

## PUBLIC INFORMATION PLAN

### I. PUBLIC INFORMATION

Public Information consists of the generation of timely news releases in cooperation with state, federal and local governments before, during and after emergency operations, reports issued to the public through the news media, State Emergency Alert System (EAS) and 24-hour radio, telephone and internet-based methods regarding **prevention**, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery in a joint effort to avoid or minimize loss of life and property if a disaster is anticipated or has occurred. Additionally, public information efforts should coordinate the printing of publications and flyers as appropriate for internal and external public information programs.

### II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance on procedures to disseminate and respond to requests for pre-disaster, disaster and post-disaster information. The intent of this document is to provide a program using existing communications facilities and news media outlets to inform the public of emergency preparedness and response in the event of a natural, man-made or terrorist-related disasters; to assure the populace that appropriate federal, state and local governments are taking all necessary precautions and responsive measures to protect and preserve life and property; to review relief plans promulgated by state and local governments and following consultation with each; and advise citizens of restrictions and limitations imposed upon them during disaster situations.

### III. SCOPE

The East Baton Rouge Parish **Mayor's** Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (**MOHSEP** ~~EBR-OHSEP~~) Public Information Office primary mission shall be to inform and educate the public about hazards, threats to public safety, and risk reduction through various media (print, internet, broadcast). The PIO shall be capable of providing timely and effective information to protect public health and safety, with procedures in place and tested to support a joint information system and pre-designated center. Essential in this process will be the establishment of protocols to interface with the media, legislative interests and other VIPs. Concentration shall be upon providing timely and effective information to protect public health and safety. Finally, procedures shall include a process for obtaining and disseminating public information materials.

Regional services and assistance provided under this function shall include the delineation of responsibilities and actions to be taken in order to provide the general public with essential information and the documents of emergency actions and operations implemented or proposed by written, verbal or photographic means. This information provided before, during and after a disaster/emergency shall provide clear, concise and accurate information on the existing situation in the disaster area, actions being taken by the authorities and those to be taken by the populace. Every effort shall be made to minimize and counter rumors, hearsay and half-truth information.

#### IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The Mayor or the Public Information Officer (PIO) for the city releases all Emergency Public Information, (EPI) provided by the ~~EBR~~ MOHSEP Director about local operations and assistance during a disaster. Upon direction of the Mayor or PIO for the city, this function may pass to the ~~EBR~~ MOHSEP Director or the ~~EBR~~ MOHSEP Public Information Officer.
- B. In order to maintain and support a unified and coordinated public message, all media inquiries must be routed through either the Assistant Director or Chief of Operations. Based upon the nature and scope of the request, respective Deputies will subsequently refer inquires to the ~~EBR~~ MOHSEP Director.
- C. ~~The~~ Mayor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (~~EBR~~ MOHSEP):
- \_\_\_\_(1) Coordinates or reviews appropriate Emergency Preparedness Information (EPI) releases from local, state or Federal agencies.
  - \_\_\_\_(2) Advises the Mayor-President with status reports and information for news releases, accepts this responsibility when delegated, submits all news releases to the PIO for City/Parish for approval before release to the media.
  - \_\_\_\_(3) Coordinates the release of emergency public information with other agencies of the local, state and federal government. Actions will include dissemination and response to requests from the public for:
    - Pre-disaster Information
    - Disaster Information
    - Post-disaster Information
  - \_\_\_\_(4) Maintains a close working relationship with all regional media sources and maintains a current list of same for releases. The ~~EBR~~ MOHSEP PIO provides information to and addresses requests from the media.
  - \_\_\_\_(5) Provides a rumor control reporting and check network.

- \_\_\_\_(6) Participates in a Joint Information Center (JIC), when appropriate.
- \_\_\_\_(7) Develops procedures for use of the parish's EAS Operational Plan.

D. State Government:  
~~State government has the responsibility for:~~

- \_\_\_\_(1) Designating an emergency public information coordinator for the chief elected officials of the jurisdiction.
- \_\_\_\_(2) Releasing emergency public information concerning warning, emergency instruction, response operations and assistance that is available.
- \_\_\_\_(3) Coordinating with local news media and, if appropriate, ~~LHSEP~~ **GOHSEP**, when releasing emergency public information.
- \_\_\_\_(4) Pursuing agreements with state broadcasting stations to utilize local radio and television capabilities for dissemination of emergency public information.

E. Federal Government

Information from Federal agency responders will come from the agencies and may be coordinated by DHS/FEMA. If federal assistance is required, the Primary Federal Officer, or his designated PIO, the State Coordinating Officer (SCO) will coordinate informational releases.

- \_\_\_\_(1) Establishes local information centers at the request of the ~~EBR~~ **MOHSEP** Director, as required, at the impact scene.
- \_\_\_\_(2) Receives, evaluates, and transmits information of media interest from Regional sources to the ~~LA-HLS&EP~~ **GOHSEP** Public Information Office.

## V. OPERATIONS

- A. Public information activities in an emergency or disaster situation will be directed and coordinated from the Parish EOC. If applicable, an on-scene press center may be established in addition to a press center in the Parish EOC. The on-scene public information personnel will coordinate and verify all facts before releasing any information. Similarly, the same information will be conveyed to the Parish EOC where the public information representative, after coordination with the appropriate authority will make release. Maximum use will be made of wire services, broadcast networks, City-Parish Departmental Public Information Officers, state, federal and local emergency management information personnel and photographers.

- B. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) shall be utilized through the joint cooperation of the Federal Communications Commission, the FEMA, the National Weather Service (NWS), the broadcast industry and local government. They will be considered part of the National EAS and will be activated ~~appropriately~~ according to established area, state and national EAS procedures.
- C. Pivotal to this plan is the establishment of and support for a Joint Information Center. This system will be put in practice via a Joint Information Center, or JIC. The JIC will consist of PIO representatives from key responding agencies (BRFD, BRCP, EBR SO, etc.). The site for this JIC has been designated as the Media Room of the ~~EBR~~ MOHSEP EOC. Tests of the JIC will be performed during exercises which will enable habitual relationships in instances of actual disasters/incidents.

## **VI. FEDERAL ASSISTANCE**

The regional emergency function, Information Management, corresponds to the Federal ESF #5, Information & Planning. The primary federal agency for this function is Federal Emergency Management Agency. Support agencies are: United States Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of Education, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Resources, Department of Interior, Department of Treasury, Environmental Protection Agency, General Services Administration, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Communications System and Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The American Red Cross also has a significant information-providing role.

## **VII. MEANS TO INFORM AND EDUCATE THE PUBLIC**

In the course of its mission, the ~~EBR~~ MOHSEP PIO should use every possible outlet available with which to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of available information. These means should include, but are not limited to:

- A. Print Media
- B. Broadcast Media (Radio and Television)
- C. Internet Based systems (Website, Email)
- D. Emergency Alert Systems
- E. Community Alert System (if applicable)

Consideration must be given to the time sensitive nature of the information and the audience to afford adequate saturation.

These means are vehicles of sharing information relevant to hazards, threats to public safety and risk reduction.

## VIII. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The agency primary Point of Contact for media, legislative inquiries and/or VIPs is the ~~EBR~~ MOHSEP PIO. Protocols will include receipt of the inquiry, log/tracking inquiry, response coordination, response preparation, and release of the appropriate information.

A. Receipt of the inquiry. All relevant inquiries received by the agency shall be directed to the ~~EBR~~ MOHSEP PIO.

\_\_\_\_(1) The PIO shall notify the Assistant Director or Chief of Operations of the action as received and during process.

\_\_\_\_(2) Assistant Director or Chief of Operations shall notify the Director, as appropriate.

\_\_\_\_(3) The Director shall designate a lead for preparation of the agency response.

B. Log/tracking inquiry.

\_\_\_\_(1) The PIO shall establish a log designed to record the receipt of applicable inquiries with tracking of progress through dispatch of response.

C. Response coordination. In the preparation of necessary response,

\_\_\_\_(1) The PIO shall serve as the action officer for coordination within the agency. This effort may necessitate the participation of numerous different divisions of this agency/outside agency under a unified effort.

D. Response preparation.

\_\_\_\_(1) The agency lead representative will be responsible for preparing necessary response, using the appropriate medium, to the media, legislative representative and/or VIPs initiating the inquiry.

E. Release of the appropriate information

\_\_\_\_(1) Draft response by staffing agency.

\_\_\_\_(2) Draft cleared by the PIO

\_\_\_\_(3) Release authority is retained by the Assistant Director. It will be incumbent upon the appropriate Assistant Director to solicit the input and final approval of the Director.

## IX. SUPPORT FOR THE PROCESS

Support to the Public Information process includes those actions associated with obtaining public information materials and disseminating public information materials.

- A. Obtaining materials. Materials to support various programs shall be drawn from respective program area/resources. Efforts shall include leveraging template public information initiatives (Public Service Announcements, pamphlets, etc.) in order to ensure a common message and realize cost savings.
- B. Dissemination. Disseminating public information materials will mirror those established contact networks. This will foster maintaining existing lines of communication and build a method to solidify trusted relationships.

## X. MAINTAINING PUBLIC INFORMATION PLAN

~~The East Baton Rouge Parish Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (EBR OHSEP)~~ MOHSEP PIO shall be responsible for annual, at a minimum, review and maintenance of this plan in order to sustain effective and efficient procedures and relevant contact information. Further, use and maintaining this plan will be examined following each event and exercise in which ~~EBR~~ MOHSEP participates.

## XI. JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

A Joint Information Center (JIC) will be established at ~~the East Baton Rouge Parish Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness~~ MOHSEP Emergency Operations Center (EOC) when the Mayor declares an emergency.

### PROCEDURES:

- \_\_\_\_(1) Provisions will be made for the Mayor or City PIO and staff to operate from the JIC.
- \_\_\_\_(2) Space will be made available for one PIO representative in the Executive Overwatch Room.
- \_\_\_\_(3) Mayor or MOHSEP ~~HLS/EP~~ Director will determine need for request of state and federal assistance, emergency proclamations and declarations, news releases, press briefings and/or EAS messages.
- \_\_\_\_(4) JIC staff will;
  - \_\_\_\_a. prepare proclamations

- \_\_\_\_\_b. arrange press briefings or executive interviews with the media
- \_\_\_\_\_(5) The Executive Overwatch Center will provide information to the JIC.
- \_\_\_\_\_(6) All written information prepared by JIC will be approved and initialed by Mayor or ~~HSL/EP~~ **MOHSEP** Director before distribution.
- \_\_\_\_\_(7) JIC will fax copies of news.
- \_\_\_\_\_(8) Other Parish, State and Volunteer agencies are encouraged to fax copies of information regarding their media related activity to the JIC.
- \_\_\_\_\_(9) The JIC will be staffed according to the size and nature of the event. For full-scale operations, the JIC will have at least minimum staffing in support of the City PIO, to include:
  - PIO Team Captain for ~~EBR~~ **MOHSEP**
  - Political Liaison Delegate
  - Secretary