EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION & OUTREACH PLAN

07|01|2024

FRESNO COUNTY OPERATIONAL AREA

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Section 1 – Introductory Materials

1.1 Introduction

Emergency Public Information is any information developed and disseminated in anticipation of, during, or after an emergency to provide life-saving and other information, including actions that individuals and communities should take. The goal of providing emergency public information is to give people the information they need to make good decisions in an emergency. The *Fresno County Emergency Public Information and Outreach Plan* is focused on the needs of the communities within Fresno County and embodies the principles of the Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101 and the Whole Community Approach planning frameworks as outlined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of the *Fresno County Emergency Public Information and Outreach* Plan is to establish a comprehensive framework that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Public Information Team, defines the guidelines, processes, and resources for Public Information Officers (PIOs), and ensures the timely, accurate, relevant, accessible, and consistent dissemination of critical public information during emergency situations in Fresno County. This plan details the systems and tools to be employed for effective communication with the public, and it also highlights the county's commitment to community education and outreach. Furthermore, it serves as a roadmap to guide and inform future efforts in emergency public information management, ensuring that the community remains well-informed and resilient in the face of adversity.

1.3 Scope

This plan applies to any extraordinary situation, regardless of cause, when the conditions require the coordinated and timely preparation and dissemination of emergency messages to the public. The provisions, policies and procedures described in this plan are applicable to all agencies and individuals, public and private, having responsibility for emergency preparedness, response, recovery and/or mitigation within the geographical boundaries of Fresno County.

1.4 Audience and Stakeholders

The primary audiences for emergency public information are the citizens of Fresno County and local partner agencies. Stakeholders may include, but are not limited to first responder agencies, cities, special districts, elected officials, schools, community-based organizations, and the media.

1.5   Assumptions

The following assumptions were considered when this plan was developed:

- Local media will cooperate in placing the community's need for emergency public information ahead of the need for news coverage, at least in the initial warning and response phase of an emergency.
- Some events, or even forecast events, can bring many reporters, photographers, and camera crews to an area; this will create heavy demands on the public information team organization, requiring augmentation.

1.6   Goals and Objectives

This plan supports the following emergency public information goals for Fresno County:

- Getting the right information to the right audience at the right time so that community members can take the right lifesaving actions.
- Providing accurate, timely, and consistent public information from a single credible source.
- Ensuring consistent public messaging across Fresno County and the region among response organizations and partner agencies.

The objectives of the *Fresno County Emergency Public Information and Outreach Plan* include:

- Define and articulate the roles and responsibilities of the PIO and communications team before, during, and after an incident, disaster, or emergency.
- Define the purpose, function, and protocols of the Fresno County Operational Area Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC) during an EOC activation.
- Provide readily accessible procedures, tools, and resources for use by PIOs and communications staff in a Joint Information Center, including templates, checklists, standard operating procedures, and forms.
- Provide and standardize training for public information team personnel to prepare them for JIC roles.

1.7   Whole Community Approach

The County is committed to achieving and fostering a robust public information system that uses the recommended Whole Community Approach[1] and is fully inclusive of the diverse needs and circumstances of citizens. The Whole Community Approach attempts to engage the full

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[1] FEMA A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management, 2011.

capacity of the private and nonprofit sectors, including businesses, faith-based and disability organizations, and the general public, in conjunction with the participation of local, tribal, state, territorial, and Federal governmental partners in emergency preparedness and planning efforts.

1.7.1 Fresno County Department of Public Health Equity Committee

Fresno County Department of Public Health's Health Equity Committee is comprised of representatives from each division. The Committee collects baseline data, identifies areas of improvement and drives health equity activities and initiatives within the department. The Committee seeks to find alignment with the California Department of Public Health's Office of Equity's domains and competencies for Health Equity Infrastructure.

The Committee is currently drafting health equity goals and objectives for department-wide activities. The developed goals and objectives will be utilized to make recommendations that drive equity activities within the department as well as specific programming where necessary. By leveraging the experiences, values, and customs of diverse organizations and community groups, the HEC provides essential insights that may otherwise go unnoticed in traditional planning processes.

1.7.2 Fresno Access and Functional Needs Emergency Planning and Preparedness Committee

The Fresno Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Emergency Planning and Preparedness Committee, hosted by the Fresno County Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) program serves as a regional forum for collaboration with diverse community organizations that serve the disability community. The purpose of the committee is to bring to the table emergency management personnel, representatives from organizations serving individuals with disabilities, and community stakeholders to strengthen community preparedness and enhance resiliency and recovery efforts.

1.8   Plan Review and Maintenance

The Fresno County Office of Emergency Services (OES) serves as custodian of the *Fresno County Emergency Public Information and Outreach Plan.* The Fresno County OES will review the plan periodically and revise it when the county's Master Emergency Services Plan is updated every five years.

This plan may also be modified as a result of post-incident analyses and/or post-exercise critiques or if responsibilities, procedures, laws, rules, or regulations pertaining to emergency public information and outreach change. The Fresno County OES will maintain in the Record of Changes, any modifications made outside of the established maintenance cycle.

1.9   Preparedness

An important part of any preparedness plan or program is an established training and exercise program. Required trainings for Fresno County Public Information Team members include:

- IS 100, Introduction to the Incident Command System, and
- IS 700, Introduction to the National Incident Management System

In addition, public information personnel are provided with many opportunities throughout the year to participate in emergency preparedness exercises.

Please refer to the *Fresno County Office of Emergency Services Integrated Preparedness Plan* for more information on training and exercise opportunities.

Section 2 – Situation Overview

2.1   General Situation Overview

Fresno County is one of many communities across the State of California, boasting a culturally and linguistically diverse population. Acknowledging the diverse needs, preferences, and communication channels of county residents is fundamental to the success and effectiveness of emergency public information messages. In times of crisis, effective communication is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor; it requires a nuanced approach that considers the various languages spoken, cultural sensitivities, and community-specific communication preferences.

2.2   Population Language Demographics

To be most effective at reaching intended audiences, emergency public information should be provided in the most commonly spoken languages within the community. Data gathered from public schools in Fresno County can offer emergency planners valuable insights into the lifestyles and cultural backgrounds of the entire community, including the most commonly spoken languages. The following data illustrates the languages most frequently spoken by English learners in Fresno County public schools.

Language Spoken
Spanish
Hmong
Punjabi
Arabic
Vietnamese
Mandarin
Filipino
Cantonese
Russian
Korean

Table 1 - English Learners in Public Schools by Primary Language[2]

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[2] California Dept. of Education, English Learners by Grade and Language (Sept. 2021).

2.3   At-Risk Populations

The goal of emergency public information is to rapidly get the right information to the entire population so that they are able to make the right choices for their health and safety. To do this, planners must know what subgroups make up its population, where the people in these groups live and work, and how they best receive information.

At-risk populations are those individuals or groups whose needs are not fully addressed by traditional service providers or who feel they cannot comfortably or safely use the standard resources offered during preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. These groups include people who are physically or mentally disabled (e.g., blind, deaf, hard-of-hearing, have learning disabilities, mental illness, or mobility limitations), people with limited English language skills, geographically or culturally isolated people, homeless people, senior citizens, and children[3].

For more detailed information on at-risk populations in Fresno County and population demographics and statistics, refer to the [Fresno County Community Health Dashboard](#).

2.3.1 Economic Disadvantage

Economic disadvantage does not necessarily impair the ability of an individual to receive information, but it can significantly affect his/her ability to follow a directive if the individual does not have the resources or means to do what is being asked (e.g., stockpile food, stay home from work and lose a day's pay, evacuate, and leave their home, or go to a point of dispensing).

2.3.2 Language and Literacy

This category includes people who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English, have low literacy skills, or who cannot read at all (in English or in their native language). It is important to consider language and literacy when developing emergency public information messages. To ensure that everyone can understand the information and follow directives, information must be culturally and linguistically appropriate and accessible to everyone.

2.3.3 Medical Issues and Disability

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a person has a disability "if he or she (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment."[4] The most easily

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[3] CDC *Public Health Workbook to Define, Locate and Reach Special, Vulnerable, and At-Risk Populations in an Emergency*.

[4] *Executive Summary: Compliance Manual Section 902, Definition of the Term "Disability."* March 2009. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. February 3, 2010. http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/902sum.html

recognized people in this category are those who are blind, deaf, and hard of hearing, as well as those with health conditions that limit mobility or make them dependent on electricity

People with mental disabilities are thought by many emergency planners to be the most challenging at-risk population in widespread emergencies because people who cannot understand and follow directions could jeopardize others in addition to themselves. Mental disability is a population category that will require priority attention in some emergencies.

2.3.4 Isolation (Cultural, Geographic, or Social)

People can be isolated if they live in rural areas or in the middle of a densely populated urban core. There are many ways in which people might be considered isolated, including:

- **Rural Populations** include ranchers, farmers, and people who live in sparsely populated communities. Rural areas can have special communication challenges, such as dependence on satellite television, which does not always provide local channels or news. Additionally, radio stations have moved to canned commercial feed in many communities and might not be useful for dispensing local information in an emergency.
- **In Urban Areas** people can be isolated because of language, lack of education, cultural practices, chronic health problems, fear, lack of transportation or access to public transit systems, unemployment, and other factors. Even if they have access to mass media, they might not have the means to respond to emergency directives.
- **Temporary Residents** can be a major population for many communities, but there are big differences in the types of temporary residents: people living on a military base, students, tourists, or seasonal farm worker, for example.
- **Undocumented Immigrants** are foreign-born persons who reside in the United States and have not yet achieved legal residency. Therefore, these individuals might consciously avoid interaction with social and public agencies.
- **Single Parents and Caregivers** face challenges because they have no one to share their responsibilities to care for those who are dependent on them. This increased responsibility can impair their ability to plan for emergencies or carry out public health directives, and it can be emotionally overwhelming.
- **Religious and Cultural Practices** may reduce the likelihood of certain groups receiving emergency communications. For example, mass media communications would be ineffective for reaching Amish and Mennonite communities which usually do not have televisions or radios.

2.3.5 Age

Although many elderly people are competent and able to access health care or provide for themselves in an emergency, chronic health problems, limited mobility, blindness, deafness,

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social isolation, fear, and reduced income put older adults at an increased risk during an emergency.

Infants and children under the age of 18 can also be at risk, particularly if they are separated from their parents or guardians. They could be at school, in daycare, or at a hospital or other institution—places where parents expect them to be cared for during the crisis. There are also increasing numbers of children who are home alone after school.

2.4   Cultural Considerations

Cultural knowledge should be considered when communicating emergency information to the public. In addition to ensuring emergency information is disseminated in the most commonly spoken languages within the community, Public Information staff should have a working knowledge of the different customs and beliefs of cultural groups within the community as they may relate to emergency preparedness and actions. The Public Information Team is comprised of county department representatives that work with and provide services to the diverse community. The Public Information Team will draw on the diverse backgrounds, subject-matter expertise, and information sharing networks of team members to ensure messages are culturally appropriate.

2.5   Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

The *Fresno County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan's* (MJHMP) Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) describes those threats and hazards relevant to the planning area that may require emergency public information activities. Threats and hazards identified in the HIRA section of the MJHMP are used to inform all disaster preparedness planning efforts of the County, including emergency public information plans and strategies.

For more detailed information on threats and hazards, please see the current *Fresno County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan's* Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA).

Section – 3 Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities

3.1 Public Information Team Organization

The organization of the Public Information Team is strategically structured based on core information management functions that serve as the foundation for key activities and capabilities essential for effective emergency communication. These core functions provide a systematic approach to organizing critical tasks, ensuring a comprehensive understanding among all stakeholders.
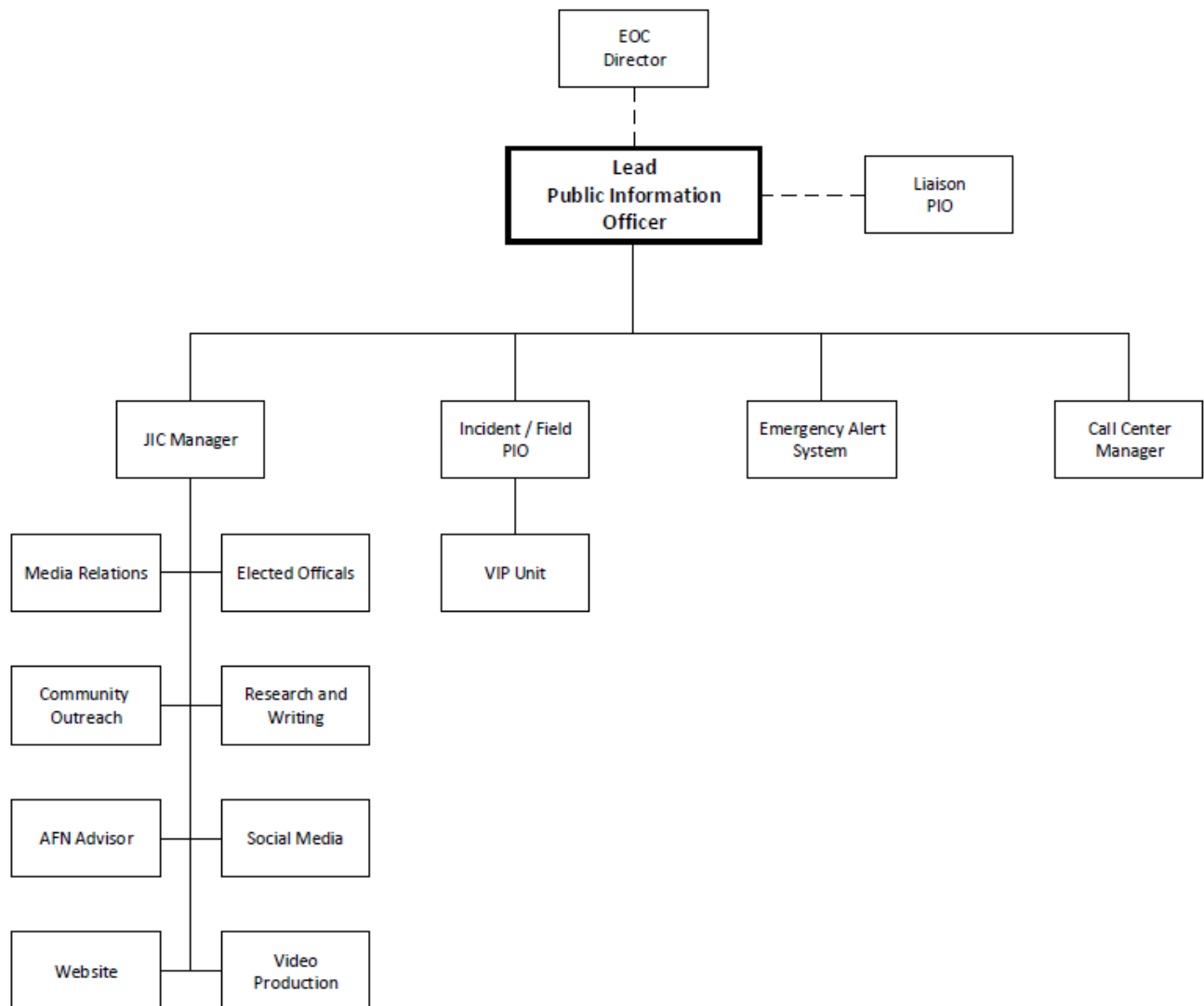
Figure 1 – Fresno County Public Information Team Organization

3.1.1 Lead Agency

The Fresno County Chief Administrative Office (CAO) Public Information Officer (PIO) is responsible for the management and oversight of all emergency public information activities of the county and has ongoing responsibilities throughout all phases of emergency management. The CAO PIO will also serve as the Lead PIO for the county / operational area during an emergency.

3.1.2 Supporting County Departments

The following county departments provide direct support for the county's Public Information Team and have designated public information team representatives:

Department	Description of Role
Chief Administrative Office Communications Team	Provides overall coordination of emergency public information activities. Updates the County social media pages (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Next Door) as well as requests that other County departments post to their social media platforms. Serves as information liaison to local media, elected officials, city PIOs, and other agency PIOs.
Behavioral Health Communications Team	Provides information on mental health messaging prior to, during and after an emergency. Assists with writing press releases, communications team relief, or additional duties as assigned, if necessary. Will also share messages from the EOC-PIO to their social media platforms to expand the audience reach.
County Fire / Cal Fire	Provides CalFire-specific emergency messaging to the EOC-PIO that needs to be distributed widely. Will also share messages from the EOC-PIO to their social media platforms to expand the audience reach.
District Attorney PIO	Assists with writing press releases, communications team relief, or additional duties as assigned, if necessary. Will also share messages from the EOC-PIO to their social media platforms to expand the audience reach..
Internal Services Department	Supports emergency webpage / homepage updates for the EOC and county departments and assists in creating visual materials such as infographics, signage, posters, etc. to effectively communicate complex information in an easily understandable format.
Library PIO	Assists with writing press releases, communications team relief, or additional duties as assigned, if necessary. Will also share messages from the EOC-PIO to their social media platforms to expand the audience reach.
Office of Emergency Services	The Emergency Manager serves as the on-camera representative for the media during an emergency.
Public Health Communications Team	Supports the development and dissemination of public health and animal-related information including hazard mitigation, debris removal, recovery resources, boil water notices, Food Disposal, etc. Assists with writing press releases, communications team relief, or additional duties as assigned, if necessary. Will also share messages from the EOC-PIO to their social media platforms to expand the audience reach.
Public Works Department and Planning PIO	Updates Public Works and Planning social media and relays updates on roads, infrastructure, and other pertinent information to the EOC-PIO and Call Center as necessary. Assists with writing press releases, communications team relief, or additional duties as assigned, if necessary. Will also share messages from the EOC-PIO to their social media platforms to expand the audience reach.

Department	Description of Role
Sheriff PIO	Works with the Sheriff to send out emergency alerts such as evacuation warnings and orders through the Everbridge system. Provides information on emergency warnings and orders throughout the emergency/disaster. Assists with planning press briefings/conferences, writing press releases, communications team relief, or additional duties as assigned, if necessary. Will also share messages from the EOC-PIO to their social media platforms to expand the audience reach.
Social Services PIO	Provides information on social services messaging prior to, during and after an emergency. Assists with writing press releases, communications team relief, or additional duties as assigned, if necessary. Will also share messages from the EOC-PIO to their social media platforms to expand the audience reach.

<p style="text-align:center">Table 2 – Fresno County Public Information Team Roles</p>

3.1.3 Public Information Team Roles and Responsibilities

The Lead Public Information Officer (PIO) plays a crucial role in the emergency communication process, as the PIO ensures that all external and internal communications are clear, consistent, and accurate. All public facing, along with all internal communications, should funnel through the PIO to ensure consistency and accuracy in messaging. During an emergency, the Lead PIO may also serve as the Joint Information Center (JIC) Manager.

Position Title	Position Description
Lead PIO	The Lead PIO serves in the Management Section of the EOC and maintains a high level of situational awareness by attending EOC and Management Section briefings, Operational Area conference calls, and partner coordination calls; helps formulate communications strategies and shapes key messages and content for dissemination. Reports to the EOC Director / Director of Emergency Services when the JIC and/or the EOC is activated.
JIC Manager	Supervises the operations of the JIC, enforces procedures, executes plans, polices, and strategies. Oversees content development, accessibility, review, approval, and dissemination. Schedules and creates agenda for Joint Information System (JIS) conference calls. Reports to the Lead PIO.
Incident or Field PIO	Works independently at the site of a major incident and coordinates with partner agencies and responders. Provides intelligence and information about the incident to the Lead PIO. Represents the Joint Information Center/System at the incident sites. Reports to Lead PIO.
Media Relations	Serves as the central point of contact for the media, responds to media inquiries, and tracks all inbound and outbound media calls. Facilitates and organizes press briefings, press conferences, and media availabilities. Keeps apprised of breaking news and shares timely and accurate information with JIC staff and members of the EOC. Checks facts and monitors rumors on social media platforms and other mass media. Responsible for maintaining the media distribution list. Reports to JIC Manager.
Community Outreach	Ensures message and content translation into English, Spanish, Hmong, and Punjabi as needed. Coordinates with county stakeholders, local partners, and community-based organizations to help ensure dissemination of information to

Position Title	Position Description
	targeted communities that may not have access to mass or social media or other channels. Reports to the JIC Manager.
AFN Advisor	Supports and assists local incident management personnel on issues related to people with disabilities and Access and Functional Needs (AFN). Advises incident leadership on physical access, effective communication access, and programmatic access. This role can serve as a technical advisor to any functional area in the team organization. Reports to the EOC Director.
Website	Develops website plan and strategy. Leads the content development and layout design. Assigns proper admins for creating and updating web and landing pages on the website platform. Maintains situational awareness, monitors, and reports web insights including page views, top pages, entry rates, exit rate, bounce ratees, and other relevant insights. Reports to the JIC Manager.
Elected Officials	Serves as the point person for elected officials from other jurisdictions (i.e., cities, special districts) within the Operational Area. Facilitates and organizes conference calls and/or briefings with elected officials. Responsible for maintaining the elected official's distribution list. Reports to the JIC Manager.
Research and Writing	Produces accurate, timely, and relevant materials for multiple audiences and stakeholders, including key messages, news releases, talking points, video scripts, web and social media content and instructional materials. Prior to activation, the Research/Writer can develop a detailed list of audiences and stakeholders with corresponding demographic and psychographic analyses to inform how messages and materials can be tailored to various audiences. Reports to the JIC Manager.
Social Media	Develops social media plans and strategies. Assigns page admins on social media handles and social media management tools to enable posting, scheduling, and listening capabilities. In addition to scheduling posts across the lead agency's social media handles, considerations should be made to cross post on relevant County social handles. Maintains situational awareness by monitoring social media accounts of responding agencies and related organizations. May commandeer lead agency's social media handles for coordinated messaging. Reports to the JIC Manager.
Video Production	Collaborates with the Research and Writing team to produce timely, accurate video and audio scripts. Responsible for scheduling video production team for various projects as delegated by the EOC Director or Lead PIO. The production team also may be called into the field to document incident damage and response efforts and activities. Reports to the JIC Manager.
VIP Unit	Only assigned as needed. Coordinates with the Lead PIO and EOC Director for escort of VIPs to incident facilities and designated disaster areas (i.e., EOC, Shelters, base camp). Coordinates with the CHP for escort of select dignitaries (i.e., Governor, President of the United States). Reports to the Lead PIO.
Emergency Alert System	Activates and operates the county's emergency alert and warning systems (EAS, WEA, Everbridge). Coordinates with the JIC Manager and other PIOs to ensure consistency in emergency messages. This position is only assigned to authorized Sheriff-Coroner personnel and reports to the Law Branch Director within the EOC.

Position Title	Position Description
Call Center Manager	Manages the JIC call center and coordinates with 211 or other call-center provider on behalf of JIC; monitors the types of inquiry received, solution provided, and reports statistics on calls taken during an incident. Establishes a toll-free telephone hotline including TDD (Telecommunications device for the deaf) and translation services as per the Public Safety Communication Act of 2002. Reports to Lead PIO.
Liaison PIO	Collaborates with external agencies and community-based organizations to coordinate information and develop culturally appropriate community messaging strategies. Reports to the Lead PIO.

Table 3 – Public Information Team Position Descriptions

3.1.4 Spokespersons

The Lead PIO maintains a listing of all county personnel that are trained to serve as a spokesperson for their respective departments or agencies. Spokespersons provide on-camera interviews to share information with the media and the public. Depending on the nature of the emergency communication needs, an appropriate subject matter expert will be selected to serve as spokesperson for incidents / emergencies. The county spokesperson should wear attire that lends credibility to their position as spokesperson and identifies their affiliation to the response (i.e., badge, agency attire with county / department / agency logo or business professional attire).

3.1.5 Emergency Manager

The Fresno County Emergency Manager is the designated media spokesperson for the county during an emergency. The Emergency Manager is trained to deliver the emergency management organization's message, appropriate to the hazard and audience.

3.1.6 Region V Public Information Group

The Region V Public Information Group works to provide strategic planning and expert advice to enhance the efficiency and efficacy of regional emergency communication strategies. This group unites key stakeholders, including local partner agencies, public safety, community-based organizations, healthcare, business, and media to provide a sophisticated and coordinated approach to emergency public information management.

3.1.7 United Way / 211

The United Way / 211 works in collaboration with the County to establish and operate the emergency call center. The call center operates as part of the JIC and adheres to the same protocols for release of information to the public. Instructions, talking points, and data sheets

will be provided by the Lead PIO to those answering the phones to ensure that accurate and consistent information is provided to the public.

The Call Center Manager serves as the communication and coordination link with the JIC by monitoring, tracking, and reporting data on public inquiries received during an incident. The Call Center Manager oversees call center operations and implements processes and procedures that ensure callers reach a live operator, hear updates, and have their questions answered or are directed to the appropriate agency for support.

Section 4 – Joint Information Center Concept of Operations

4.1   Joint Information System

During an emergency, public information operations and resources are handled by local PIOs in accordance with existing plans and procedures. As the emergency escalates, additional public information resources may be activated and deployed to provide support for local emergency public information objectives. As multiple agencies begin to provide public information, information sharing, and communications, the Joint Information System (JIS) is established to analyze the information available and to provide a consistent message to the public and the media across the response organization. The JIS also provides the structure and processes to communicate internally and externally with higher, lateral, and subordinate stakeholders and emergency personnel. [EMAP Statement]

4.2   Joint Information Center

The Joint Information Center (JIC) is typically located within, or adjacent to the Emergency Operations Center. The JIC may also be a virtual coordination environment using technological methods (e.g., internet/web-based, teleconferences, video chat, etc.) for the collaboration and communication of public information by multiple agencies. The JIC includes specific roles and functions to maintain situational awareness, manage public information, and produce content for public dissemination. The main activities of the JIC include:

- Developing and delivering coordinated interagency messages
- Developing, recommending, and executing public information plans and strategies
- Advising on public affairs issues that could affect the emergency management effort
- Addressing and managing rumors and inaccurate information that could undermine public confidence.

4.2.1 Primary and Alternate JIC Facilities

The primary physical JIC facility is located at the Internal Services Division building or downtown at the Hall of Records. Ideally, the JIC should be co-located with the county EOC when possible. The Sheriff's Office also has a location that may be used as an alternate JIC or EOC if necessary.

4.3   Activation

The Joint Information Center (JIC) will be activated when the informational demands of an incident exceed the capabilities of normal on-scene PIO coordination. The activation of the JIC includes consultation between the CAO-PIO, Emergency Services Manager, Sheriff, Supervisor (BOS) of affected districts, and agency PIO representatives (e.g., Cal Fire or Forest Service), as necessary. The JIC will be activated automatically when the County EOC is activated. This could be a physical JIC facility activation or a virtual activation by only activating the Joint Information System.

4.3.1 Staff Notification

Once the EOC and JIC have been activated, Public Information Team personnel will be notified by the Lead PIO / OES / EOC by email, telephone, and/or text message and provided with an assignment and instructions for reporting. The Lead PIO maintains a contact directory of all Public Information Team members that is stored in WebEOC where response personnel can access.

4.4   Information Collection and Dissemination

The Public Information Team and will use a variety of methods to collect and disseminate emergency information through various media such as, WebEOC, representatives from other agencies involved in the disaster, information from public calls to 2-1-1, monitoring traditional media, monitoring social media and the internet, and other means as appropriate.

In addition to the external communication responsibilities, the PIO is also tasked with updating internal department staff on a regular basis, as directed by the EOC Director. All internal information should be funneled through the PIO to ensure consistency and accuracy.

4.4.1 Situational Awareness

Every action taken by EOC personnel, including the communications team in the Joint Information Center (JIC) takes into consideration situational awareness (knowing what is happening) and a common operating picture. This requires continuous, two-way communication among those working in the field, Department Operations Centers (DOC), the EOC and the JIC.

Sources for situational awareness may include the following:

- Direction and intelligence from the EOC Director and JIC Manager.
- The situation status (Sit Stat) report produced by the Planning and Intelligence Section.
- Management Section briefings provided by Sections Chiefs and or Coordinators.

- Incident Reports from first responding organizations.
- Emergency or Incident Action Plan for the operational period.
- Conference calls for the Operational Area, specifically for PIOs who are part of the Joint Information System.
- News media live feeds.
- Social media accounts for fire, police, news media, allied agencies, utilities, and others.
- Watches and warnings issued by the National Weather Service.
- Air quality index (AQI) indicators from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.
- Notifications from PG&E for Public Safety Power Shutoff.
- California State Warning Center notifications and daily situation reports.

4.4.2 Dissemination Methods and Systems

Once messages and accompanying materials are finalized, the PIO will disseminate the information through various channels. The Social Media Liaison can assist in sharing information on various county social media platforms, while the Media Relations Liaison can work with traditional news outlets. In some cases, the information may also be shared directly with the general public, for example, through a public briefing or on the department's official website.

The following methods are used to disseminate emergency public information:

- Everbridge (Geographically targeted mass notifications)
- Traditional Media (TV, radio, print)
- Social Media (Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Next-door, Ring Neighborhood)
- County Websites
- County Staff Email (The Lead PIO has capability to reach >8,000 contacts)
- Town Halls / Community Meetings
- Door-to-Door Canvassing (The Sheriff's Office uses this method for notifications in rural/isolated areas of the county)
- Community-based organizations and partner networks

NOTE: The private message feature on all social media platforms should be disabled during an emergency. Public inquiries should be redirected to official public information inquiry channels (i.e., call center, social media, or website).

4.5   JIC Operations

The Joint Information Center (JIC) plays a critical role in coordinating and disseminating information during emergencies. The following sections describe the procedures for JIC operations.

4.5.1 Authorizing Messages for Release

The Lead PIO works in conjunction with the EOC Director to establish message priorities. The Lead PIO/JIC Manager then works with the communications team to ensure that emergency public information conveys the proper tone and messaging priorities. To streamline the dissemination of information to the public, the EOC Director delegates message approval authority to the Lead PIO or Emergency Manager whenever possible. At the start of the emergency, the EOC Director and Lead PIO may discuss general guidelines for determining what messages the Lead PIO/JIC Manager may approve, and what messages the EOC Director would like to review.

4.5.2 Call Center Activation

The United Way/211 will provide the public information call center function for the county. There is an agreement between UW/211 and the County for this activity. To activate the call center the Lead PIO and/or Emergency Manager will consult with the Director of Emergency Services, and then contact the UW/211 to request this resource. The UW/211 will provide personnel to support public inquiries and the county will provide the UW/211 with appropriate references materials, information, or fact sheets about the incident.

4.5.3 Responding to Public and Media Inquiries

Public inquiries received outside of established channels should be redirected to official sources such as a public information hotline, Fresno County emergency webpage, 211 call center, or official social media pages. The general public will be referred to the appropriate department, agency, or resource that can best address their inquiry.

The County takes a proactive approach to media and provides information to them in the form of a press release, official statement, briefing, fact sheet, or interview. Media inquiries are to be directed to the assigned Media Relations public information team member or the JIC Manager / Lead PIO. This ensures that the JIC is providing a central point of contact for the media.

4.5.4 Correcting Misinformation and Addressing Rumors

Public information team members are assigned to monitor social media and traditional media to identify and correct misinformation and rumors. The County of Fresno and Fresno County

Sheriff's Office websites and social media pages (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok) are credible sources of emergency information. The public will be directed to these platforms for clarifying statements or information.

4.5.5 Translation Services

The JIC will coordinate with the county EOC to provide accessible information to all residents and visitors in Fresno County. The JIC will coordinate with JIS partners to provide disaster-related public information in English, Spanish, Hmong, and Punjabi when possible. County employees who are fluent in languages other than English may also be called upon to provide translation services where necessary. The county maintains a listing of all county employees and their multilingual written and spoken language proficiencies. Additionally, the county has a service agreement with a language interpretation line that can assist in real-time translation and interpretation services in 200+ languages.

American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation should ideally be provided in any crisis or emergency communications that's televised (i.e., TV news media, Zoom, livestream on social media). ASL interpretation services are contracted through the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service Center and may be activated with a 24hour notice request via phone and email. In addition, the Fresno County Sheriff's Office has a staff member that can provide ASL interpretations. ASL interpreters will be positioned immediately adjacent to the speaker in media briefings or may be pre-recorded and played along with the public address. When ASL is not available, closed captioning options are important and available on YouTube and TV stations.

4.5.5 Communicating with At-Risk Populations

At-risk populations may require special accommodation to receive and utilize emergency communications. When possible, the Public Information Team will take actions to ensure the use of interpreters, translators, and assistive technologies are available to ensure emergency communications are accessible by all populations including those who are hearing and sight-impaired and the non-English speaking communities.

Partner agencies that have established relationships with at-risk populations will be critical links to ensuring messaging and communications are linguistically and culturally appropriate for the intended audience. The Public Information Team will leverage the collective knowledge and experience of partner agencies when developing emergency public information messages and strategies.

In some situations, it may be necessary to implement the use of non-traditional communication methods for messages to reach at-risk populations. The following methods may be part of the emergency public information strategy for reaching at-risk populations:

- Use door-to-door notifications, emergency vehicle sirens, and/or public address systems to reach rural populations.
- Host community or other public meetings in collaboration with trusted agents or leaders of culturally diverse communities.
- Collaborate with community-based organizations or networks that routinely interact with specific geographic or cultural groups.
- Provide contrast in the colors of public information materials and make allowances for enlarged text where needed.
- Use pictograms to overcome literacy barriers, such as FEMA's Protective Actions Icons where appropriate.
- Work closely with homeless service network providers to notify homeless shelters about the emergency and what needs to be done to ensure safety for the general public.
- Utilize outreach teams to speak with unsheltered populations where they are located.
- Use message boards and post flyers in highly visible places to reach visitor or tourist populations.

4.6   Alert and Warning

During an EOC activation for a countywide incident, the alert and warning system (i.e., Everbridge) can be used to disseminate alerts, notifications, public health, and safety messages to a specified geographic area via multiple communications channels. This system does not require individuals to opt-in to a system.

The Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, known as IPAWS, is an important emergency communications tool in the EOC. The Sheriff's Office has a federally issued credential to access IPAWS through the Fresno County Emergency alert system (i.e., Everbridge). Cities and towns are responsible for alerting and warning residents within their jurisdiction.

IPAWS delivers alerts and notifications simultaneously across single or multiple communication channels including:

- **Emergency Alert System (EAS)** – a national public warning system that local officials can use to deliver emergency information to the public via local broadcast media, including radio and television. EAS messages are made accessible through auditory alerts, closed captioning on television, visual representations, multilingual support, and compatibility with various assistive technologies.

- **Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA)** - geographically targeted emergency alerts to cell phones across wireless networks. The WEA system is only used for imminent, life safety events. WEA messages leverage accessibility features already available on modern mobile devices such as text-to-speech and vibration, making the information accessible to individuals with visual or hearing impairments. WEA does not require people to opt into any system or register their location and covers a broad geographic region. To receive a WEA message, the cell phone must be WEA-enabled on the device's emergency alert settings. WEA has Spanish language capability.
- **Everbridge –** Fresno County Emergency sends emergency alerts to a database that includes listings from reverse 9-1-1, White and Yellow Pages and subscribers who have opted in. Messages can be received via text, email, and landlines in multiple languages and accessible formats (TTY/TDD). This system also provides preferred language (i.e., English or Spanish) options for message recipients.

4.7   Deactivation

When it is determined that the threat has subsided, and that public information is no longer a necessary function, the JIC will be deactivated. The JIS may stay 'activated' long after the EOC and JIC demobilize response activities. This may be to support recovery and ensure communications are coordinated across the operational area.

4.8   After-Action Reporting

Following the activation of the JIC and JIS, the Lead PIO and/or the Emergency Manager will coordinate an after-action review with the Public Information Team. This review is intended to identify strengths and areas of improvement in emergency public communication programs. Lessons learned will be documented in the After-Action Report and corrective actions will be annotated in the Corrective Action Plan / Improvement Plan.

Section 5 – Public Education and Outreach

5.1   Disaster Preparedness Education and Outreach

The Fresno County disaster preparedness education and outreach strategy is designed to inform county residents, individuals, and households about the types of emergencies and disasters that could affect them and direct them to resources for resilience. The county also leverages partnerships with local service providers to help engage residents and develop strategies to deliver accessible information and emergency messages to the whole community.

In general, the county's education and outreach strategies are designed to educate the public through various media about the following:

- Local hazards and vulnerabilities
- Potential threats to public safety
- Reducing disaster risk exposures

5.2   Public Education Strategy

Developing a comprehensive public education and outreach strategy for a county-level Emergency Public Information Plan involves reaching diverse audiences and fostering a culture of preparedness in the community. To ensure that emergency public information messages are effective in delivering the right information and eliciting action from the public before, during, and after an emergency, the county has developed a public education and outreach strategy that includes the following activities:

- **Cultural Competency and Multilingual Materials –** Ensuring that outreach materials are culturally sensitive and available in multiple languages to address the diverse needs of the community. Preparedness information and resources posted to the county website and social media will, to the greatest extent possible, be provided in accessible formats and in multiple languages.
- **Community Preparedness Events –** The County participates in a variety of Preparedness Campaigns and events throughout the year such as, National Preparedness Month, National Night Out, community fairs, vaccination clinics, and other community events to provide emergency and disaster preparedness information and education to the public. Additionally, public health educators regularly attend local health fairs and other community outreach events to provide emergency preparedness, health and safety, and local resource information to Fresno County residents.
- **Interactive Online Platforms –** The Fresno County Emergency website is a central hub for real-time emergency public information. This website, designed as a comprehensive

resource, offers current updates during incidents, features GIS maps illustrating evacuation zones, road closures, and other critical information. Additionally, the platform incorporates mobile apps and educational resources to ensure accessible and engaging content for the community, fostering a digitally connected and informed public during emergency situations

- **Partnerships in the Community –** The County partners with schools, businesses, and diverse community groups to share disaster preparedness information and resources. These strategic partnerships help to understand the unique needs of the community and build a culture of preparedness.

- **Regular Drills and Exercises –** The County collaborates with local, regional, and state partners to test public information strategies, systems, and tools to enhance preparedness, optimize communications, and ensure a coordinated response during emergency situations.

Section 6 – Authorities and References

6.1   Authorities

- AB 2311 (Brown, Chapter 520, 2016) Access and Functional Needs
- AB 2386 (Bigelow, Chapter 254, 2020) Cal OES review of local emergency plans
- AB 2968 (Rodriguez, Chapter 275, 2020) Best practices for county emergency plans
- AB 477 (Cervantes, Chapter 218, 2019) Vulnerable Populations
- Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.
- California Emergency Services Act; California Government Code § 8550 et seq.
- CFR 47, §11.55-EAS operation during a State or Local Area emergency
- Fresno County Emergency Services Code Chapter 2.44
- Public Alert and Warning System, Presidential Executive Order 13407, June 26, 2006
- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988, 42 U.S.C. 5121, et seq., as amended.
- SB 160 (Jackson, Chapter 402, 2019) Cultural Competence
- Standardized Emergency Management System; California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 2, Chapter 1.
- Warning, Alert, and Response Network (WARN) Act, October 13, 2006.

6.2   References

- A whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action, FEMA, December 2011.
- Cal OES Planning Best Practices for County Emergency Plans.
- California Dept. of Education, English Learners by Grade and Language (Sept. 2021).
- California Public Alert and Warning System (CalPAWS) Plan, December 2016.
- CDC Public Health Workbook to Define, Locate and Reach Special, Vulnerable, and At-Risk Populations in an Emergency.
- Effective Disaster Warnings, Report of the National Science.
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- Executive Summary: Compliance Manual Section 902, Definition of the Term "Disability." March 2009.
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- National Incident Management System, FEMA, December 2008.
- National Response Framework, Second Edition, Federal Emergency Management Agency, May 2013.
- National Strategy for Integrated Public Warning, Partnership for Public Warning, February 2003, Washington DC.

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- State of California Integrating Access and Functional Needs within the Emergency Planning Process: Best practices for Stakeholder Inclusion.
- Fresno County Community Health Dashboard, https://www.healthyfresnocountydata.org/indicators/index/dashboard?alias=alldata.
- Fresno County Emergency, https://www.fresnocountyca.gov/Resources/Fresno-County-Emergency.
- Fresno County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2017.
- Fresno County Office of Emergency Services Integrated Preparedness Plan