EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION 15

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

APPENDIX J: JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

PRIMARY AGENCY: Kittitas County Emergency Management

SUPPORT AGENCIES: Kittitas County PIOs
                            Municipalities PIOs
                            Kittitas Valley Hospital PIOs
                            Fire District PIOs
                            Central Washington University PIOs

I.   INTRODUCTION

Purpose

1. To ensure that sufficient assets are mobilized during emergencies or disasters to provide accurate, coordinated and timely information to impacted communities and effected population, first responders, governments, media, tribes, and private sectors, including those with alternate communication needs (e.g. limited English proficiency and deaf and hard of hearing).

2. To provide resource support and mechanisms to implement the Kittitas County Joint Information Center (JIC) Plan (attached) and supplementing first responder public information officers' operations with JIC resources.

Scope

1. The emergency public information system provides for coordination of information released to the news media and the public in time of crisis. This system is a multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency process and affects all responding organizations.

2. The context of this ESF is emergency or disaster situations that exhausts or nearly exhausts the capacity of county first responder public affairs/information operations or when support is requested. These incidents are typically complex in nature or extend beyond one operational period.

II.   POLICIES

Kittitas County government recognizes the importance of providing vital health and safety information to affected populations. Kittitas County Emergency Management will do everything possible to ensure that the information is consistent, accurate, complete, and promptly delivered

using communication methods that will disseminate the information as widely as possible to affected populations and the public, including those with alternate communication needs.

Kittitas County is committed to communicating with the whole community during emergency response and disaster recovery operations. The whole community includes populations with limited English proficiency (LEP), and individuals with disabilities and access and functional needs.

Each jurisdiction or agency defines how their Information Officer is appointed and the scope of that person's duties. The Joint Information Center (JIC) concept will be used in the event of a multi-jurisdictional event.

III.   SITUATION

Emergency/Disaster Conditions and Hazards

1. Any emergency or disaster has the potential to adversely impact the county's ability to provide health and safety information to residents and communicate with necessary first responders, governments, media, volunteer organizations, and private sector.

2. Reference the Kittitas County Hazard Identification and Vulnerability Assessment (HIVA) for detailed information on the hazards that have the potential to impact Kittitas County.

3. People with access and functional needs are not able to access (e.g. hearing or visual impairment) or understand (e.g. cognitive impairment or limited English speaking) conventional warning systems (e.g. Emergency Alert Systems) advising them of the need to evacuate during a short-notice event.

4. Following an incident, such as an earthquake, in which buildings are intact but may have sustained damage, people with access and functional needs and/or their caregivers may not want to stay at a disaster shelter due to the unfamiliar and often hectic environment.

Planning Assumptions

1. Disruption and damage to the telecommunications infrastructure will likely occur in the event of an emergency or disaster. The type and degree of damage will determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the response and recovery efforts.

2. Any undamaged communications infrastructure will be overwhelmed and may cease to function.

3. Health and safety information will be disseminated as soon as possible by whatever means available.

4. Requested telecommunications resources may not be available or may be delayed for a substantial period of time.

5. All public information officers will endeavor to keep all stakeholders adequately informed with clear, accurate, and complete reports of changing situations as soon as possible, including those with alternate communication needs.

6. Public messaging before, during and after the incident will be in a variety of formats and languages and are made accessible to those with alternate communications needs.

7. Public messaging will include specific information as to what people with access and functional needs should do in an evacuation and/or sheltering situation that is different from the actions recommended to the general population.

8. Public messaging for people with access and functional needs, including those with alternate communication needs, will also focus on community gathering points such as schools, ethnic grocery stores, ethnic media outlets, churches, community centers, advocacy groups and support agencies.

IV.   CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

The Kittitas County EOC is responsible for the establishing and maintaining the Kittitas County JIC when appropriate.

The Kittitas County EOC public information officer will coordinate activities and information. The PIO will:

1. Establish a joint information center (JIC) when appropriate.

2. Prepare information for release to the media and the public.

3. Obtain approval for all releases from the incident commander (IC).

4. Coordinate all news media activities associated with the incident.

5. Coordinate the public information and rumor-control process.

6. Monitor news media and social media coverage of the incident.

Kittitas County Sheriff's will utilize Everbridge to send out EAS messages when needed.

Statewide warning fan-out will be received by the Kittitas County warning point at the Kittitas County 9-1-1 communication center via NAWAS or NLETS. Upon receipt of warning or test information, the

Kittitas County Sheriff's Office will fan out all warning information via the state law enforcement teletype system (ACCESS), telephone, and voice radio, as provided in its emergency SOPs.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

Primary Agency

Kittitas County Emergency Management:

a. In the event of any national, state, or local incident requiring warning dissemination, the Kittitas County Sheriff's Office or the initial agency contacted will alert the Kittitas County Emergency Management ranking designee. The Kittitas County Emergency Management ranking designee will activate the warning procedures, as necessary.

b. Disseminate warnings to the general public by all means available, including the Emergency Alerting System (EAS), NOAA Weather Radio (NWR), helicopter, door to door, media, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, sirens, voice radio, or any other workable method.

c. Authorize EAS alerts through KITTCOM when necessary.

d. Activate a JIC as necessary to support emergency operations.

e. Notify all affected jurisdictions and stakeholders of operational and situational conditions and provide frequent and regular status updates.

f. Develop public messaging in multiple formats and languages.

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

h. Conduct outreach programs to the Limited English Proficiency population in Kittitas County to educate them on how to receive emergency notifications. This includes but not limited to outreach to businesses, churches, and schools.

Supporting Agencies

Kittitas County PIOs, Municipalities PIOs, Kittitas Valley Hospital PIOs, Fire District PIOs, Central Washington University PIOs

a. Affected agency PIOs will coordinate public affairs/information messages and operations with the Kittitas County JIC.

b. Support the Kittitas County JIC by suppling PIOs resources, logistic support, and translation support.

c. Coordinate and disseminate consistent, accurate, complete, and prompt emergency communication to the affected population, general public including those with alternate communication needs.

Develop public messaging in multiple formats and languages.

VI.   RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Situation dependent.

VII.   REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING PLANS

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Presidential Executive Order 13166
- Presidential Executive Order 13347
- Title II, III & V Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- RCW 38.52.010 & 38.52.070

VIII.   TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

ANNEX A: Definitions and Acronyms

APPENDIX J

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER (JIC)

In large events, or when more than one jurisdiction is affected by an emergency, a joint information center (JIC) may be established to coordinate the release of information. The designated information officers will equally and cooperatively staff and operate the JIC.

The JIC can be set up anywhere that can support the phone, Amateur Radio and internet/computer infrastructure. The JIC will work directly with the Kittitas County EOC PIO and Command staff to assure messaging is correct.

When working with outside agencies such as a Wildland Fire Type I or II team, or other outside agencies, the JIC will follow the information loop check off before publishing any information. This means that both entities, the Kittitas County EOC and the outside agencies, have checked the information for accuracy and have given the appropriate approval before publishing.

COOPERATION WITH THE JIC

1. Kittitas County Emergency Management is responsible for the activation, hardware and maintenance of the JIC operations.
2. All agencies and organizations involved in emergency response and recovery will contribute their designated information personnel to the JIC to ensure accurate information regarding their individual operation is released to the media. All response and recovery agencies are required to fully cooperate with the JIC possible regarding the release of any information involving the incident. Each participating agency will assist in providing current information to the PIO/JIC.
3. The primary goal of the JIC is to coordinate and disseminate consistent, accurate, complete, and prompt emergency communication to the affected population, public including those with alternate communication needs.

REACHING SPECIAL POPULATIONS

1. Technical support from state and federal organizations for disseminating warnings and information to people who have impaired hearing or vision is limited. Locally, emergency management officials will address what special needs individuals should do to prepare for emergencies, including receiving warnings.
2. Kittitas County EOC JIC will translate all emergency notifications into Spanish or other Limited English Proficiency population as deemed necessary.
3. The attempt to reach all special needs populations with different methods and platforms, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, public sandwich board postings, TV, and radio.

RUMOR CONTROL

1. Rumor control and disinformation is critical to stop as soon as possible and relay the proper information to news outlets and social media. The JIC will be responsible for monitoring the news and social media sites to make sure the proper information is being relayed to the public.