



# Public Information

Teller County Emergency Operations Plan - Annex G

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The following Annex provides an overview of public information dissemination in the event of a large-scale emergency or disaster in Teller County. Public Information Officers are responsible for keeping the public informed concerning a threatened or actual emergency situation and to provide protective action guidance as appropriate to save lives and property.

The 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 general public. Every effort shall be made to minimize and counter rumors, hearsay, and half-truth information.

Citizens have the responsibility to prepare themselves and their families to cope with emergencies and to manage their affairs in ways that will aid the County in managing emergencies. The County will assist residents in carrying out these responsibilities by providing public information and instructions before, during, and after emergencies.

## **SCOPE**

County Public Information staff (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, local government and others.

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.

Many agencies have designated Public Information Officers (PIOs) and existing departmental or office emergency public information plans and procedures/guidelines. This Annex is not designed to take the place of these plans, rather it is designed to complement and support the departmental staffing and procedures/guidelines already in place.

## **CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

### **DESIGNATED INFORMATION OFFICERS**

The designated Public Information Officer (PIO) releases all emergency public information about local operations and assistance during a disaster. In order to maintain and support a unified and coordinated public message, all media inquiries must be routed through the designated PIO and be approved by the IC/Sheriff, EM or the County Administrator. Additionally, public information efforts should coordinate the printing of publications and flyers, as appropriate, for internal and external public information programs.

- 1) Coordinates or reviews appropriate emergency public information releases from local, State, or Federal agencies.
- 2) Advises the appropriate government officials with status reports and information for news releases
- 3) Coordinates the release of emergency public information with other agencies both public and private (utilities, contractors, etc.).
- 4) Actions will include dissemination and response to requests from the public for the following:
  - a) Pre-disaster Information
  - b) Disaster Information
  - c) Post-disaster Information

- 5) Maintains a working relationship with local and state media sources and maintains a current list of same for releases and provides information to and addresses requests from the media. *Click on Links to Access (must have internet access)*
- 6) Participates in a Joint Information Center (JIC), when appropriate.

The following staff has been designated as Public Information Officers:

TITLE	DISASTER SCALE/TYPE
Teller County Sheriff/Administrator	All County, Public Works, Public Health or other disasters
Emergency Management Director	Small Scale County or Public Safety
Public Health Director	Public Health Disaster

**PUBLIC INFORMATION**

The County will endeavor to release timely and accurate emergency information to the public concerning emergency preparedness, response, and recovery in a cooperative effort with the media. Given Teller County agencies are dispatched by the Teller Regional Dispatch Center, the County will coordinate warnings with surrounding County and City Dispatch Centers when appropriate.

In an emergency or disaster situation, public information activities will be directed and coordinated from the JIC or the Board of County Commissioners Board Room. The designated PIO should use every possible outlet available with which to ensure timely and accurate dissemination of available information. In conjunction with warning officials, these means should include, but are not limited to the following:

Print Media	PIO
Broadcast Media (Radio and Television)	PIO
Internet Based systems (Website, Email)	PIO
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)	PIO
Emergency Alert System	Warning Officials
Community Alert System (NIXEL)	Warning Officials

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.

**JOINT INFORMATION CENTER**

The County shall establish an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) separate from the Joint Information Center which located at the BOCC Board Room or the Tamarac Complex. This location will be used, when necessary, to serve as a Joint Information Center (JIC) as needed. Should the situation require, the JIC may be moved to another location to serve its purpose while not impacting incident support functions. A Joint Information System (JIS) will be used whenever possible.

The JIC will be used to gather, analyze, produce and disseminate information in the event of a threat or disaster affecting the County. Public Information Officers from municipal agencies not normally affiliated with emergency

response may be called upon to assist the Joint Information Center during an emergency. These functions may be performed remotely, in the field or in multiple locations.

The JIC will be established during a high-visibility or high severity incident to serve as the central contact point for all news media and to coordinate all incident-related public information activities. All municipal agencies releasing information concerning their emergency actions shall coordinate through the EOC or the JIC.

The County will ensure that emergency information transmitted to the public clearly conveys the following information:

- The nature of the emergency
- The location of the emergency
- How the emergency can affect them?
- What protective action to take?
- Where to get help
- When the situation will be remedied

## **ACTIVATION PROCEDURES**

If Public Information support is needed, the appropriate personnel will be contacted via cell phone and/or internal notification by the County Administrator, Emergency Management Director, the Sheriff or the in the following order:

1. County Administrator
2. Sheriff and/or Emergency Management Director
3. Public Health Director

Each representative will be briefed on the situation, and informed where to report (usually the BOCC Board Room). Upon County PIO activation, Emergency Management will notify the State Office of Emergency Management and request state PIO Assistance as needed.

## ATTACHMENT A PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE CHECKLIST

### PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER CHECKLIST

These or similar responsibilities should apply to any PIO working in the EOC, JIC or JIS.

#### MITIGATION PHASE

- Stay current or familiar with the latest techniques for emergency management information.
- Meet regularly with members of the media to foster a close working relationship.
- Conduct public education and media programs as needed.

#### PREPAREDNESS PHASE

- Maintain close liaison with local, state, and federal PIOs as well as the media to enhance public preparedness and awareness prior to an emergency, and to facilitate dissemination of actual incident information.
- Participate in emergency drills and exercises to test plans for effective and consistent information release.
- Attend PIO conferences and training sessions if available.
- Compile and prepare emergency information for the public in case of emergency.
- Become aware of the procedures to utilize the Emergency Alert System. Persons designated as PIOs may assist in preparation of EAS messages and should monitor all EAS announcements.
- Coordinate public education/awareness campaigns with Emergency Management.

#### RESPONSE PHASE

- Reports to the EOC, upon activation.
- Contacts the media and informs them about the emergency.
- Serves as an official Teller County spokesperson and the sole source for dissemination of official emergency related materials to the public. Remind agency heads to clear all releases through you.
- May update web site and then regularly updates it with the latest information.
- Coordinates all public announcements with the Incident Commander.
- Issues news media releases from the EOC, or, if activated, establishes and coordinates all actions at the Joint Information Center (JIC).
- Coordinates news releases with parties involved in an emergency and the State PIO.
- Verifies the authenticity of incoming information.
- Verifies that duplicate or contradictory releases are not being made.
- Takes action to maintain control of rumors.
- Coordinates with the American Red Cross to establish a single point of contact for the public to obtain information concerning missing relatives.
- Public Information Officers should provide news releases that emphasize the following:
  - Public Information Resources
  - Timely, accurate and easily understood information on the situation.
  - Recommended or ordered protective actions.
  - Descriptions of local, State and Federal response to the emergency.
  - Identification of stations and times for information updates.
  - At the end of an emergency situation, request that media announce the end of the emergency at regular intervals to ensure complete dissemination to the public.
  - After an emergency is terminated, continue to provide information to the media concerning recovery operations
  - Maintains current files and accurate records of all information released to the public and media which should include, but not be limited to:
    - Name, agency, and phone number of the release initiator.

- Text, tape, or video of the news release.
- Substantiating information for the release.
- Date and time information received.
- Date and time information released.
- How and to whom the news release was issued.

**RECOVERY PHASE**

- Continue to brief the media about continuing developments.
- Critique the public information response to the emergency with the media, EM and agency heads.
- Incorporate appropriate recommendations to revise the plan.
- Release available statistics on disaster damage, injuries and fatalities.
- Inform the public on available assistance - and the location of shelters and disaster assistance centers.
- Provide the media information on the progress of recovery efforts.