
Emergency Public Information

Acronyms:

EBS—Emergency Broadcast System
EOC—Emergency Operations Center
EPI—Emergency Public Information
FEMA—Federal Emergency Management Agency
OES—Office of Emergency Services
PIO—Public Information Officer
RACES—Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service
SOP—Standard Operating Procedure(s)
UPD—University Police Department

Purpose

The Campus Emergency Public Information (EPI) Organization is responsible for the following:

- A. The rapid dissemination of accurate instructions and information to the campus community during periods of emergency.
- B. Response to media inquiries and calls from the campus community.
- C. Establishment of a Media Center near the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for use by representatives of the print and electronic media.
- D. Establishment of an On-Scene Public Information Team at the site of the incident.

Assumptions During Emergency Situations

- A. The campus community will need and demand information about the emergency situation and instructions on proper survival/response actions.
- B. The media will demand information about the emergency. The local media, particularly radio, will perform an essential role in providing emergency instructions and status information to the public. Depending on the severity of the emergency, or the media's conception of the severity of the emergency,

regional and national media also will demand information and may play a supporting role in notifying distant relatives of disaster victims. With an emergency of significant magnitude and its aftermath, the media's interest in the event may stretch over days, weeks or months.

- C. Depending on the severity of the emergency, telephone communication may be sporadic or impossible. Local and regional radio/telephone stations without emergency power may be off the air.
- D. Demand for timely information may be overwhelming. Sufficient staff must be identified, provided and well-trained.

Concept of Operations

EPI activities during emergencies are summarized below for each period/phase. Actions to be taken by the Public Information Officer (PIO) and EPI staff are provided in detail in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

A. Pre-Emergency Period

Emphasis will be placed on these efforts:

- ◆ Developing and maintaining news media contact lists.
- ◆ Developing/updating sample releases, radio/TV messages and emergency instructions that require only particulars to be inserted.
- ◆ Developing questions commonly asked during an emergency.
- ◆ Gathering background information and arranging potential sources.
- ◆ Developing and/or linking web pages on emergency survival, family emergency plans, emergency supplies checklist, first aid, child assistance after an emergency, stress and emergencies, etc.

- ◆ Organizing and training EPI staff as well as coordinating EPI plans with neighboring jurisdictions.
- ◆ Periodic training exercises, including the use of communications technology—walkie-talkies, satellite up-links and RACES.

B. Emergency Period

During emergency operations, the campus Office for Public Information will serve as the dissemination point for all media releases. Other functional units wishing to release information must coordinate through this office. The campus Office for Public Information will coordinate news releases with neighboring jurisdictions.

Whenever possible, EPI functions will warn the campus community of an imminent hazard and provide instructions on protective actions to avoid the hazard or reduce its impact.

EPI Staff will be fully mobilized, and emergency instructions/information will be disseminated in the following priorities (see Attachment 1, Emergency Public Information Priorities, for details):

- ◆ Lifesaving/health-preservation instructions.
- ◆ Emergency status information.
- ◆ Other useful information.

C. Post-Emergency Period (Recovery)

During this period, appropriate information will continue to be released, particularly on the restoration of essential services, travel restrictions and assistance programs available. When time allows, actions taken during the emergency will be assessed, and the EPI Plan and checklist will be revised as necessary.

If practical and appropriate, consider the heightened awareness following the emergency as an opportunity

to promote coverage of recovery, resilience, “lessons learned” and other positive outcomes.

California Emergency Public Information System

The California Emergency Public Information System includes city, county, Office of Emergency Services (OES) Mutual Aid Region, State and Federal PIOs, and public information representatives from private agencies. The scope of the emergency will determine how many levels of the system become involved in EPI activities. The Campus PIO will coordinate with the EPI System that has been activated by local jurisdictions and state OES.

Emergency Public Information Responsibilities and Reporting

Federal Office of Emergency Management (FEMA)

Provides information on federal response effort and assistance programs.

State of California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services

Establishes statewide Emergency Broadcast System programming.
Summarizes the disaster situation for statewide media.
Reports on State agency response activities.

Humboldt County Office of Emergency Services

707.268.2500
Establishes county EBS programming. All EBS information goes through this office.
Summarizes the county disaster situation for news media.
Reports on county response activities.

City of Arcata or City of Eureka Emergency Services

Summarizes city disaster situation.
Reports on city response activities.

Humboldt State University Emergency Public Information

707.826.5101 or 826.5102
The release of all information to the news media or public must be approved in advance by the EOC Director.
Summarizes the HSU disaster situation for news media.
Reports on HSU response activities.
Coordinates news releases with neighboring jurisdictions, mutual aid regions, private agencies and companies.
All EBS information goes through the county.

HSU Student Affairs Information

Coordinates the communication of HSU emergency information to students.
All information must be approved in advance by the Public Information Officer.

Private Agencies/Companies: Red Cross, Salvation Army, Pacific Gas & Electric, Pacific Bell, etc.

Provides aid to HSU.

CSU Campus Mutual Aid, Northern California

Provides aid to HSU.

CSU Campus Mutual Aid, Southern California

Provides aid to HSU.

City and County PIOs will release Emergency Public Information (EPI) locally and will provide status information to PIOs at the next-higher level of government. The Campus PIO should coordinate in advance with city and county PIOs and the public information representatives of local private agencies such as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and utility companies, so that mutual needs may be fulfilled during emergencies.

When the OES Emergency Public Information Organization at the OES Headquarters in Sacramento has been activated, PIOs will be assigned to the affected OES Mutual Aid Region(s) to gather status information from local jurisdictions and provide it to the State OES PIO. Mutual Aid Region PIOs may reply to media calls and will relay information from the state and federal levels to local PIOs. However, Mutual Aid PIOs should coordinate with the Campus PIO before releasing any information pertaining to Humboldt State University conditions and activities.

The State OES PIO will summarize the disaster situation for the media and report on state agency response activities. The State OES PIO also will establish statewide Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) programming, keep the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) PIO informed of developments, and provide EPI staff support to local jurisdictions on request. The State OES PIO will coordinate news releases pertaining to a particular jurisdiction with that jurisdiction prior to dissemination to the news media. When prior coordination is not feasible, the local PIO will be informed at the earliest possible opportunity.

The FEMA PIO will provide information on federal response efforts and federal assistance programs and may provide EPI staff support to the state on request. The federal government

determines nationwide Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) programming.

Campus EPI Organization and Responsibilities

The Campus Emergency Public Information Organization will be supervised by the Campus PIO or alternate. The organization will function on a 24-hour basis during emergencies and will be divided into four elements:

- ◆ Emergency Information/Rumor Control Section.
- ◆ Non-Emergency Information/Visitor Control Section.
- ◆ On-Scene Public Information Team.
- ◆ Administrative Support Section.

As soon as possible after the onset of an emergency, the PIO will fully mobilize the EPI Organization, requesting additional staff support.

PIO Operations

A. Emergency Information/Rumor Control Section Responsibilities

- ◆ Rapidly release emergency instructions and information to the campus community through all available means:
 - Telephone
 - Fax
 - Short-wave Radio
 - Walkie-Talkie
 - Email
 - Web page
 - Bull horn
 - Runner
- ◆ Receive all calls coming into the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) over the public access lines, responding to those from the public and the news media. Relay calls to other EOC staff as appropriate.
- ◆ Obtain periodic situation updates from EOC staff members and maintain PIO status boards and

maps. Make situation reports and provide hard copy of news releases to the local jurisdiction.

- ◆ Prepare news releases as requested by the PIO.
- ◆ Hourly update information for recorded telephone messages or as situation changes. Recorded telephone information is coordinated through the UPD dispatcher.

B. Non-Emergency Information/Visitor Control Section Responsibilities

- ◆ Receive and handle non-emergency calls.
- ◆ Greet and badge official visitors as necessary—VIPs and news media. Arrange for official PIO spokesperson(s) and news media tours of the EOC (one crew at a time).
- ◆ Maintain situation boards and maps in the PIO Office.
- ◆ Provide escorts to accompany official visitors and VIPs into disaster areas. The PIO will assign VIP escorts.
- ◆ Arrange accommodations and transportation for official visitors (as necessary) through the Logistics unit.
- ◆ Assist Emergency Information/Rumor Control Section as required.
- ◆ Develop scripts for telephone responses to key questions.

C. On-Scene Public Information Team Responsibilities

- ◆ Establish an On-Scene Media Control Point in the vicinity of, but physically separated from, the incident site or Command Post.

- ◆ Request media cooperation, with “ground rules” established by Incident Commander/EOC Director.
- ◆ Brief the media on the incident and on response actions underway. Names or other identification of casualties will not be released. (Work with medical team and Coroner’s Office.)
- ◆ Maintain liaison with the Incident Commander/EOC Director to obtain latest information and remain current on the situation.
- ◆ Arrange interviews and live camera shots with key personnel when requested by the news media and when such requests can be accommodated without interfering with response operations.
- ◆ Keep the Emergency Information/Rumor Control Section and other EOC staff informed of the status of the emergency situation.

D. Administrative Support Section Responsibilities

- ◆ Provide Mutual Aid PIO support (telephones, desks, typewriters, office supplies, copy and fax machines, clerical support) to other jurisdictions as needed.
- ◆ Ensure that the PIO and Media Center are operational and maintained—generally on the second floor of the Student and Business Services Building.
 - ◆ The Emergency Public Information Office will serve as headquarters for HSU emergency public information personnel.
 - ◆ The Media Center will serve as a centralized information resources and working center for journalists covering the emergency. To the extent possible, necessary equipment (phone lines, work stations, etc.) will be provided.

- ◆ Provide foreign-language translators and broadcasts as necessary.
- ◆ Arrange the site, sources, scheduling notification and equipment for news media briefings.
- ◆ Assist the media in securing accommodations and transportation (if determined necessary by the Campus PIO) through the Logistics Unit. News media are responsible for their own expenses for accommodations, transportation, food and other expenditures.
- ◆ Assist other sections as required.

Communications

The campus will rely on the most efficient means available for dissemination of information to the media and for responding to direct public inquiry. The PIO should ensure that sufficient telephone circuits are installed in the Emergency Information/Rumor Control Section area to handle incoming calls and in the Media Center to allow the news media to relay information.

- ◆ The PIO should arrange for at least two (2) unlisted outgoing lines for their exclusive use during disasters.
- ◆ The telephone/fax/email will be used to coordinate with PIOs in other affected jurisdictions and at other government levels. Should telephones be out of service or unavailable (as will be the case of the On-Scene PIO Team), the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) will be used for communicating EPI messages. Provisions for this support will be made in advance by the University Police Department and a list of trained RACES operators maintained. The PIO may request activation of local EBS stations following established EBS procedures.
- ◆ Local commercial radio is the most rapid means of communicating emergency information to the public; however, EPI may need to be disseminated in the following ways:

- Regional commercial radio stations whose signals reach the stricken area (if local stations are off the air).
- Television stations (including cable).
- Newspapers—local, regional, state and national (as necessary).
- Special EPI supplements to newspapers.
- Leaflets distributed by volunteers.
- Public Address System—to communicate issues of public safety.
- Personal contact.
- Email and the World Wide Web.

Media Access Privileges

Ground Access

California Penal Code Section 409.5 permits access by the media to areas that are closed to the public during disasters. If access by the media must be denied or restricted for any reason, a complete explanation must be given.

Pool System. If access restrictions for the news media are unavoidable in the opinion of the authority in charge of the incident/disaster, a “pool” system may be established. Reporters on scene should be permitted to select one representative from each medium (radio, television, newspaper, wire service) and from each level of coverage (local, regional, national, international) to be escorted into the area. Reporters then will share information, photographs and video/audio tape with other accredited reporters.

- ◆ PIO will coordinate with UPD to provide appropriate access to emergency sites, including developing an understanding of public, media and critical perimeters around the scene.

- ◆ PC 409.5 cites only two exceptions that allow reporters to be prevented from entering an emergency scene:
 1. If their presence would impede rescue and other emergency efforts.
 2. If the scene is sealed off as a crime scene.
However, PIO and UPD will work together to provide reasonable, effective media access that minimizes impact on emergency operations.

Air Access

Federal Aviation Administration Regulation 91.91 covers temporary flight restrictions during incidents/disasters and sets forth procedures that pilots of media aircraft and others must follow. Permission to fly over incident sites may be denied if such flights pose a significant safety hazard to the general public.

Emergency Public Information Priorities

1. Lifesaving/Health Preservation Instructions
 - ◆ What to do (and why).
 - ◆ What not to do (and why).
 - ◆ Information (for parents, families, friends, public) on the status and actions of Humboldt State University (if in session).
 - ◆ Hazardous/contaminated/congested areas to avoid.
 - ◆ Curfews (if established).
 - ◆ Road, bridge, freeway overpass and dam conditions, and alternate routes to take.
 - ◆ Evacuation:
 - Routes.

- Instructions (including what to do if vehicle breaks down).
- Arrangements for persons without transportation.
- Location of mass care/medical/coroner facilities, food, safe water, etc.
- ◆ Status of hospitals.
- ◆ First Aid information.
- ◆ Firefighting instructions.
- ◆ Emergency telephone number (otherwise request people NOT to use telephones). Stress to out-of-town media that people should NOT telephone into the area. Lines must be kept open for emergency calls.
- ◆ Instructions/precautions about utility use, sanitation, how to turn off utilities.
- ◆ Essential services available:
 - Hospitals.
 - Grocery stores.
 - Banks.
 - Pharmacies.
 - Other facilities as necessary.

2. Emergency Status Information

- ◆ Media access numbers to EPI. (Do not release to public or place on Web.)
- ◆ Public access numbers to EPI.

- ◆ Description of the emergency situation, including number of confirmed deaths and injuries, property damage, persons displaced.
- ◆ Description of government and private response efforts (mass care, medical, search and rescue, emergency repair, debris clearance, fire/flood fighting, etc.).
- ◆ Any of the Priority 1 information in summary form on a “nice to know” rather than “vital to know and act upon” basis.
- ◆ Where people should report/call to volunteer.
- ◆ Direct people not to come to campus.
- ◆ How people in other areas can obtain information about relatives/friends in the disaster area (coordinate with Red Cross on release of this information). How disaster victims can locate family members.
- ◆ What types of donated supplies, if any, are needed and how can they be best provided.

3. Other Useful Information

Usually this sort of information will be released during the Post-Emergency Period because of lack of time and other priorities during other phases.

- ◆ State/Federal assistance available.
- ◆ Disaster Assistance Center opening dates/times.
- ◆ Historical events of this nature.
- ◆ Charts/photographs/statistics from past events.
- ◆ Human interest stories.
- ◆ Acts of heroism.

- ◆ Historical value of property damaged/destroyed.
- ◆ Prominence of those killed/injured. (Obtain from Coroner.)

Emergency Broadcast System Procedures

1. Emergency Broadcast System (EBS)

The County of Humboldt utilizes an Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) in the event of an emergency. Special provisions have been made to ensure the media get frequent, accurate broadcasts. The EBS is a group of radio stations that has agreed to immediately broadcast and repeat official messages during an emergency. Participating stations in the Humboldt area are:

- ◆ KRED 1480 AM
443-1480 or 443-1621
Operating: 5:20 a.m. to midnight Monday
through Saturday
6:45 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Sunday
- ◆ KINS 980 AM
442-5744
Operating: 6:00 a.m. to midnight Monday
through Saturday

Other stations in the area have the ability to repeat EBS messages.

2. Utilizing the EBS System

In time of an emergency, emergency broadcast information will be provided through the County Emergency Operations Center to the designated radio stations. A County Media Center also will be established. This center will operate a county phone assistance organization for the purpose of accepting calls from the public.

3. HSU Messages

All EBS announcements specific to Humboldt State

University will be prepared by the University Public Information Officer (PIO) and authorized for release by the EOC Director. The EBS announcements will be dispatched to the County EOC (telephone) which will release the information.

Emergency Operations Center

Position: **Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Director**

Position Responsibility: Overall management of incident/emergency activities, including development, implementation and review of strategic decisions. Management and coordination of the campus Emergency Operations Center.

Duty—Checklist:

- ◆ Ensure that field operations are activated.
- ◆ Contact Emergency Operations Executive and obtain approval for implementation of plan, if time permits, and the activation/deactivation of the campus Emergency Operations Center.
- ◆ Activate/deactivate EOC.
- ◆ Alert emergency managers to report to the EOC.
- ◆ Alert emergency managers to activate DOCs.
- ◆ Make EOC assignments.
- ◆ Brief emergency managers at EOC.
- ◆ Identify hazardous and unsafe situations associated with the incident/emergency.
- ◆ Initiate field situation analysis.
- ◆ Initiate protective actions necessary. Advise Emergency Operations Executive of recommendations;

get approval of the campus President when appropriate.

- ◆ Develop communications with Emergency Operations Executive and University Police dispatch center.
- ◆ Ensure that all emergency notifications have been made.
- ◆ Activate callback procedures of essential personnel, if necessary.
- ◆ Activate and coordinate/deactivate mutual aid procedures.
- ◆ Coordinate EOC staff in developing incident/emergency action plan.
- ◆ Establish operation schedules and priorities consistent with directions from Emergency Operations Executive/Policy Management Group.
- ◆ Ensure 24-hour staffing of EOC for duration of incident/emergency.
- ◆ If campus closure is ordered, implement campus closure procedure.
- ◆ If evacuation is ordered, notify campus community and implement evacuation plans.
- ◆ If campus is evacuated, provide for security.
- ◆ Coordinate development of recovery plan.
- ◆ Obtain authorization for re-entry of campus when conditions permit.
- ◆ Coordinate record-keeping, logs and incident/emergency documentation.