

**SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**



ANNEX I – RISK COMMUNICATIONS

**APPENDIX 3 - JOINT INFORMATION
CENTER**

December 2003

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SECTION 1: JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

Under the Standardized Emergency Management System, the JIC is the mechanism through which the crisis response team comes in contact with the public and the media.

1.1 The JIC Concept

A crisis brings together many response elements and audiences with varying interests in what is going on. Two of the largest groups are the public and the media.

1.1.1 The Public

The public includes political entities at the local, state and federal levels, environmental groups, volunteers, and other audiences who appear on-scene with an obvious or not-so-obvious reason. A call from the Governor's office, or from a concerned citizen, is typical of the telephone traffic. Some members of the public may drive to the command site for answers.

1.1.2 The Media

The media provides the communication channel through which most audiences are served in a crisis situation. Media includes local, regional, national, and international press and electronic reporters plus the trade press. Hundreds of media will arrive at a major event. Each of them will have one or more news "angles" to explore during their coverage. Some will want information in great depth and others need superficial one-liner facts.

1.2 JIC Role

The JIC is designed to be a "one stop service center" for both these audiences. Either a mayor or a TV reporter can call or come by the JIC for the latest information or to file a request or complaint. The JIC's basic role is to collect as much information as possible on the incident and coordinate its timely flow outward. Coordinated information means less confusion, inaccuracies and duplication of effort.

SECTION 2: MANAGEMENT OF CENTER

2.1 Lead Agency

The JIC is operated by personnel from each major response organization, including the Federal On-Scene Coordinator's (FOSC) Information Officer if warranted. Other members could include the State On-Scene Coordinator's Information Officer and the Responsible Party's PR professionals, either contracted or staff.

2.1.1 Oil Spills

The Federal On-Scene Coordinator decides all matters, including information flow. For that reason, leadership of the initial public affairs function will likely default to a Federal information officer. For oil spills, the RP's public affairs representative, when the JIC is established, should manage it.

This is a better approach since the RP has the distinct goal of mounting a response that will move the incident *out* of the news rather than sustain the story to enhance Federal or State promotion opportunities.

2.1.2 Terrorism Events

Crisis Management - The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is responsible for Crisis Management information issues.

Consequence Management - The local jurisdiction is responsible for issues. See Hazardous Materials Area Plan for determination of pre-determined Incident Commander assignments.

2.2 Agencies Included in Staffing

Local governments and other agencies may also have PR persons in the JIC to handle specific inquiries that affect their constituencies.

2.2.1 Oil Spills

The US Coast Guard may deploy its Public Information Assist Team to direct its media response for oil spills or marine water vessel incidents.

All persons activated in a JIC *must have a contractual reason to be there*; otherwise, there are potentially damaging liability problems with each contact with media or public, not to mention the sensitive information that may be heard behind the scenes as planning goes forward.

2.2.2 Staffing Tasks

A list of all JIC personnel will be posted in the Incident Command with duty hours, quarters and telephone numbers.

2.3 **Releases**

Releases of information are coordinated between JIC members periodically during the event and presented in writing and/or in a news briefing **in the name of the Unified Command**. News releases will carry a unique JIC letterhead. JIC releases do not preclude any responder from channeling its own information to the media or the public.

SECTION 3: ESTABLISHING A JIC CONCEPT

The Incident Commander (IC) is responsible for the public affairs program. For multiple incidents, the Operational Area EOC Director may establish a risk communications activity. The IC will be the responsible party's representative in most incidents, but that person will understand that one of their political responsibilities is to gain real or tacit approval of other jurisdiction authorities.

Although the JIC is a cooperative venture, a designated Information Officer supervises it. This lead person organizes the JIC. It is the responsibility of each responding organization to voluntarily send personnel to the JIC and operate under its auspices.

There should be two distinct JIC operations: internal and external.

3.1 Internal JIC

This larger arm of the JIC directly serves the IC, or EOC Director, and is not directly accessible by the public or media. This group is tasked to:

- Creates the media response plan
- Monitors media coverage
- Tracks progress of the response
- Provides a research capability
- Creates news releases
- Coordinates all products
- Prints and distributes materials
- Provides audio-visual aids
- Answers telephone inquiries
- Plans and conducts news briefings and other meetings
- Coordinates news photography and media transportation (if provided)
- Maintains event logs
- Operates “rumor lines.”

It is located within or close to the Incident Command Center, or Emergency/Department Operations Center.

3.2 External JIC

The “front end” of the JIC — is the face the outside world sees. This office has at least one senior PR practitioner from the major responders, and any responsible company. Other responders or participants can send personnel to this room as appropriate — especially when events bring visibility to their involvement (e.g., coroner, weather).

3.2.1 Oil spills

This office would have at least one senior PR practitioner from the three major responders: US Coast Guard/Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), California Department of Fish & Game (OSPR), and the company.

All releases, fact sheets, and statements are posted here; copies of all products are available. News clippings and videotapes are available for review. Event status boards are posted; media escorts, if provided, are assigned from this office.

One-on-one media interviews can be conducted here. The principal spokespersons operate from this JIC location and are available to meet with community leaders and media representatives. Visitors to this “external office” use a sign-in sheet.

3.3 Office Support

Both offices are supported with copying machines, telephones, fax machines, and word processors. At least one private communications line is maintained between the internal and external JIC functions. Most outside lines are located in the internal JIC.

3.4 Personnel

The most skilled communicators are divided between the two JIC operations. Lesser skilled staff members are assigned to the internal JIC for clerical, coordination, and administrative tasks. At least one clerical person works in each location. At least one person will be responsible to keep current data boards in each location.

The expertise of JIC participants is determined quickly, and the appropriate inquiry may be directed to an “expert” on that subject. Each member of the JIC can respond to *generic* questions (e.g., size of spill, road closure status, location of evacuation reception centers, etc.) but specific inquiries are directed to the appropriate representative.

Depending upon the extent of the geography involved, there may be JIC personnel assigned to additional locations (e.g., explosion cleanup, at the harbor, at another headquarters). These persons provide a flow of intelligence from the site and can provide one-on-one media interviews.

The keys to the success of any Joint Information Center are cooperation and coordination among all members.

SECTION 4: Facility Selection Criteria

The need for several identified primary and an alternate JIC facility should be addressed.

4.1 Configuration

(See 8.1 - Attachment 2 for example)

Configuration of the facility includes:

- Setting up the telephone banks in the designated phone team area(s).
- Readyng the building lobby and auditorium to accommodate working news media and news briefings.

SECTION 5: ACTIVATING/DEMOBILIZING

5.1 The Organization

The OA JIC takes a graded approach to activation, depending on the nature, severity, duration, and public and news media perception of the emergency.

- (See 8.2 Attachments 1 - Organizational Chart)
- See Section 6 – Position Descriptions

5.1.1 Initial activation

Involves assembly of the JIC Management Team – consisting of:

- County Information Officer (or designee).
- JIC Manager.
- Assistant JIC Manager.
- Technical Spokesperson (Subject Matter Expert).
- News Media Information Manager.
- Public Information Manager.
- JIC Writer

5.1.2 Fully Operational Activation

Additional staff to fulfill staffing of JIC includes the following teams:

- News Media Phone Team.
- Public Inquiry Phone Team.
- JIC Support Team.
- JIC Secretarial Team.
- JIC Receptionist Team.
- Distribution Support Team.
- News Conference Support Team.
- News Media Monitoring Team.
- News Media Escort Team.

5.2 JIC Activation

Activation is complete when:

- A JIC Writer is in place.
- JIC Manager has established an open telephone line of communication with the

Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Information Officer.

To ensure timely and accurate dissemination of information to the public, OA can and will activate its JIC anytime an off- normal event occurs — regardless of whether or not the EOC is involved. Activation of the JIC is accomplished through a systematic call- up process that begins with notification of an emergency through the San Joaquin County OES Duty Officer or the EOC Director.

Once called to duty, JIC personnel report to the JIC:

- Sign in
- Collect their position-specific manual
- Assist in the configuration of the facility
- Take their places.

During JIC operations, the JIC Management Team focuses:

- Details of the event as communicated by the EOC Information Officer to develop and distribute timely news releases
- Notify key stakeholders (local and regional government officials)
- Conduct news briefings for reporters present in the JIC.

5.3 Activation Objectives

The team is guided by operational objectives that call for:

- Distribution of an initial notification news release within 25 minutes of activation.
- Initial briefing of news media in the JIC within one hour of activation.
- Distribute an event-specific/event classification news release within one hour of activation.
- Ensure the timely briefing of telephone team members who are responding to calls from the public and news media.

Additional event-specific news releases/updates are issued as warranted. Additional news media briefings are held as events warrant and can be held to impart fast-breaking information in the absence of an approved news release.

In the case of an extended activation (beyond eight hours), the JIC Management Team will prepare for and conduct shift changes to ensure an alert, rested JIC staff is available at all times.

5.4 Deactivation

Once the event is secured and the EOC Crisis Manager directs the JIC to:

- Stand down.
- The facility is reconfigured for normal day-to-day business.
- All JIC equipment is stowed.
- Event records are collected and filed.
- A staff briefing (“hot wash”) is held shortly after deactivation to capture lessons learned and other information that can be included in the post-event report.

SECTION 6: POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Operational Area Information Officer (or designee) – Coordinates with impacted jurisdictions on JIC needs. Activates JIC, approves resource.

6.1 Management

JIC Manager – Coordinates all activities within JIC. Activities and support operations based on needs have impacted jurisdictions, whether an agency representative is physically on-site.

Approvals all releases to public and media, and authorized entry list to briefings, statements, and conferences. This may be sub-approved to certain Managers or specific issues.

Assistant JIC Manager – Has same level of knowledge as Manager, but not all decision-making authority. May be used as either a relief, or to focus on an aspect of the JIC operations.

6.2 External Teams

News Media Information Manager – Oversees staff assigned to interface with media either by communications or on-site contact.

News Media Phone Team – Answers or originates telephone contact with media. Fax or other non-verbal sharing is from Internal Teams.

News Media Escort Team – Conducts incident, EOC, or JIC visits. Should have Information Officer training to avoid improper statements or violate media/jurisdictional rights.

Technical Spokesperson (Subject Matter Expert) – Provides media with understanding of issues involved. If not distracting from media access may assist Internal staff with understanding of technical information.

6.3 Internal Teams

Public Information Manager – Oversees support functions to External Team, and provides information to public, media, and impacted or non-impacted jurisdictions.

Public Inquiry Phone Team – answers or originates contact with general public, businesses, or unaffected jurisdictions.

JIC Writer – Develops media releases, website page content, distribution recommendations

JIC Support Team – Computer services such as mapping, developing and maintaining website pages, sending/receiving e-mail. Develops and displays maps, status boards, reports. Maintains equipment: copy machines, faxes, phones, and computers.

JIC Secretarial Team – Assists all teams with typing, filing, copying of documents.

JIC Receptionist Team – Signs in/out visitors, assigned staff. Maintains current resource status. Develops a JIC Organizational Chart based on staffing for each shift.

Distribution Support Team – Disperses documents by facsimile, runners, Field Observers from incidents, DOC's, EOC's. Interacts with Secretarial Team on duplication tasks.

News Conference Support Team – Develops activities, displays, resources needed for conferences, briefings, and statements. Invitee or authorized entry list to be developed by Managers.

News Media Monitoring Team – Reviews newspapers, journals, television, and radio coverage. Jurisdictions or Managers will direct what should be monitored, and what extent.

SECTION 7: SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT

7.1 Message Center Operations

For processing information into and out of the JIC:

- Facsimile machines (2)
- Television (2)
- Copier
- Phones (10) 5-banked/rotating

7.2 Information Processing

To develop, or record, information or images:

- Computers (with ability to fax from computer)
- Digital VCR
- Digital camera
- SLR camera
- Tape recorder (2) 1-digital if possible

7.3 Other General Office Supplies

- Pens and pencils
- Paper pads
- Paperclips
- Paper binders
- Post-it (various sizes)
- Mail trays (double-stack)

7.4 News Release Process Equipment

News release distribution should evolve rapidly from manual faxing to computer-based methods. While the use of e-mail for rapid distribution has become a part of the process, The Communications Unit Leader should enhance its computer faxing capabilities with the use of a Web-to-Fax process, or Server-to-Fax.

News releases can be sent from any location on the Internet through this service. The JIC can upload news releases to a secure server and distribute news releases to its database of news outlets and stakeholders within a matter of minutes.

A service of user-friendly list management software and access to confirmation data that can be downloaded and printed for the record.

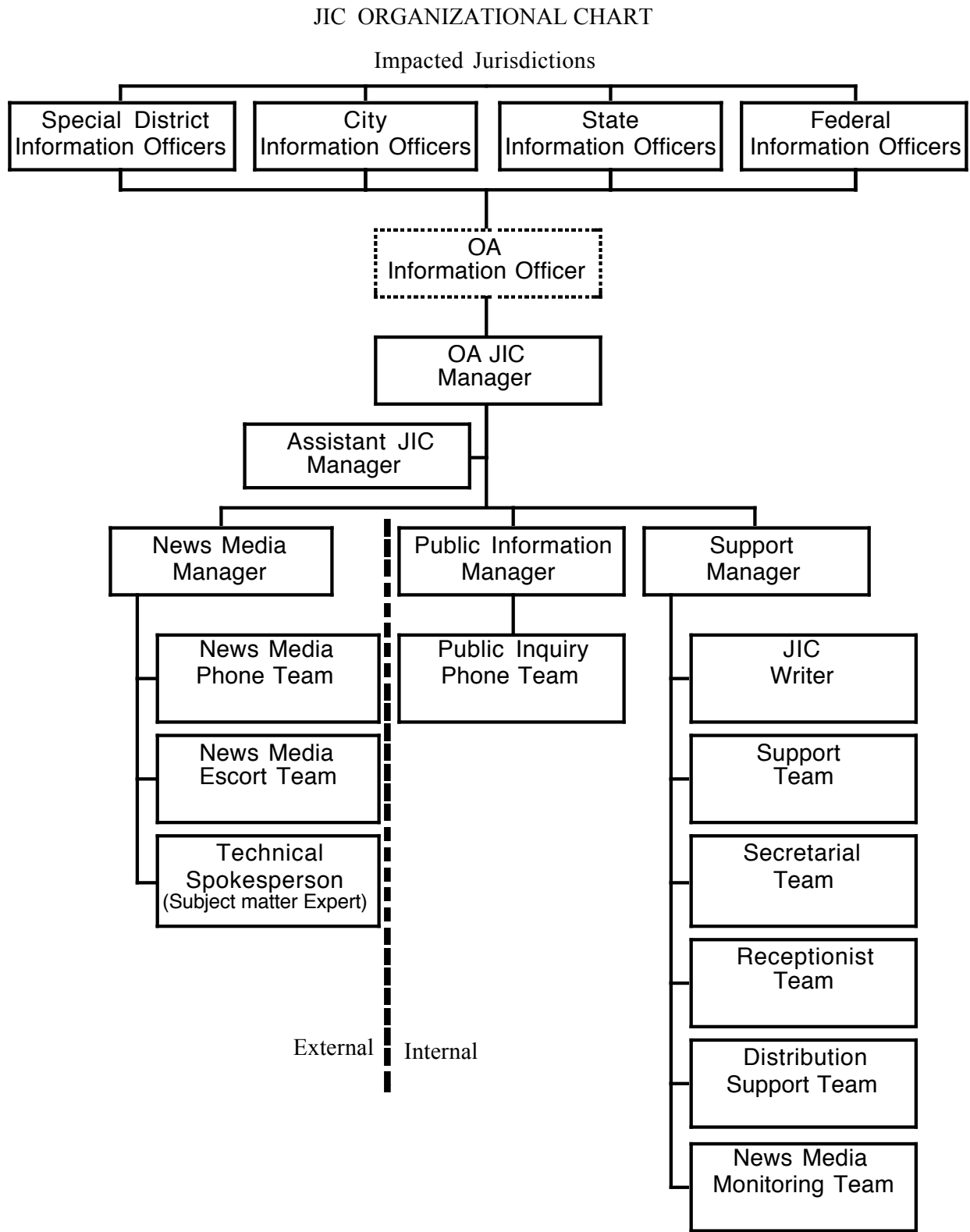
7.5 Foreign Language

In addressing the need for foreign language interpretation, staffing should include trained telephone team members fluent in Spanish (the most common foreign language encountered in the region) and use a language service.

SECTION 8: ATTACHMENTS

1. Organizational Chart
2. Layout example
3. Forms

8.1 ATTACHMENT 1 – ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



8.2 ATTACHMENT 2 – FACILITY LAYOUT

8.3 ATTACHMENT 3 – FORMS

1. JIC Letterhead
2. JIC Fax Cover