

# **Emergency Support Function #15**

## **External Affairs Annex**

**ESF Coordinator:**

Eagle River Fire Protection District

**Support Agencies:**

Eagle County Public Information Officer's  
("PIO") Group

**Primary Agencies:**

Jurisdiction Public Information Officer(s)

### **Purpose**

The purpose of public information is to establish uniform policies for the effective development, coordination, and dissemination of information to the public in the event of a disaster. These policies and procedures are located in the Eagle County Joint Information Center/Joint Information System ("JIC/JIS") Plan (Appendix U).

Emergency Support Function (ESF) #15 coordinates local actions to provide the required external affairs support to local incident management elements.

ESF #15 details the establishment of support positions to coordinate communications to various audiences. The Eagle County JIC is a physical location where public affairs professionals from organizations involved in incident management activities can work together to provide critical emergency information, crisis communications, and public affairs support.

The Eagle County JIC serves as a focal point for the coordination and dissemination of information to the public and media concerning incident prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. The Eagle County JIC structure is designed to work equally well for large or small situations and can expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident. The Eagle County PIO Group will be responsible for staffing and managing the JIC.

### **Scope**

ESF #15 applies to all local departments and agencies that may require public affairs support or whose public affairs assets may be employed during a disaster.

ESF #15 is required during any response or other event where significant interagency coordination is required and when the Eagle County Emergency Operations Center ("EOC") has been activated.

ESF #15 provides the resources and structure for the implementation of the Eagle County Emergency Operations Plan ("EOP"). Incident communications actions contained in the EOP are consistent with the National Incident Management System.

Under the Incident Command System ("ICS")/Unified Command System ("UCS"), the JIC is led by the PIO whose jurisdiction has authority for the incident. The PIO has three primary responsibilities:

1. To gather incident data. This involves understanding how an ICS/UCS operates and developing an effective method for obtaining up to date information from appropriate ICS/UCS sections.

2. To analyze public perceptions for each incident of the response. This involves employing techniques for obtaining community feedback to provide response agencies with insight into community information needs, their expectations for the role to be played by the response agencies, and the lessons to be learned from specific response efforts.
3. To inform the public. That is, to serve as the source of accurate and comprehensive information about the incident and the response to a specific set of audiences.

When multiple public and/or private agencies and organizations come together to respond to an emergency or manage an event, efficient information flow is critical to carrying out these PIO responsibilities and meeting the expectations of various entities. The Eagle County JIC is a centralized “communication hub” that serves to achieve that information flow.

PIOs will represent their own agency and speak about their agency’s involvement in response and recovery operations in an event. The Colorado Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management PIO will be a central point of contact for the State and should be kept informed, utilizing WebEOC whenever possible, about all participating agency news and information releases throughout the response and recovery operations.

### **Initial Actions**

The Eagle County Emergency Management Director or designee will make the initial decision to activate the JIC during a large scale emergency or disaster affecting Eagle County. The JIC will be located in close proximity to the EOC.

Once a JIC has been established, the information officers will follow the Eagle County JIC/JIS Plan.

If activated to support incident information management, a request may come from the Incident Commander, or the PIO assigned to the incident.

The request is made to the Vail Public Safety Communications Center (VPSCC) to notify the PIO Group using the group located in the RoamSecure ® system.

Upon notification, VPSCC will inform the available PIO’s where to respond and to whom they should report to upon arrival. PIO’s should reply to the PSN message with their availability to respond to the request and give their expected time of arrival on scene.

The Lead PIO will be the PIO whose agency has statutory authority for the incident. If there are multiple agencies with jurisdictional authority, a unified approach should be utilized when possible.

Eagle County PIO Group may be activated to support ongoing information requirements of a specific jurisdiction during any incident as needed or may be activated to staff the JIC during any large scale incident.