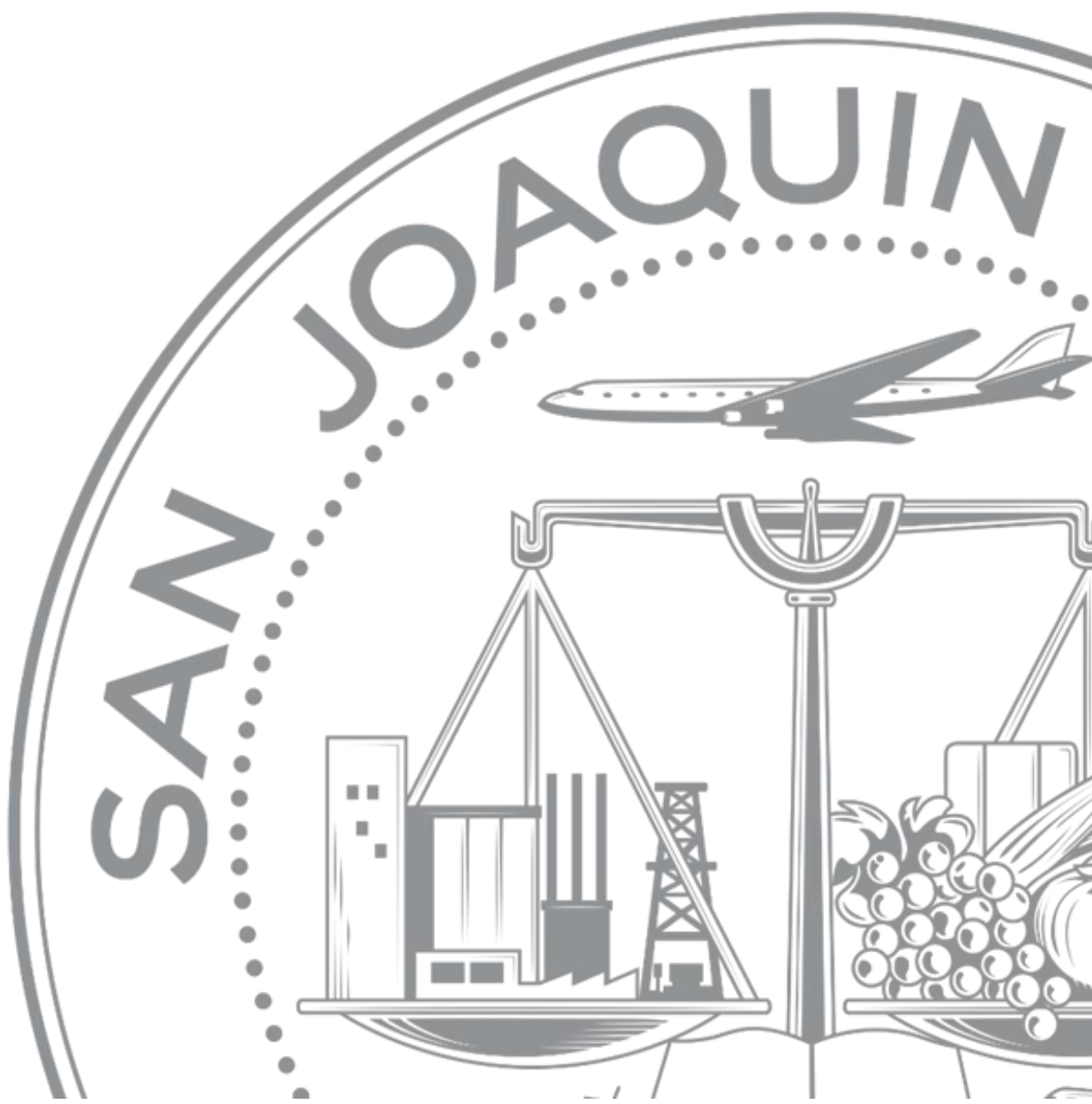# ESF-15
Public Information Annex

July 22, 2020

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Letter of Promulgation

This ESF Annex to the County of San Joaquin Emergency Operations Plan describes how San Joaquin County will manage emergency incident or disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and restoration related to this ESF. All Primary and Support agencies identified as having assigned responsibilities in this ESF shall perform the emergency tasks as described to include preparing and maintaining Standard Operating Guidelines and Procedures, and by carrying out the training, exercises and plan maintenance needed to support the plan.
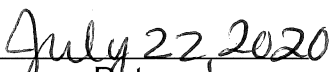
This ESF plan was developed using the Comprehensive Planning Guide 101 version 2 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and California's emergency planning guidance documents. Adoption will occur following the established maintenance schedule; however, the plan may be modified in the interim without prior approval and formal adoption under the direction of the Director of Emergency Operations. The modified plan will be relayed digitally to all Primary and Support agencies identified as having assigned responsibilities in this ESF. In addition, the plan will be available on the San Joaquin County Office of Emergency Services webpage and within the Advanced File Library of WebEOC. The Primary assigned agency will coordinate the review and update of the plan with the Support agencies as needed at least every two years. This ESF plan supersedes any previous versions.

This ESF Annex applies to Primary and Support agencies within San Joaquin County who are assigned responsibilities in *Section 4.3.1 Responsibilities by Emergency Support Function* of the All-Hazard EOP and/or identified within the ESF Annex.
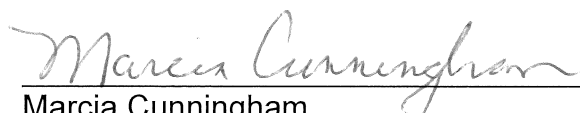
This plan replaces previous annexes of the same title.

_____   _____
Shellie Lima, Director Emergency Operations   Date
July 22, 2020
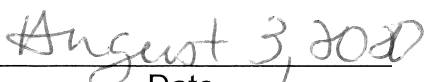
This plan/annex will be formally promulgated by the chairperson of the Disaster Council of San Joaquin County at the next regularly scheduled meeting. The Disaster Council is empowered by County Ordinance to review and approve emergency and mutual aid plans.

_____   _____
Marcia Cunningham   Date
Chair, San Joaquin County Disaster Council   August 3, 2020
Director of Emergency Services

Plan Administration

San Joaquin County Office of Emergency Services Director of Emergency Operations will coordinate review, revise, and re-promulgate this annex at least once every two years or when key changes occur, such as lessons learned from exercises or real events. Changes may be made by the San Joaquin County Director of Emergency Operations without formal Disaster Council's approval. This document supersedes all previous ESF-15 Public Information Annex for the Operational Area.

Record of Changes

All updates and revisions to this annex will be tracked and recorded in the following table. This process will ensure that the most recent version of the plan is disseminated and implemented by incident response personnel.

Date	Change No.	Change made by (name/title)	Summary of Changes
2/25/2020	1	Heyer/Emergency Planner	Updated- Dates and changed Emergency Services Council to Disaster Council per County Ordinance

Plan Distribution

San Joaquin County Office of Emergency Services maintains the San Joaquin County Emergency Operations Plan in the San Joaquin County Emergency Operations Center Library. This document, upon signature, will become an annex to the Emergency Operations Plan. The primary method of distribution is electronic, with a copy available in the Advanced File Library of the County web-based information-sharing database (WebEOC) and on the San Joaquin County webpage.

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Primary Agency: Office of Emergency Services

Supporting Agencies: County Department PIOs
San Joaquin County Counsel
Information Systems Division
City PIOs

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Emergency Support Function (ESF) -15 (Public Information), is composed of Public Information Officers (PIOs) and subject matter experts (SMEs) who work together to provide timely, accurate, and coordinated information for the residents of San Joaquin County. ESF-15 stakeholders have common interests and share a responsibility to provide public information with the mission to protect human health and safety, critical infrastructure, property, and the environmental quality within the Operational Area (OA). The ESF-15 stakeholders embrace the "whole community" by coordinating and sharing information with the media, faith-based and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, the local populace, individuals with limited English, and other access and functional needs.

The role of public information during and post-incident is crucial. If employees, residents, and businesses lack reliable information, this may be paralyzing and lead to anger at authorities. The County and affected jurisdictions must go beyond regular efforts to keep the public aware and informed. Effective communications, therefore, includes providing timely, reliable, and consistent information via multiple media channels, including print, broadcast, website(s), news and social media, community organizations and networks, and direct outreach.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of ESF-15 is to describe the coordination elements necessary to provide accurate, organized, timely, and accessible information to the public for emergencies and incidents affecting San Joaquin County. This document outlines the roles, responsibilities, and tasks of the primary and support organizations in providing the public with critical information. This ESF will offer guidance for conducting these services and support during all phases of an incident.

Public information consists of the processes, procedures, and systems to communicate timely, accurate, and accessible information on the incident's cause, size, and current situation to the public, responders, and additional stakeholders (both directly and indirectly affected). Public information must be coordinated and integrated across jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations, among federal, state, tribal, and local governments, and with non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

2.2 SCOPE

ESF-15 applies to all agencies that have assigned roles and responsibilities in the San Joaquin County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) in support of public information services in ESF-15. This ESF supplements the EOP. ESF-15 integrates public affairs, community relations, emergency communications, and internal communications under the coordinating auspices of external affairs. Another component, the Joint Information Center (JIC), ensures the coordinated release of information under ESF-15.

The scope of ESF-15 is to:

- Identify and describe actions taken to provide continuous and accessible public information about the incident, secondary effects, and recovery activities.

- Ensure that information includes the content necessary to enable receivers to determine the authenticity and validity required to take recommended actions.

- Define plans, programs, and systems to control rumors by correcting misinformation.

- Identify steps to inform all of the public of warnings, or recommended actions, including individuals with Access and Functional Needs (AFN).

- Define how local responders and officials will use, and work with, the media during an incident.

- Identify prepared messages, materials, and resources for a variety of hazards.

- Categorize materials and communication methods for extensive facilities such as congregate-care facilities, assisted living centers, hospitals, schools, and colleges.

- Identify local media organizations and the means to disseminate warnings.

- Identify communication skills sharing information.

3 GUIDELINES

This ESF is a guide for the timely and effective dissemination of accurate, official, situational, and preparedness information during a significant incident that affects public safety, health, community well-being, or continuity of government operations. The San Joaquin County Office of Emergency Services (OES) will maintain standard operating procedures for accomplishing assigned responsibilities. All county employees shall follow the County Administrative Manual, Section: 3100- Media Relations, Solicitation, & Advertising. If a Joint Information Center (JIC) is activated, staff will also utilize the JIC Plan.

3.1 ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

To ensure individuals with Access and Functional Needs (AFN) receive notifications, the PIO will coordinate with other county agencies to identify additional systems that may be utilized. Systems and considerations include, but are not limited to:

- County staff certified to speak additional languages.
- TDD/TDY telecommunications devices for deaf and their provision of accurate, timely information to their constituents.
- Outreach to Behavioral Health Services.
- Outreach to In-Home Support Services.
- Utilization of other accessible means of communication.
- Outreach to foster children in the County's care.
- Outreach to the Homeless population.
- Maps for people with vision impairment.
- Transportation for persons with limited mobility.
- Considerations for non-native or limited English speakers.
- Notification to Superintendent of schools, and activation of call-down systems for schools in the impacted area.

OES will establish communication networks ahead of time with trusted agents and daily contacts, which will consist of language translation services or closed captioning monitors. Subject matter experts (SME) from various parts of the disproportionately impacted populations may act in a Technical Specialist (Tech Spec) position or (SME) under the PIO or the JIC.

4 PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

The following planning assumptions have been used to develop this ESF. If these assumptions are not valid for a specific event or circumstance, it will be necessary to modify the operational concepts and assigned responsibilities defined herein:

- Natural and human-made incidents can occur with or without warning at any time of the day or night. They can affect multiple departments within the County.

- The public will demand information about the incident and instructions on proper survival/response actions.

- The progression of events in an incident is not predictable. Specific activities if this ESF will depend on the nature and demands of the crisis.

- Rumors and misinformation are likely to develop when there is a lack of official news or information readily available.

- The media will demand information about the incident.

- The release of information to the public and media will follow the standard state emergency management system (SEMS) and the National Incident Management System / Incident Command System (NIMS/ICS) protocols.

- Traditional technology may be inoperative.

- Members of the affected public should receive emergency instructions regarding protective actions and changes to normal daily conditions. The audience will endeavor to comply with such directions to the best of their ability.

- If sufficiently trained staff is not available, emergency response organizations may become overwhelmed by the demand for information.

- In incidents involving numerous jurisdictions, departments, and/or agencies, the Joint Information System (JIS) protocols will be used, including the possible establishment of a JIC.

5 CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

5.1 GENERAL

Public Information Officers prepare and distribute information to the public before, during, and after an incident, using all available media and communication methods. Public information is based upon the size, scope, and nature of an incident.

The Incident Commander (IC), or responsible agency, will cover initial response information and notifications when available. If the IC requests, a PIO, or team, may be dispatched to address media needs at the scene, or in support of, an incident. The EOC Director may also assemble a team consisting of one or more departmental or jurisdictional PIOs.

5.2 ORGANIZATION

OES serves as the coordinator of ESF-15 and is assisted by the designated support agencies, including a PIO Team from the OA. The lead agency involved in the incident will commit its available personnel, facilities, and resources to ESF operations, requesting assistance through OES when necessary. The organization of this ESF is expected to remain the same for both response and recovery activities.

5.3 NOTIFICATIONS

The IC will contact the OES Duty Officer to request assistance. In turn, the OES Duty officer will confer with the Director of Emergency Services and determine if personnel from some or all of the support agencies should be alerted and mobilized.

OES will maintain a roster of its personnel assigned to this ESF, including an OA-wide PIO Team roster. This roster is maintained as a separate document by OES, as it contains personal information of members.

5.4 PRE-EVENT PLANNING

Pre-incident awareness and education on related issues should focus on communications to assure the public that they can prepare for an incident. Agencies that develop educational materials for the public can share these materials with the PIO Team to ensure all agencies reinforce preparedness messages before an incident occurs.

Agencies must work with the media in advance of incidents to ensure the needs of media are understood and to establish relationships and protocols to meet those needs. Building effective media relationships with local outlets will help avoid unfortunate delays or miscommunications in times of crisis. The interests of the media and those of the public are not always the same. The safety of the community and the proper management of an incident are best served if the information presented to the public is timely, accurate, and designed to alert, inform, and reassure. Breaking news stories may attract viewers and listeners, but do nothing to create a feeling of calmness and well-being on the part of the public who are impacted by the incident.

To ensure readiness to activate, OES and support agencies will confirm the following before the onset of an incident:

- Action checklists and job aids needed by assigned personnel are developed and available for use.

- Personnel rosters necessary for the PIO Team will be up-to-date and accessible.

- Agencies will ensure that personnel designated for PIO have received essential and required training and, if able, are appropriately credentialed and certified under guidelines issued by NIMS/SEMS.

- Agencies will appoint a designated alternate PIO in the event the primary is unavailable.

- OES will develop and maintain a list of media contacts.

- Agencies should develop a public information program to educate the public regarding the effects of potential incidents in the area.

- Agencies will develop strategies to conduct a multi-agency/jurisdiction organized public information program during emergencies and incidents, including establishing a JIC.

- Agencies will provide evacuation information to the affected public.

- Agencies will have access to and maintain their social media platforms.

5.5 ACTIVATION

OES will activate this ESF whenever the known or anticipated effects of an event require its services and capabilities. The decision to utilize ESF-15 functions may be requested by the field IC and approved by the EOC Director, the Director of Emergency Services, or designated alternate.

Activation may be needed when one or more of the following has occurred or is expected:

- Significant damage to the jurisdiction's infrastructure has occurred or will occur

- A large-scale evacuation is required.

- Public safety and security mutual aid resources from the County and surrounding jurisdictions may be necessary to support emergency operations within the OA

Once activated, designated personnel from the agency responsible for the incident will coordinate with ESF-15 from its position in the EOC, where adequate communications and data management systems are available.

5.6 RESPONSE OPERATIONS

Operations conducted during an incident are necessary to protect people, provide services to those harmed, and/or mitigate further property or environmental damage, if feasible. Response operations for public information are considered in two phases: (1) initial actions for the period when the PIO is first activated and (2) continuing activities that are implemented during each EOC operational period until the ESF is demobilized. In all cases, the operations are general guidelines for action and may be modified, as needed, to adjust to the particular circumstances of the situation. Additional information can be found in the Alert and Warning Support Annex.

5.6.1 Public Information Coordination

Dependent upon the threat and time availability, the PIO, with IC or EOC Manager, determine the need to initiate alerts and warnings utilizing a variety of communication methods. As in any incident, the effectiveness of notifications will be reliant upon many factors, including:

- Time availability

- The initial notice of a threat

- Time of day

- Language barriers
- Communication systems viability

Agencies or departments within the OA may have additional alerting systems. This ESF will utilize the following notification systems, platforms, and modes of communications at a minimum, to deliver critical messages to the internal and external stakeholders:

- Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)
    - Emergency Alert System (EAS)
    - Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)
- San Joaquin County 2-1-1
- Social Media

- Sirens
- Door-to-Door
- Loudspeakers
- Electronic Message Signs
- Town Halls/Public Meetings
- Sign Boards/Trap Lines
- Press Releases

IPAWS

FEMA's IPAWS is an Internet-based capability that alerting authorities can use to issue critical public alerts and warnings. Alerting authorities can use IPAWS and integrate local systems that use Common Alerting Protocol standards with the IPAWS infrastructure. IPAWS provides public safety officials with an effective way to alert and warn the public about serious emergencies using EAS, WEA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, and other public alerting systems from a single interface. OES staff can send alert messages remotely as deemed necessary by partner agencies.

San Joaquin County 2-1-1

San Joaquin County 2-1-1 (SJ211) is a collaborative effort of health and human service providers, state legislators, local government representatives, and county residents. Its purpose is to make it easy for the people of the County to find the help they need when they need it. They have databases of agencies that offer programs and services within the County. Resources may be found by accessing their webpage at www.211sj.org or by dialing 2-1-1. Call specialists are available 24/7; 365 days a year and can provide information in 170 languages. When events in the County require information to be shared with the community or to field questions from the community, SJ211 is often called upon to assist in fielding questions. 211 staff are provided fact sheets and information to help citizens get the answers they seek.

Social Media

Social media is a critical piece of the alert and warning strategy due to its extensive use by every jurisdiction within the OA. Several jurisdictions maintain multiple accounts on a variety of platforms and endeavor to ensure messages are consistent across all accounts. Posting guidelines for each administration are outlined in social media policies on file within each jurisdiction.

While social media can be a very effective way to supply alert and warning information, special consideration must be given to the messages being posted on each system. Factors such as character limits, type of message, and following on each platform should be taken into consideration when identifying notification strategies and designing messages for an incident. Postings to social media should link back to a jurisdictional website for detailed information.

Door-to-Door

In incidents that are fast-moving (such as fires), local public safety professionals may need issue notifications by going door-to-door. Public safety officials will be identified to members of the public by uniforms issued from their agency. Due to its labor intensity and time-consuming involvement, this is generally conducted in small areas with urgent action requirements for the public. Policies and procedures for in-person notifications are handled through local law enforcement or the Sheriff's Department.

Loudspeakers/Sirens

Public safety officials may communicate with the public through audible sirens and loudspeakers. In some cases, vehicles with loudspeakers may be used to relay information to neighborhoods. Another common form of notification can be a siren with an audible tone.

Loudspeakers and Public Address Systems can be useful tools as well. Built-in audio announcement systems exist in many buildings and outdoor venues and may be deployed on both law enforcement and fire vehicles. Depending on the information, long detailed messages can become intelligible and complex in acoustic environments, so care must be taken to ensure messages can be heard and understood in their entirety.

5.6.2   Diverse Populations

Gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, transitory or recently arrived status, familial relationships, past experiences, environmental and social factors, access and functional needs, language, literacy, ability, remoteness or isolation, access to technology, and others can all affect how people interpret and subsequently respond to information. Different populations have varying levels of access to various communication pathways. The use of multi-modal technologies, both modern and traditional, are necessary to reach people with differing levels of access.

5.7   JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

In any incident, the PIO function may be conducted from a Joint Information Center (JIC) that may include other non-County organizations. These may include but are not limited to cities, special districts, mutual aid, state and federal representatives, AFN stakeholder groups, utilities, business, and non-governmental organizations. The purpose of the JIC is not to control the activities of other departments but provide a forum for sharing information among all agencies. The JIC serves as a central point for the media to get information.

The County JIC Plan is a collection of guidelines, checklists, and job aids that detail activation, operation, and demobilization. These procedures are designed to expand or contract as needed to fit the type of incident. These processes also may incorporate a virtual JIC involving a city, county, state, federal, school, healthcare, private sector, and non-governmental organizations. A JIC can be established with or without the activation of the EOC.

A virtual JIC may be initiated when geographical restrictions, incident management requirements, or other limitations preclude physical attendance by PIOs at a central location. Through telephone or videoconference, personnel participating in the virtual JIC can meet and coordinate information. The following resources are currently maintained:

- Laptop computers
- WebEOC
- Skype account
- Blue Jeans account (OES/Public Health Services)

- YouTube account (OES)

- Dropbox & Google Drive accounts

- Facebook & Twitter accounts

- Editing rights for the County Inter- and Intranet sites

6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 PRIMARY AGENCY- SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY OES

The PIO is the primary point of contact between the EOC, the media, and the public. The PIO prepares information releases, manages social media, briefs media representatives, provides venue and support for press conferences, oversees rumor control, and ensures accurate information is provided. The PIO serves as a member of the Management Staff and reports directly to the EOC Director. Assistant PIOs may be assigned as needed to represent other departments, agencies, or jurisdictions, or to handle specific public information support functions. The PIO will coordinate the release of incident-related information among participating agencies.

The PIO responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the public within the affected area receives complete, accurate, and timely information.

- Coordinating media releases among affected emergency response agencies as required.

- Activating the JIC, as necessary, to support incident operations.

- Notifying all affected jurisdictions and stakeholders of operational and situational conditions and ensure regular status updates.

- Establishing an "Incident Hotline" with up-to-date information, including SJ211.

- Ensuring all rumors are responded to promptly and with correct information.

- Developing a format for press conferences.

- Developing and maintaining a list of media contacts and PIOs.

- Posting information on the County's Intranet site specifically for County employees.

- Updating appropriate WebEOC Boards for situational awareness, press releases, etc.

- Authoring IPAWS messages when necessary.

- Informing high-risk populations of response activities they should engage in and will encounter during and following an incident.

- Coordinating with ESF-02 (Communications) to utilize accessible alert systems.

- Developing public messaging in multiple formats and languages.

- Coordinating responsibilities with supporting agencies such as non-governmental partners (e.g., the business community, faith-based communities).

- Participating in all-hazards planning, training, and exercises, including preparation of department staff for incident assignments.

6.2 SUPPORTING AGENCIES

6.2.1 Other Agency/Department PIO's

The County PIO Team consists of trained staff from other County departments and OA agencies. It is the responsibility of the department/agency PIO to keep their department and the EOC PIO informed of any activities related to the ongoing incident. It is the responsibility of

County departments to ensure that their PIO's are trained to use the County's WebEOC to access information relating to an incident. They should coordinate with the OA and other jurisdictions when appropriate. Additionally, cities are requested to use WebEOC to report any significant media concerns. News releases can be placed on a WebEOC board for transmittal to the EOC/PIO, when appropriate.

If the JIC has been activated, all County Departments are requested to report significant media concerns to their PIO for communication with the JIC/EOC. Responses to all media inquiries relating to the incident must be coordinated with the JIC so that it can be recorded in a log maintained by the PIO. When working in the JIC, jurisdictions, and agencies are responsible for Public Information as it relates to their operations and geographical boundaries.

6.2.2   Information Security Department (ISD)

ISD will assist with ensuring connections to valuable communications platforms, updating websites, equipment procurement, and provides additional technical support as needed.

6.2.3   Access and Functional Needs Specialists

AFN TechSpec's may be assigned to the Management Section at the EOC. The technical specialist will work closely with the PIO/JIC, ensuring the information and tools are used to meet AFN standards and requirements. Interpreters will first be utilized from the established bi-lingual supplemented staff within the County. An American Sign Language interpreter will be utilized for all press conferences and video posts. If no certified interpreter is available within the County, Logistics may request assistance through Cal OES. When no interpreter is available, captions or a transcript should be utilized.

7 INFORMATION COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND DISSEMINATION

The primary function of ESF-15 will be to provide information to the public involving incidents to persons or property at risk because of a significant incident or potential disaster and to provide timely information in support of response and recovery. As a result, ESF-15 must work closely with numerous other ESFs to establish an active process of communication and information collection.

A primary source of information for the Public Information function will be from the Situation Unit in the Planning Section. While not all information may be appropriate for the public, the information should be considered as the best available and will have been verified for accuracy.

Other sources of information are social media monitoring, traditional news monitoring, and calls for information from the public. All information will be vetted for accuracy and approved by the EOC Director before being distributed to the public. Public Information will be disseminated utilizing the platforms previously mentioned, as well as any other means necessary during an activation.

8 ADMINISTRATION, FINANCE, LOGISTICS

8.1 RESOURCE PROCUREMENT

This section describes how the ESF will procure or obtain the resources that may be required for implementation. Resources, as a general term, encompasses the personnel, equipment, systems, supplies, and highly specialized services that may be needed for ESF implementation.

- The primary agency representative will have information readily available regarding the categories or types of resources relevant to ESF operations to facilitate requesting additional resources.

- In all cases, the primary agency will provide continuing representation in the EOC.

- The ESF coordinator will be responsible for the process of procurement authorization established by ESF-07 Resources.

8.2 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- The Finance Section Chief is responsible for managing financial matters related to resources used during an incident. During a response, each agency/department is responsible for recording and tracking its expenses and seeking reimbursement from the appropriate resource after the event.

- For reporting purposes, support entities will document their expenditures and submit them directly to the Finance and Administration group

9 PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

The development and maintenance of this ESF plan will be consistent with the guidelines established in the EOP.

10 AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

The authorities and references documented in the basic plan of the San Joaquin County EOP are considered applicable to this ESF; in addition, the following are also relevant to this function:

- San Joaquin County JIS Plan.

- Staff working under this ESF should also consider California Penal Code (PC) 409.5(d), which allows duly authorized members of the media to enter other areas closed according to this section.

- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ensures members of the public with disabilities receive comparable access to publicly available information and services.

- ADA Title II requires public entities to include individuals with disabilities the opportunity to participate in the full and equal enjoyment of the services, programs, benefits, or activities of a public entity.

- The California Emergency Services Act (California Government Code 8593.3) - emergency managers required proactively to identify the needs of the AFN community and integrate needs into emergency management documents.