

## ANNEX D - EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION (ESF# 15)

### I. PURPOSE

This annex provides for the development and distribution of coordinated Emergency Public Information through official representatives in order to protect the citizens of Shelby County from hazards that may affect the community. It also supports primary emergency response organizations by providing a structured way to communicate with the public, and thus facilitates a more effective response to hazards.

### II. MISSION AREAS AND LIFELINES

#### A. Mission Areas

1. Response: Shelby County will lead efforts to coordinate and deliver actionable, culturally and linguistically appropriate, timely information to the public that conveys situational assessment, protective actions, and other directives. They will maintain constant communication with the public as the incident progresses and eventually demobilizes and closes.
2. Recovery: As the community recovers from a large incident, Shelby County will ensure that residents and businesses are given continual accurate information about resources, assistance, and other recovery programs that will help them.

#### B. Lifelines

##### 1. Communications

- a. Shelby County will deliver messages to the public through a variety of methods, to include mass media, social media, and press conferences at a minimum.
- b. Shelby County will provide information on appropriate web sites, social media pages, and other digital resources as those are available for use.
- c. Shelby County will use local warning systems, IPAWS, NAWAS terminals, and other warning systems to disseminate information quickly and accurately.
- d. Shelby County will make sure that public information is available at reasonable hours and times, and not just during the work day when a disaster response operation is open for extended periods of operation.

### III. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

#### A. Situation

1. There is one daily newspaper (The Sidney Daily News) in Shelby County. There are also several regional weekly publications that will provide public information support during long-term events.
2. There is one radio station (WMVR) and several cable-television companies in the county that will provide information and instructions to the public during emergencies.
3. Shelby County maintains Emergency Alert System (EAS) equipment that can be used to disseminate emergency information to the public over radio and television stations in this area. The participation of these stations is on a strictly voluntary basis. The EAS is regulated by the "2018 OHIO EAS PLAN" and it will be used by Shelby County only when life safety is at stake.
4. The Shelby County EMA appoints a county Public Information Officer (PIO) to coordinate the release of information to the public during emergencies. The use of a single point of contact

for releasing emergency public information, providing status updates about an incident, and answering calls from media will ensure consistent and accurate communication with the public.

5. The county PIO is supported by the Crisis Communications Team, comprised of representatives from various agencies who work together in the PIO section of the EOC coordinating public information releases.
6. A Joint Information Center (JIC) will be established as needed and/or during major events. This will be the central location used to provide briefings to all media representatives, and develop coordinated releases of public information among involved agencies.

#### B. Assumptions

1. News media resources in the county will provide emergency instructions to residents.
2. It will be necessary to provide continuous public information about an emergency or disaster. The county PIO will coordinate this function which will be accomplished through the use of media briefings, press releases, interviews for broadcasts or newspaper articles, and whatever other means are necessary.
3. Rumor control procedures directed by the county PIO will prevent incorrect information from affecting emergency response activities.

### IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

#### A. Core Capabilities

1. Planning
  - a. Shelby County response departments and agencies will plan together to jointly collect information, develop messages, and disseminate all critical information to the public from parties involved in a response.
  - b. All departments and agencies will jointly develop personnel to complete public information officer tasks in a manner that meets the needs of all of them.
  - c. All departments and agencies will address the development of messages that are linguistically appropriate and that meet the special needs of English and non-English speaking populations, persons with sensory needs, and others who require special procedures to effectively receive emergency communication.
2. Public Information & Warning
  - a. The Shelby County EMA will evaluate and modify, as needed, the warning and notification systems in place to relay critical life-saving information in a timely manner.
  - b. The EMA will ensure that warning and notification systems are able to be received by all populations in Shelby County through development of linguistically and culturally appropriate messages and methods of transmitting the message.
  - c. Shelby County EMA will conduct public awareness campaigns to ensure the residents of the county know how to receive emergency messages from warning and notification systems.
  - d. Shelby County EMA and its response partners will develop a system of messaging that effectively warns the community of imminent dangers and provides actionable directives to preserve lives and property.

3. Operational Coordination

- a. Shelby County EMA will facilitate and promote coordination of public information release by response organizations in a unified and consistent manner during emergencies. A single source of public information for the public with actionable directives and accurate information will result in improved compliance and more effective response plan execution.

B. Public Information Structure

1. Shelby County will manage emergency public information using a ~~county~~ Public Information Officer (PIO) in coordination with organizational public information officers, and where appropriate, through the use of a Joint Information Center (JIC). Information about what to do in an emergency and what protective actions the public should take can be found at [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).
2. Day-to-Day Operations
  - a. During day-to-day responses and routine situations, emergency public information will initiate from the responding agency or the Sheriff's Office.
  - b. The Incident Commander may request support from the county PIO as needed. This should be done by contacting the EMA Director or the EOC.
3. Declared Emergencies or EOC Activations
  - a. Upon activation of the county EOC, or when a local/county declaration has been made, all emergency public information and news releases will be coordinated by the officially designated Public Information Officer (PIO).
    - 1) Some organizations in Shelby County have assigned a PIO to manage their releases of information.
      - a) The organizational PIOs will continue to present information about their specific activities; however, ALL public information and news releases will be coordinated, reviewed, and approved by the Shelby County PIO and EMA Director/EOC Manager prior to release to ensure that the messages are consistent and unified.
    - b. While the county PIO may spend time in the field, the PIO will be based in the EOC and will work closely with the Public Information Section, the EOC Manager, and EMA Director.

C. Rumor Control

1. The county PIO and organizational PIOs should monitor radio and/or television broadcasts and social media sites to detect rumors and incorrect information.
  - a. When false or misleading information is detected, the county PIO shall be notified immediately. Calls about inaccurate information should be referred to the Shelby County PIO or the Public Information Section...
  - b. The county PIO will verify correct information, contact the specific media outlet(s) involved to provide accurate information, and release the accurate information to all media.
  - c. The county PIO may post accurate information on social media using the Shelby County EMA or other specifically approved accounts, sites, or pages.
  - d. If state or federal entities notify the county that they have identified inaccurate or misleading information, they should be referred to the county PIO.

2. Organizations with response and recovery responsibilities will report rumors concerning the emergency to the county PIO who will investigate and confirm the validity of the information and release correct information to the public.
3. Rumor control hotline numbers may also be established in the Shelby County EOC and/or the JIC so the public can obtain immediate assistance concerning rumors.

## V. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. Organization

1. The county PIO is to be appointed to the post by the Emergency Management Agency Director with approval from the Policy Group Committee.
  - a. The county PIO is the designated spokesperson for Shelby County during declared emergencies or when the EOC is activated.
  - b. This person will serve as the coordinating point for all releases of information during a declared emergency or when the EOC is activated.

### B. Assignment of Responsibilities

1. Shelby County EMA Director
  - a. Appoint the county PIO.
  - b. Review and approve information prepared by the county PIO.
  - c. Develop agreements for emergency public information support.
  - d. Participate in briefings and interviews, as needed.
2. County PIO and Public Information Section.
  - a. Maintain working relationships with the local media.
  - b. Coordinate with appropriate officials and EOC representatives to collect and prepare emergency public information.
  - c. Review all public information with EMA Director/EOC Manager before release.
  - d. Prepare news releases and schedule, prepare for, and present media briefings.
  - e. Make arrangements for executive and response personnel to speak on television and radio and provide interviews to print media outlets.
  - f. Determine, in cooperation with the EMA Director, the need to open a JIC.
    - 1) Function as the Manager of the activated Joint Information Center.
  - g. Provide for rumor control.
  - h. Designate personnel and dedicate phone lines to handle inquiries from the public. Make arrangements to keep these personnel up-to-date on the disaster situation through briefings, fact sheets and news releases.
    - 1) Refer inquiries about injured or missing relatives to the Red Cross representative in the EOC.
  - i. Prepare public information and instructions including but not limited to (per incident):
    - 1) Evacuation, including a definition for the population at risk, evacuation routes, types and quantities of items that evacuees should take with them, locations of reception centers/shelters, and safe travel routes for return. (See Annex J, Population Protective Actions, for further information)

- 2) Prepare instruction that identifies centrally located staging areas and pick-up points, as determined by Incident Command and/or officials in the EOC, for evacuees without private automobiles or other means of transportation.
  - 3) Prepare and disseminate materials for the visually impaired and non-English speaking groups, if appropriate.
3. Organizational PIO
    - a. Prepare draft press releases for organizational information concerning the incident.
    - b. Review the releases with the county PIO to maintain a consistent message.
    - c. Disseminate information after making necessary revisions, in cooperation with the county PIO.
    - d. Relocate to the Joint Information Center, when activated.
  4. EOC representatives
    - a. Cooperate in the public education process.
    - b. Verify reports received from the field, to the extent possible.
    - c. Assist the PIO in preparing press releases and emergency public information.
    - d. Information Technology Personnel
      - 1) Assist the county PIO by providing telephones/fax equipment for the media at the EOC and/or JIC.

## **VI. DIRECTION AND CONTROL**

### **A. Day-to-Day Operations**

1. Organizational PIOs will manage and disseminate public information, as needed, for daily operations.
2. Many agencies conduct public education activities throughout the year.
3. Emergency public information will initiate from the responding agency or the Sheriff's Office at the onset of an emergency.

### **B. On-Scene Public Information**

1. During some incidents it may be necessary to establish media centers on-scene to control access to the scene, the responders, and the victims.
2. If on-scene media centers are necessary and the EOC is not activated, the Incident Commander may request assistance of the county PIO by contacting the EMA Director.

### **C. Declared Events or Activated EOC**

1. Upon activation of the Shelby County EOC, or a local declaration of emergency, all public information activities are requested to be coordinated by the county PIO.
2. If the situation warrants, a Joint Information Center will be established to coordinate the release of emergency public information and provide updates on the situation to the public and the media.

**D. Joint Information Center (JIC)**

1. During major emergencies a Joint Information Center (JIC) will be established to handle public information needs on a larger scale than could be effectively managed by a single agency.
  - a. A JIC is a group of communications representatives from agencies and organizations located together and providing public information about a significant, large-scale event.
2. The JIC ICS structure is designed to work for large or medium-sized situations and can expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident.
  - 1) Dissemination of public information will be made from the JIC via news conferences, interviews, and issuing of news releases.
  - 2) This will serve as the single official point of contact for release of information when it is activated.
3. All organizations involved in emergency response and recovery and having requirements to release information to media will cooperate with JIC procedures set up by the Shelby county PIO.
4. The Shelby county PIO manages the activities at the JIC in coordination with the EMA Director or EOC Manager in the EOC, and the Incident Command Staff at the site of the emergency.

**VII. CONTINUITY OF GOVERNMENT**

**A. The line of succession for the County PIO is as follows:**

1. County PIO
2. In the absence of the designated county PIO, a substitute or replacement will be selected by the EMA Director.

**B. Refer to Appendix 2, Public Awareness Program - Continuity of Government, to this annex.?**

**C. Also refer to Appendix 3, Procedures for the Relocation & Safeguarding of Vital Records in the Basic Plan and Appendix 1, Procedures for the Protection of Government Resources, Facilities, and Personnel in Annex N, Resource Management.**

**VIII. ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS**

**A. Public Education Programs**

1. The response and support agencies (fire departments, law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, Shelby County Health Department, Wilson Health Memorial Hospital, Miami Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross, and Shelby County EMA) provide classes, speakers, public meetings, school presentations, and seasonal-storm pamphlets as the means of delivering emergency preparedness information to the public.

**B. Emergency Public Information**

1. Timely dissemination is essential.
2. Copies of all press releases will be maintained on file at the EMA office.
3. When the EOC is activated, the county PIO/ Public Information Section will record all media contacts made, press releases issued, and any other major PIO functions accomplished

during that shift. This information will be available to the EMA Director and the PIO coming on-duty at the end of the shift.

4. At shift changes the incoming PIO will be briefed on activities and needs for the next shift.
5. PIOs from State, Federal and private sector organizations will coordinate information for release to the public. Such information includes but is not limited to health risks related to the hazard, type and availability of assistance, geographic, geological, meteorological and demographic information related to population protection.

**IX. PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE**

- A. The county PIO in cooperation with the county Emergency Management Director is responsible for updating this annex based on deficiencies identified through drills and exercises and changes in government structure and emergency organizations.
- B. The county Emergency Management Director will prepare, coordinate, publish and distribute necessary changes and revisions to this annex.
- C. The county PIO will coordinate with JIC representatives (industry representatives, media representatives, response organizations, appropriate state and federal organizations and private organizations) for the development of Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) that detail assigned responsibilities.

**X. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES**

- A. Authorities
  1. Not used, please refer to the Basic Plan.
- B. References
  1. Joint Information System Handbook, EMI 1988
  2. Joint Information Center, Standard Operating Guidelines

**XI. ADDENDA**

- A. None

**XII. AUTHENTICATION**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Shelby County Public Information Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Shelby County EMA Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date