



ESF 15 Public Information

Primary Coordinating Agency

Lexington Division of Emergency Management



Table of Contents

Primary Coordinating Agency	2
Local Supporting Agencies	2
State, Regional, and Federal Agencies and Organizations	3
Purpose	3
Situations and Assumptions.....	4
Direction and Control	6
Concept of Operations	7
General.....	7
Preparedness	8
Mitigation	9
Alert and Notification	9
Response	10
Recovery	11
Responsibilities.....	12

Primary Coordinating Agency

The Lexington Division of Emergency Management (DEM) is the primary coordinating agency for Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 Public Information. DEM will act as the central coordinating agency for receiving and disseminating public information during a disaster.

Information will be disseminated from the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the form of media briefings, news releases, social media posts, website updates, audio updates to its AM radio station network, video news releases, the LEXTV cable channel, and situation reports or other means as applicable.

Through WebEOC (crisis management software) and press release distribution, information will also flow from ESF 15 to the State EOC.

Local Supporting Agencies

Local supporting agencies for ESF 15 are agencies with designated Public Information/Public Affairs Officers, or spokespersons that participate in information gathering and dissemination activities. This list of primary agencies may be expanded or shortened dependent on the event. These agencies may become a part of a Joint Information System (JIS) as necessary.

- A. Lexington Division of E911
- B. Fayette County Public Schools
- C. Lexington Division of LexCall
- D. Lexington Division of Community Corrections
- E. Lexington Division of Computer services
- F. Lexington Division of Environmental Policy
- G. Lexington Division of Fire and Emergency Services
- H. Lexington Division of Government Communications
- I. Lexington Division of Police
- J. Fayette County Health Department (LFCHD)
- K. Local Media
- L. Local Utilities
- M. Mayor's Office
- N. United Way - 211
- O. Transylvania University Public Affairs
- P. Global Lex

Q. The Lexington Commission on Disabilities

State, Regional, and Federal Agencies and Organizations

ESF 15 keeps officials and the citizens of the Commonwealth informed of developing emergency situations, instructions for protective actions in the event of a threatened or actual natural, man-made, technological, or terrorist incident, controls rumors and speculations, and provides recovery operations instructions.

Specific incidents may require the notification to, and assistance from, state, regional, or federal agencies. State and federal agencies that may be active in ESF 15 include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Office of the Governor
- B. Kentucky Horse Park
- C. University of Kentucky Office of Public Information
- D. Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH)
- E. Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection
- F. Kentucky Division of Emergency Management (KyEM)
- G. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- H. Kentucky State Police
- I. Blue Grass Army Depot
- J. Blue Grass Army Chemical Activity
- K. Kentucky Department of Agriculture
- L. Kentucky Department of Transportation
- M. Language services, i.e., Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Language Access Program (LAP)
- N. Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

Purpose

The purpose of ESF 15 is the generation of timely public information that is essential to avoid or minimize the loss of life and property if a disaster is imminent or has occurred. ESF 15 also gathers information from public sources, including radio stations, television stations, websites, blogs and social media channels to provide intelligence to the command staff and other ESFs. This communication is passed on to the EOC Director and the EOC manager.

Information will be disseminated to government officials, emergency services staff, media outlets, and the public through the Emergency Alert System (EAS), 1620 AM Alert Radio, the outdoor warning system, IPAWS, the news media, social media channels and other outlets as appropriate.

ESF 15 will also monitor information disseminated from other state and local jurisdictions as well as federal authorities. Significant information will be forwarded to the EOC Director and EOC Manager.

Additionally, ESF 15 will maintain contact with contiguous political jurisdictions, state, and federal level Public Information Officers/JIC's.

This coordination will improve the ability of all participating agencies and organizations to coordinate and to cohesively and effectively perform the following:

- A. Quickly relay critical and potentially lifesaving information to those at risk.
- B. Provide timely, consistent information on the status of emergency operations.
- C. Coordinate the release of public information from all responding agencies and avoid unnecessary duplication of messages.
- D. Assure the public that government is responding effectively to the emergency.
- E. Make credible and consistent information available to answer citizen inquiries.
- F. Provide ongoing and useful information regarding recovery.
- G. Ensure a system is in place to provide information using all available channels.
- H. Ensure a system is in place to monitor traditional media and social media to ensure accurate information is being disseminated to the public.
- I. Ensure a system of information gathering is in place during crises.
- J. Provide rumor and misinformation monitoring and control.

During times of crises, local broadcast stations and news publications share a commitment to warn and inform local citizenry of actions that can save lives and protect the environment and property. This function is separate and distinct from news coverage and journalistic pursuits. A complete list of media outlets, including out-of-county, regional, state, and national media, is maintained by ESF 15 for news and information dissemination.

During emergency situations, most broadcast stations in central Kentucky participate in the national EAS. WUKY-FM is the primary notification station for EAS alert messages. Spectrum Cable subscribers receive these messages, as well as viewers of the local over-the-air broadcast stations – WKYT-TV, WLEX-TV, WTVQ-TV, WDKY-TV, and Kentucky Educational Television (KET). Additionally, most AM and FM radio stations rebroadcast EAS messages.

Situations and Assumptions

General situations, assumptions, and policies are found in the Emergency Operations Plans (EOP) Basic Plan and are not repeated in this ESF. Only statements specific to ESF 15 are stated here:

- A. Many disasters occur with little or no warning; ESF15 may be activated when there is imminent threat or advance warning of floods, winter storms, tornadoes,

or other extreme weather events. ESF 15 may also be activated to provide support for extraordinary activities, such as sporting events where large, enthusiastic crowds are expected, parades, festivals and equine competitions.

- B. Essential resources (personnel, vehicles, fuel, critical supplies, etc.) may be pre-positioned and readied for activation when an area is under imminent threat.
- C. Essential resources (personnel, vehicles, fuel, critical supplies, etc.) will be relocated for safety if they are in an area under imminent threat.
- D. Emergencies can quickly reach a magnitude that require additional resources from local, state, federal, or other organizations through mutual aid agreements. Requests for additional assistance from outside of Lexington Fayette will be made through and by ESF 7 KyEM, or with organizations with which Lexington Fayette and/or coordinating agencies have mutual aid agreements.

The following assumptions will guide the dissemination of public information in the Lexington/Fayette area:

- A. A significant natural disaster, emergency condition, or other incident may be of such magnitude that the means for dispersing public information in the disaster area may be severely affected or cease to function.
- B. Extensive destruction of media communications facilities and loss of electrical power may severely disrupt the normal flow and dispersal of information in the disaster area.
- C. The demand for public information within the disaster area may exceed the capability of ESF 15 to provide service. Additional support may be requested from other local agencies or the state.
- D. Information can be erroneous, vague, difficult to confirm, and contradictory during a disaster. It is the responsibility of ESF 15 to identify the rumor and misinformation and provide guidance and correcting/clarifying information in these cases.
- E. There will be significant demand for information on volunteer resources that are needed during a disaster.
- F. Depending on the extent of the disaster, there may be self-deployed volunteers who will offer assistance to ESF 15. These volunteers should be vetted and triaged for real capabilities before working in any capacity.
- G. When ESF 15 is activated, Lexington DEM PIO will lead ESF 15 activities from the EOC.
- H. Depending on the extent and nature of the emergency, ESF 15, in consultation with the DEM Director and/or EOC Manager, may activate additional staff according to JIS operating procedures. A Joint Information Center (JIC) may be staffed physically at the EOC or be staffed virtually.
- I. During an event involving multiple agencies and jurisdictions, all participating agencies and departments will coordinate, to the greatest extent possible, emergency public information releases, through ESF 15.

- J. During an event involving state, regional, and federal level agencies, ESF 15 will coordinate activities and emergency information releases with the other Public Information Officers and Public Affairs Officers of these organizations.
- K. Local, regional, state, and national media outlets, if effectively utilized, can inform the population of emergency events that may be occurring and how best to take protective actions.
- L. Local, regional, state, and federal agencies, non-profit organizations and/or networks (such as the Kentucky Outreach and Information Network) will be utilized to reach populations with access and functional needs, people with language barriers, etc.

Depending on the severity of the emergency, telephone communication and electrical power may be affected. This may prompt two unrelated actions: (1) door to door and/or public address systems to warn the public of impending danger, and (2) dependence on internet and texting capabilities to send information to media outlets outside the affected area.

Direction and Control

The Lexington Fayette EOC will serve as the central location for interagency coordination and multijurisdictional executive decision-making, including all activities associated with ESF 15.

Though a JIC/JIS system may be activated, the ESF 15 coordinator will stay in contact with the EOC Director and the EOC Manager through an EOC/JIC liaison. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the EOC Director and/or the EOC Manager to approve the information disseminated by ESF 15.

ESF 15 complies with the National Response Framework, the National Incident Management System, and uses the Incident Command System (composed of Planning, Operations, Logistics, and Finance/Administration Sections with their standardized units, teams, positions, forms, and terminology) to manage its emergency/disaster responsibilities. Key to this system is DEM, which functions as the official disaster organization for preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery within Lexington Fayette. ESF 15 complies with Incident Command System standards for the formation and operation of a JIC.

ESF 15 operates at three levels within the EOC with one or more staff in conjunction with a JIC and one or more field operations.

All management decisions regarding county and/or regional resource allocation are made at the EOC by the ESF 15 coordinator during emergency activations.

In accordance with a mission assignment from ESF 15 and further mission tasking by a local primary agency, each support organization assisting in an ESF 15 assignment will retain administrative control over its own resources and personnel but will be under the operational control of ESF 15.

Concept of Operations

General

- A. All operations will be conducted in adherence to Kentucky Occupational Safety and Health Program standards and regulations with life safety issues being a priority.
- B. Procedures, protocols, and plans for disaster response activities provide guidelines for operations at the EOC and in the field. The EOP and corresponding Appendices, Incident Specific Plans, Support Plans, and Standard Operating Procedures that describe ESF 15 capabilities (based on National Planning Scenarios, Universal Task List, and Target Capabilities) are the basis of these guidelines. Periodic training and exercises are also conducted to enhance effectiveness.
- C. DEM maintains the overall ESF 15 plan and accompanying Attachments and References that govern response actions related to emergencies.
- D. Supporting agencies shall develop and maintain their own similar documents for internal use, which must be compatible with, and in support of, the overall EOP. All such documents will be in compliance with the National Response Framework, the National Incident Management System, the Incident Command System, and the EOP.
- E. When directed by the on-scene Incident Commander (IC), ESF 15 will establish and staff a Joint Information/ Media Center near the scene of the emergency. The location of the center will be selected by ESF 15 with the approval of the on-scene IC. The purpose of the center is to provide a central location to collect and collate information from the response agencies and to disseminate official statements, emergency information, and instructions.
- F. ESF 15 will obtain authorization from the on-scene IC before the news media are allowed to visit any restricted area. ESF 15 staff will coordinate media activities at the scene according to the criteria established by the on-scene IC.
- G. Actions initiated by ESF 15 are grouped into the phases of emergency management: prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. Each phase requires specific skills and knowledge. Each phase requires significant cooperation and collaboration between all supporting agencies and the intended recipients of service. ESF 15 encompasses a full range of activities from training to the provision of field services.
- H. Lead or supporting agency public information staff will operate from the EOC on a 24-hour schedule to help maintain the flow of public information. As necessary, a physical or virtual JIC will be established to meet the requirements of the ESF-15 operational plan for the required 12-hour cycles.
- I. A large event requiring regional, state, and/or interstate mutual aid assistance will require ESF 15 implementation through JIS procedures. ESF 15 will coordinate with supporting agency counterparts to seek and procure, plan, coordinate, and

direct the use of any required assets, including the formation and staffing of a JIC.

- J. Access to the EOC by the media will be restricted and normally limited to a designated area. A pool representative from each media type may be selected for access if space constraints become an issue. At the Fayette County PSOC, that area is designate as the Pressroom, immediately off the front entrance of the building.
- K. The EOC uses WebEOC to supplement disaster management through communicative integration of ESFs, agency based emergency operations centers, and other facilities or functions as appropriate.

Preparedness

Actions and activities that develop ESF 15 response capabilities may include planning, training, orientation sessions, and exercises for ESF 15 personnel (i.e., county, state, regional, and federal) and other ESFs that will respond with ESF 15. Initiatives also include the following:

- A. Conduct planning with ESF 15 supporting agencies and other emergency support functions to refine operations.
- B. Conduct training and exercises for EOC and response team members. Ensure lead agency personnel are trained in their responsibilities and duties.
- C. Manage inventory of equipment and other pre-designated assets that are essential to meet the requirements of special needs groups.
- D. Maintain a list of ESF 15 assets that can be deployed during an emergency.
- E. Assign and schedule sufficient personnel to implement ESF 15 tasks for an extended period of time.
- F. Develop and implement emergency response and logistics strategies.
- G. Develop and present training courses for ESF 15 personnel.
- H. Maintain liaison with supporting agencies.
- I. Conduct all-hazards exercises involving ESF 15.
- J. Develop and maintain a resource request system.
- K. On an ongoing basis and during periods of non-emergency, DEM Public Information Office (PIO), and other primary and supporting agencies involved in ESF 15, will engage in public education programs. These programs are designed to educate and prepare citizens for potential hazards and best response procedures.
- L. Public Information Officers will be trained in their roles of the PIO under NIMS and the Incident Command System including legal issues, risk communication, communication in emergencies, and the role of the Joint Information System/Joint Information Centers.

- M. ESF 15 staff will be trained in the use of disaster intelligence from ESF 5, including how the intelligence can be effectively used in communications with news media on potential consequences of hazards on people, buildings and infrastructure.
- N. The ESF 15 coordinator and his/her assistants will disseminate written and graphic disaster preparedness materials such as brochures and publications, public presentations, news releases, website and social media postings, and through attendance at public events.

The information will be designed to encourage preparedness activities, awareness and personal responsibility to minimize the loss of life and property during a disaster.

- O. ESF 15 will coordinate with local media on public information procedures, content of information, information dissemination strategies, and roles and responsibilities of the Public Information Officer under the Incident Command System.

Mitigation

ESF 15 will perform the following:

- A. Coordinate with the All Natural Hazards Mitigation Committee to identify potential hazards and their impacts and seek funding for resources to mitigate those hazards.
- B. Provide personnel with the appropriate expertise to participate in activities designed to reduce or minimize the impact of future disasters.

Alert and Notification

The EOC will serve as the central location for interagency coordination and executive decision-making, including all activities associated with ESF 15.

The EOC will be activated, as will ESF 15, upon the direction of the Mayor or the DEM Director. The DEM Director may make the decision to selectively activate ESF 15 agencies based on the type of threat, event, or incident. DEM will notify ESF 15 primary and supporting agencies of activation and request liaisons to report to the EOC.

E911 will notify the DEM Director and the primary on-call person when the county or an area of the county has been threatened or impacted by an emergency or disaster event.

E911 or DEM will initiate ESF 15 notification using the Emergency Notification System (ENS). E911 will request, as directed by DEM, assistance from the primary coordinating agency to staff the ESF 15 position in the EOC on a 24-hour basis.

Upon instructions to activate the ESF 15 group, ESF 15 and supporting agencies will implement their procedures to notify and mobilize all personnel, facilities, and physical resources potentially needed based on the emergency.

Primary and supporting agencies in ESF 15 will include appropriate methods and media outlets to ensure that persons with disabilities, cultural differences, and language

barriers receive the public health and safety public information disseminated to all populations.

Response

The EOC will act as the central coordinating facility for receiving, interpreting, writing, editing, and disseminating public information during a disaster.

Information will be received by the EOC through ESF emergent information and Situation Reports, news media reports, social media reports, and citizen reports received by LexCall.

In major events or those with considerable media attention, ESF 15 will establish a JIC to facilitate the coordinated release of information from all responding agencies. ESF 15 will:

- A. Notify the media of disaster impacts, protective measures, and other topics that will facilitate and expedite response and recovery and address public information needs.
- B. Provide updates to the news media about disaster conditions and actions taken in response to those conditions, primarily information and instructions provided for the survival, health, and safety of the citizens in the impacted area.
- C. As necessary and requested, deploy its Public Affairs Rapid Response Trailer along with sufficient staff to create and maintain a field media center.
- D. Create informational releases with the following prioritization:
- E. Lifesaving, including information essential to survival, health, and safety.
- F. Recovery, including instructions concerning disaster recovery, relief, programs, and services.
- G. Other, including non-emergency notices released by participating government and volunteer agencies.

ESF 15 is responsible for the coordination of all public information activities during an actual or pending emergency. ESF 15 will:

- A. Disseminate information concerning specific disasters and the threats associated with the current potential situation as well as long and short-term protective actions. This information will be disseminated to the news media and general public through a multimedia methodology.
- B. Ensure that no media information is released prior to appropriate coordination and approval.
- C. Actively solicit information from all ESFs and liaisons to ensure current and complete information is being disseminated.
- D. Coordinate information flow with the State EOC.

- E. Coordinate and publish information concerning all facets of the emergency, e.g., needed volunteers and donations, evacuation, reentry, and other recovery issues.
- F. Activate the JIC should the situation warrant.
- G. Ensure broadcast, print, and social media are monitored for correct and consistent informational reports and postings.
- H. Conduct media briefings and/or press conferences as appropriate.
- I. Participate in EOC briefings, Incident Action Plans, Situation Reports, and meetings.
- J. Ensure the most up to date information is available to answer public inquiries regarding the emergency by developing uniform talking points for all employees or volunteers who have direct contact with the public.
- K. Work with the EOC Director, or designee, to help ensure LexCall has timely, accurate, and useful information available to answer direct inquiries from the public.
- L. Schedule and coordinate news conferences and media briefings as dictated by the event.
- M. Make every effort to provide emergency information appropriate for non-English speaking citizens and other special population groups (e.g., the elderly and those with physical and developmental disabilities).
- N. Coordinate with the staff of senior elected officials and other dignitaries visiting the disaster area to coordinate site visits, tours, and media opportunities.
- O. Work with elected officials and department heads to ensure appropriate representation at news conferences and ample opportunities for media interviews and photos. The ESF 15 coordinator will ensure local officials are kept apprised of such visits.
- P. Continue to work with DEM and all other departments and agencies throughout the stabilization and recovery period.
- Q. Coordinate efforts with KyEM, in particular the application of multimedia public information strategies, techniques, and monitoring efforts.

Recovery

After the emergency response phase is determined complete, ESF 15 participates in the recovery effort. ESF 15 will:

- A. Coordinate with ESF 5 in assessing disaster recovery issues, priorities, problems, and other factors that need to be shared with the news media. This includes questions on damage assessment findings, disaster response performance, and other potentially sensitive issues.

- B. Coordinate with ESF 6 to announce status of shelters, location of mass feeding and/or supplies distribution sites, and comfort stations.
- C. Coordinate information and publicity efforts with volunteer and donations coordinators in relation to volunteers and/or donations.
- D. Provide staff if establishment of JIC is required.
- E. Maintain records of all releases for documentation after the event.
- F. Include disaster assistance information, descriptions of recovery efforts, actions being taken to alleviate problems, and public assistance programs available in informational releases.

Responsibilities

ESF 15 is the primary lead and coordinator for ESF 15 when the EOC is activated. As part of the EOC team, ESF 15 coordinator functions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Assist ESF 2 with initiating EAS by activating the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS).
- B. As directed by the EOC Manager, disseminate to the local media by any distribution method available lifesaving emergency response actions that should be taken by the public.
- C. Gather emergency response information from other ESF coordinators or ESF 15 agencies tasked with primary, support, or assisting responsibilities.
- D. Coordinate the release of emergency response information to the media, as necessary, with other local, state, regional, and federal agencies with ESF 15 responsibilities.
- E. Manage the activation and operation of a JIC, which includes the following activities:
 1. Gathering and disseminating emergency information in a multijurisdictional response requires a well-organized coordination process. When multiple PIOs coordinate with each other from their respective EOCs or out in the community, they will use processes and protocols as defined in the JIS.
 2. When situations dictate a large response by ESF 15, the EOC Manager, EOC Director, and ESF 15 coordinator may decide to provide facilities for multiple PIOs to operate in a single operational unit or facility, known as a JIC.
 3. Activation of the JIC will be initiated when an emergency event, or the imminent threat of an event, requires multiple jurisdictions and/or requires dissemination of information to the public to protect the lives, environment, and property of the citizens of Lexington Fayette and/or surrounding counties and jurisdictions.

4. The JIC can operate physically in one location with multiple personnel or through electronic coordination in multiple locations.
5. The JIC functions will be performed by the following teams which will be staffed by DEM PIO, personnel from other ESF 15 primary and supporting agencies, ESF 15 state, regional, and federal Public Information Officers, Public Affairs Officers, and trained volunteers.

The Joint Information System (JIS) consists of the following operating units:

- A. ESF-15 Coordinator/ Lead Public Information Officer
 1. PIO Assistants
 2. JIC Manager
 3. Logistics Liaison
- B. Analysis, Intelligence and Monitoring Group
 1. Local television monitoring unit
 2. Local radio/cable channel monitoring unit
 3. Facebook monitoring unit
 4. Twitter/Snapchat/Text message monitoring unit
 5. Instagram monitoring unit
 6. Website/blog online monitoring unit
 7. VOST coordinator
 8. Telephone unit
- C. Research and Writing Group
 1. Research unit
 2. Writing unit (all types)
 3. Multi-cultural communications unit
 4. Multimedia unit (audio, video, graphics, still images)
- D. Distribution and Publishing Group
 1. Website/Blog unit
 2. Email/email newsletter unit
 3. Social media unit
 4. Radio/TV/Print media unit
 5. Multimedia unit (AM 1620)

6. WebEOC/Internal briefing unit
 7. Telephone unit
- E. External Operations Group
1. Media briefing unit/spokesperson
 2. VIP Unit
 3. Special Assignments
 4. Madison County Liaison
 - a. Reception center/field operations unit
 - b. Public Affairs Rapid Response Team unit