and maintain essential pieces of equipment related to short and long-term emergency public information needs.
7	Identify, establish and maintain routine and emergency safety standards for all deployed public information personnel that comply with federal and state requirements and policies.
8	Identify, establish and maintain alternate public information facilities, equipment and assets for continuity of operations and essential public information services.
9	Develop informational messages and materials to share with local, state, public and private sector partners about potential threats and future protective actions.
10	Make recommendations, if appropriate, for pieces of legislation, policies and administrative rules that relate directly to public information and hinder this ESF's ability to provide emergency assistance.

Table 5. ESF-15 RESPONSE TASKS

ESF #15 – RESPONSE TASKS	
TASK #	TASK SUMMARY
1	<p>Activate SOPs or guidelines for emergency operations that consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The assessment, staging, use, status and sustainability of facilities, equipment, supplies and other resources.</li> <li>• Alerting, notifying and activating personnel for work in the field or within the SEOC.</li> <li>• Emergency communications and reporting procedures.</li> </ul>

<b>2</b>	<p>In coordination with the Executive PIO, assist in activating Joint Information System (JIS) personnel for such mission essential tasks as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing equipment, supplies and resources.</li> <li>• Providing representatives to work in the Joint Information Center (JIC), if activated.</li> <li>• Responding to the field for emergency operations.</li> <li>• Working in an EOC during emergency conditions.</li> <li>• Supporting local, district or statewide Incident Command structures.</li> <li>• Activating continuity of operations plans.</li> <li>• Collect, analyze and disseminate critical health, safety and welfare information for the public.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the Executive PIO in their mission to provide information to the public through all available means.</li> <li>• Include press releases and press briefings, as deemed appropriate, and regular updates to posts on agency websites and social media.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	Evaluate the ability to communicate with ESF-15 personnel and implement alternate communications if primary systems are down.
<b>5</b>	Communicate with ESF partners as needed, as well as Long-Term Recovery to provide critical information to the incident PIO for distribution to the public.
<b>6</b>	Work with ESF counterparts at the local, state, regional and national levels, as well as NGO's and private businesses/industry, as needed.
<b>7</b>	Post situation reports and critical information in WebEOC during activations.

Table 6. ESF-15 RECOVERY TASKS

<b>ESF #15 – RECOVERY TASKS</b>	
<b>TASK #</b>	<b>TASK SUMMARY</b>
<b>1</b>	Work to aggressively eliminate shortfalls or resource gaps that were identified in response to an emergency or disaster.
<b>2</b>	Establish partnerships and identify funding sources to address resource shortfalls or gaps for public information issues and concerns.
<b>3</b>	Maintain open and ongoing communication with other federal, state, local and municipal entities in impacted areas.
<b>4</b>	Assess agreements, memorandums of understanding or contracts with departments, organizations or private entities that may have been utilized during the response and determine if those agreements need to be updated or revised.

<b>5</b>	Assess the current technical standards and specifications for essential pieces of equipment related to short and long-term emergency public information needs and update based upon the lessons learned from the most recent emergency response.
<b>6</b>	Assess the current level of training on emergency safety standards for public information personnel to determine the appropriate application and compliance with federal and state requirements and policies.
<b>7</b>	Assess the current usage and application of alternate public information facilities, equipment and assets for these essential services statewide to determine if there are issues that need to be addressed for future response operations.

## COMMUNITY LIFELINES



Indiana has adopted the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) eight (8) community lifelines into prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery activities. Lifelines are services that enable the continuous operation of critical government and business functions and are essential to human health and safety or economic security.

Table 7. COMMUNITY LIFELINES AND SUBCOMPONENTS

COMMUNITY LIFELINE COMPONENTS AND SUB-COMPONENTS		
Multiple components establish the parameters of and key assessment elements for each of the lifelines; component-level analysis is required to determine if each lifeline is stable		
SAFETY AND SECURITY	FOOD, HYDRATION, SHELTER	HEALTH AND MEDICAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Law Enforcement / Security</li> <li>▪ Fire Services</li> <li>▪ Search and Rescue</li> <li>▪ Government Service</li> <li>▪ Community Safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Food</li> <li>▪ Drinking Water</li> <li>▪ Shelter</li> <li>▪ Agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Medical Care</li> <li>▪ Public Health</li> <li>▪ Patient Movement</li> <li>▪ Fatality Management</li> <li>▪ Medical Supply Chain</li> </ul>
ENERGY	COMMUNICATIONS	TRANSPORTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Power (Grid)</li> <li>▪ Fuel</li> <li>▪ Pipeline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Responder Communications</li> <li>▪ Alerts, Warnings, Messages</li> <li>▪ Financial Services</li> <li>▪ 911 &amp; Dispatch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Highway / Roadway Motor Vehicle</li> <li>▪ Mass Transit</li> <li>▪ Railway</li> <li>▪ Aviation</li> <li>▪ Maritime</li> </ul>
HAZARDOUS MATERIAL		WATER SYSTEMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilities</li> <li>▪ Hazardous Debris</li> <li>▪ Pollutants</li> <li>▪ Contaminants</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potable Water Infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Wastewater Management</li> </ul>



## LIFELINE AND ESF OBJECTIVES AND TASKS TIMELINE

Table 8. ESF-15 GENERAL TASKS

OBJECTIVE	SUPPORT NEEDED FROM	ESF-15 MISSION-ESSENTIAL TASKS
<b>TIMELINE: 0-24 HOURS</b>		
To deploy an ESF-15 representative to the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) within 2–6 hours of notification.	— —	Deploy ESF-15 representative to the SEOC and be briefed.
To maintain the common operating picture (COP) and contribute to the incident action plan (IAP).	— —	Provide situational information to the SEOC.
<b>TIMELINE: 24-72 HOURS</b>		
To continue maintaining the COP and contributing to the IAP.	— —	Communicate the status and existing capabilities of all ESF-15 agencies to prioritize needs.
	— —	Participate in developing the incident action plan (IAP) with IDHS to determine needs and priorities.
— —	— —	Continue to disseminate internal information through appropriate channels.
To develop a 7-day JIC schedule within 36 hours.	— —	Set initial staffing plan to maintain long-term operations.
<b>TIMELINE: BEYOND 72 HOURS</b>		
To continue maintaining the COP and contributing to the IAP.	— —	Provide situational information to the SEOC.
	— —	Participate in developing the IAP, based on needs and priorities.
— —	— —	Continue to disseminate internal information.

Table 9. ESF-15 TASKS FOR HEALTH AND MEDICAL

LIFELINE OBJECTIVE	ESF OBJECTIVE	SUPPORT NEEDED FROM	ESF-15 MISSION-ESSENTIAL TASKS
<b>TIMELINE: 0-72 HOURS</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To evacuate level 3 casualties</li> <li>To support temporary health and medical infrastructure in and around the impacted zone within 48 hours</li> </ul>	To coordinate with incident PIO to activate public-information plans and assess initial resources within 24 hours.	— —	Coordinate with Executive PIO and/or JIC to provide critical health and medical information and provide updates from ESF-2 regarding best remaining communication systems.
		— —	Coordinate information distribution from SEOC to Executive PIO and/or

			JIC regarding where health and medical treatment can be received.
		— —	Coordinate information distribution from SEOC to Executive PIO and/or JIC regarding the status of the health and medical infrastructure.
TIMELINE: BEYOND 72 HOURS			
To resume health services		— —	Coordinate information distribution from SEOC to Executive PIO regarding any public-health related issues while moving toward recovery.

Table 10. ESF-15 TASKS FOR COMMUNICATIONS

LIFELINE OBJECTIVE	ESF OBJECTIVE	SUPPORT NEEDED FROM	ESF-15 MISSION-ESSENTIAL TASKS
<b>TIMELINE: 0-24 HOURS</b>			
To transmit public information and warning messages to survivors in the disaster area within 12 hours of the incident.	To establish contact with ESF-5 for situational assessments and have verified information ready and to the Executive PIO for release within 6-12 hours.	ESF-5	Request information from each ESF and coordinate with the Executive PIO to prepare statements to the media and public.
	Work with the SEOC to gather information for the incident PIO to assist the PIO and joint information system in coordinating a message among local, state and federal public information officers (PIOs) and providing the necessary context for the incident PIO to determine how to best distribute that message within the first 24 hours.	ESF-2	As ESF 2 (Communications) is assessing the degree and types of communications capabilities available, inquire about the status of the EAS system. If the infrastructure for public-safety communications has been seriously affected or rendered nonfunctional, it is highly unlikely the infrastructure that supports the EAS will have remained functional.
			If the EAS system remains totally functional, use it to the maximum extent.
		ESF-2	Contact ESF-2 to determine communications capabilities available.
		Governor	Regularly coordinate with the Governor's designated Public Affairs Liaison.
		— —	Develop messages for the public for review by the Executive PIO. Using pre-scripted messages will be important but review them closely

			before dissemination to ensure they fit the “tone” of the incident at the time.
		— —	Coordinate with on-scene public information teams as needed and directed by the Incident PIO. Consider dispatching on-scene public information personnel to provide frequent communications with the JIC and SEOC.
		— —	Establish some means of disseminating information to the affected populace during the first 72 hours after the initial incident. This will be the single most important action the state can take to save lives, reduce further injuries and provide some “calm.”
		— —	Establish a schedule for long-term ESF-15 operations.
		— —	Disseminate critical lifesaving and life-sustaining information to all affected segments of society necessary, including accessible tools, to expedite delivering emergency services and to aid the public in taking protective actions.
	To establish a JIC and staff it within 12-18 hours.	— —	Set up the JIC in 2 East, Government Center South, Indianapolis. The traditional setup is E202 in the South Building, but available resources allow a mobile JIC if damage are somewhat isolated.
		All required departments and agencies.	Request a representative sent to the JIC.
TIMELINE: 24-72 HOURS			
To ensure public updates are given regularly to reduce fear and provide rumor control	To activate public-information plans and assess initial resources within 24 hours	— —	Coordinate with other ESFs to gather information regarding rumors, security, shelters and medical care locations and provide to the Executive PIO.
		— —	Determine and implement rumor control strategy
		All ESFs	Coordinate with all ESFs to gather information that should be shared with the public for ingress and egress routes, water fitness and availability, evacuations, government response updates, mass care, health and

			medical services, food, pet care and availability and restoring utilities, and provide to the incident PIO.
		— —	Schedule briefings with local and state news outlets.
		ESF-7	Request additional resources through EMAC or the federal government, as necessary.
TIMELINE: BEYOND 72 HOURS			
To ensure public updates are given regularly to reduce fear and provide rumor control		— —	Continually gather information on the locations of shelters and medical care. Include other information about survival, first aid and self-help.
		— —	Continually update the public on actions the government is taking and how soon they can expect assistance.
		Governor	Continue to coordinate with the governor’s public-affairs liaison.
		All ESFs	Continue to request information from each ESF to prepare statements for the media and the public.
		— —	Continue to collect media reports regarding the need for rumor control.
		— —	Continue to schedule briefings with local and state news outlets.
		ESF-7	Request additional resources through EMAC or the federal government, as necessary.

## **DIRECTION, CONTROL AND COORDINATION**

### **DIRECTION**

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) is the primary agency for Emergency Support Function #15 (ESF-15); however, the Incident Public Information Officer (PIO) changes depending on the incident. For example, during the 2016 Avian Influenza Outbreak, the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) was the Incident PIO, while IDHS served as the Incident PIO for the 2018 Floods.

If activated, the Joint Information Center (JIC) will be the central point of contact for all news media regarding any subjects related to the incident. If the JIC is not activated, ESF-15 will be the primary point of contact.

### **CONTROL**

The Executive PIO, commonly the Chief Public Information Officer of IDHS, oversees overall messaging, public information strategy and Joint Information Center (JIC) staff. The Executive PIO also jointly oversees the ESF-15 in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) and Field PIOs.

### **COORDINATION**

ESF-15 will coordinate with internal and external partners to develop a common operating picture. It is best practice for the SEOC ESF-15, JIC staff and Field PIOs (IMAT or IMT) staff to coordinate and communicate together on unified messaging. There should be at least one (1) conference call a day and regular communication amongst the SEOC ESF-15, state IMAT PIO and JIC staff during an incident. The state may support local jurisdictions with public information, as described in the Local Coordination section below.

#### **Local Coordination**

All incidents begin and end locally. When an incident occurs, a PIO may be staffed within an Incident Management Team (IMT) or an Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Due to Indiana's Home Rule, the IDHS Public Affairs Section, Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC) cannot regulate local PIO messaging. Therefore, it is important to coordinate, build and maintain a relationship between local PIOs and state-level PIOs. This advanced coordination will better ensure unified messaging when an incident occurs.

ESF-15 may coordinate with local PIOs to assist the local jurisdiction with information management. Rural jurisdictions may utilize the state JIC, if established, to provide the jurisdiction with direct PIO support.

## **INFORMATION COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION**

### **INFORMATION COLLECTION**

The Joint Information System (JIS) provides accessible information that is timely, coordinated and accurate. Emergency Support Function #15 (ESF-15) will coordinate with internal and external partners on information collection. Information to collect may include:

- Assistance provided to the affected area
- Agency response and support
- Protective measures
- Impact on non-affected areas
- Health risks and considerations
- Complete picture of what survivors need to do to recover from the emergency

### **ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION**

Messages should be unified, and rumors should be controlled. Social media and traditional media will be analyzed to ensure information is being conveyed accurately. Released information should be clear and void of any errors that could cause credibility issues such as misspelling and incorrect grammar.

Information must be available to affected citizens, including but not limited to: the media, private sector, governments, individuals with limited English proficiency and those with access and functional needs.

The responsibility to provide information regarding the incident is a shared task among local, state, tribal, territorial and federal authorities. There are multiple means that information can be shared, as listed in the Communications section below.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The following is a list of identified potential alternative communications, assuming that landline, wireless communication devices and internet are primary sources of communication. Any of these can be primary forms of communication and can be used alone or in conjunction with other communication systems to support ESF-15 operations. One, or all, may be operable at any given time within the state.

### COMMUNICATION METHODS

- Data including but not limited to: WebEOC, email, text, social media, Microsoft Teams and Cisco Jabber
- Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)
- Emergency Alert System (EAS)
- Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) All-Hazard Weather Radio
- Highway Advisory Radio Stations
- Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) Signage
- Amateur Radio
- Local Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Website
- Non-traditional avenues: Private Sector Partners and Translation Services
- Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS)
- Wireless Priority Service (WPS)
- Project Hoosier SAFE-T Digital 800 MHz Radio System
- Mutual Aid repeater system
- Indiana Law Enforcement Emergency Network (ILEEN)
- Satellite Radio/Phones
- Starlink Satellite
- Broadband Satellite Network
- FEMA National Radio System (FNARS)
- SHARED RESOURCES High Frequency Radio Program (SHARES)
- Radio Emergency Associated Communications Teams (REACT)
- Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS)
- Runners

For information on Public Alert and Warning, as well as the state P.A.C.E plan for communication methods, refer to the State of Indiana Disaster and Emergency Communications Plan, 2023.

## **APPENDIX A – REFERENCES, RELATED PLANS AND PROCEDURES**

### **REFERENCES**

- [FEMA's ESF #15 – External Affairs Annex, 2016](#)
- [FEMA's ESF #15 Standard Operating Procedures, 2019](#)

### **RELATED PLANS**

- Indiana State Emergency Alert System (EAS) Plan, May 2018
- State of Indiana Disaster and Emergency Communications Plan, July 2023
- State of Indiana Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), March 2025
- State of Indiana State Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP), 2024

### **STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES AND GUIDES**

- ESF 15 – Daily Tasks
- ESF 15 – WebEOC Checklist
- How to Create the EMA Conference Call During Incidents
- IDHS Style Guide
- IDHS Website Style Guide
- IDHS Websites and Online Tools SOP
- SEOC Just-In-Time Training Checklist- ESF #15
- State of Indiana Joint Information Center Operations Manual, 2025



## APPENDIX B – ACRONYMS

ACRONYMS	FULL DESCRIPTION
ARC	American Red Cross
BOAH	Indiana State Board of Animal Health
COP	Common Operating Picture
DNR	Indiana Department of Natural Resources
EAS	Emergency Alert System
EMA	Emergency Management Agency
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
ESF	Emergency Support Function
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GETS	Government Emergency Telecommunications Service
IDEM	Indiana Department of Environmental Management
IDHS	Indiana Department of Homeland Security
IDOH	Indiana Department of Health
IFCA	Indiana Fire Chiefs Association
IMAT	Incident Management Assistance Team
IMT	Incident Management Team
INDOT	Indiana Department of Transportation
INNG	Indiana National Guard
IN-VOAD	Indiana Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
IPAWS	Integrated Public Alert and Warning System
ISP	Indiana State Police
JIC	Joint Information Center
JIS	Joint Information System
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PIO	Public Information Officer
SEOC	State Emergency Operations Center
SOG	Standard Operating Guideline
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
WEA	Wireless Emergency Alerts
WebEOC	Web-based Emergency Operations Center