Part II: The Joint Information Center (JIC)

JIC Operations and Functions

A Joint Information Center (JIC) may need to be activated to support a large-scale emergency that requires multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional response. Onsite as well as offsite staffing, and 24-hour operation, may be needed. The following outlines basic PIO functions that will need to be staffed during an emergency event.

Functional Organization
In general, a JIC may have at least five (5) central functions with an assigned lead for each functional area. The PIO Lead and the JIC Manager oversee the functional units of the JIC, Media Relations, Research and Writing, and Special Projects.

The JIC Manager manages the operations of the Public Information office and coordinate the flow of information between functional areas and staff. JIC functional areas will each have a designated lead that will oversee workgroup staff and delegate specific tasks from the roles and responsibilities sheets. The Admin/It Support unit provides administrative, documentation, technical and IT support for the entire PIO operations.

Public Information Officer (PIO) Lead
The PIO Lead reports to the Incident Commander and has overall oversight and command of the PIO office. The PIO Lead is responsible for activating the CERC plan under the direction of incident command.

JIC Manager
The JIC Manager reports to the PIO Lead and is responsible for managing overall JIC staff and JIC operations. This includes oversight of the JIC functional areas and ensuring information is shared among units. The JIC Manager is also charged with managing operations and acts as the PIO Lead when the PIO Lead attends EOC command briefings.

- ***Administrative/ IT Support***
  The Administrative and IT Support Unit reports to the JIC Manager and takes direction from JIC Manager and/or the PIO Lead to provide administrative, clerical and IT support for operations during an emergency event. Additionally, serves as the documentation unit and is responsible for obtaining and maintaining all documentation records including operational files and communication materials.

Part II: The Joint Information Center (JIC)

Media Relations Lead

The Media Relations Lead reports to the PIO Lead and oversees the media relations unit and is responsible for responding to all media calls and inquiries, scheduling and preparing the appropriate spokespersons, planning /scheduling news conferences and interviews and managing on-scene media & crews conducting live feeds.

- ***News Desk***

  The News Desk staff reports to the Media Relations Lead and is primarily responsible for receiving and responding to all basic media calls and inquiries.

- ***Media Logistics***

  The Media Logistics staff reports to the Media Relations Lead. Media Logistics staff is responsible for coordinating logistics for media press conferences, briefings and other needs as determined. The Media Logistics staff report to the Media Relations Lead and interface with News Desk and Media Liaison staff.

- ***Media Monitoring***

  Media Monitoring staff report to the Media Relations Lead. Media Monitoring staff is responsible for monitoring all news media outlets and providing reports to the Rapid Response Unit regarding media trends, misinformation, rumors and accuracy.

- ***Deputy / Field PIO***

  The Deputy/ Field PIO reports to the Media Relations Lead. The Deputy/ Field PIO is stationed in the field (incident command /evacuation center or other designated location) to handle on-site media inquiries and requests. The Deputy/ Field PIO coordinates with the incident commander in the field and reports information back to the main JIC/ PIO operations.

Research and Writing Lead

The Research and Writing Lead reports to the PIO Lead and is responsible for overseeing the gathering of information, the verifying and updating of information, and the final content development of materials, as well as getting final approval from the PIO Lead. Content development includes materials for the media, general public and other communication vehicles such as Web, call center scripts, and other non-traditional communications.

- ***Content Development***

  Content development staff report to the Research & Writing Lead. Content development staff works closely with both the Media Relations and Special Projects units to consult on media and public information materials that need to be developed. Content development is responsible for keeping track of updated information that has been verified and making revisions as appropriate.

- ***Rapid Response***
  Rapid response staff report to the Research & Writing Lead and work closely with the Media Relations and Special Projects units to collect rumors, misinformation, issues and problems that need to be resolved. Rapid Response is also responsible for maintaining a rapid response board with all rumors, misinformation, issues, problems and corrective actions and corrected information.

- ***Translations***
  The Translations staff report to the Research & Writing Lead. Translations staff are responsible for translating all written public information materials in a timely manner, including phone scripts and Web content. Translations staff provide bilingual assistance and respond to ethnic media requests as needed. Translations staff may also be requested to assist with recording phone script messages in other language and with special population needs.

Special Projects Lead

The Special Projects Lead reports to the PIO Lead and is responsible for handling and distribution information to non-media partners. The Special Projects lead is responsible for managing key partner information, rumor control, ensuring that accurate information is posted on all Web pages and call centers.

- ***Key Partners***

The Key Partners staff reports to the Special Projects Lead and is responsible for providing prompt and organized information, reports and updates to all members of the public, including special populations.

- ***Web Page***

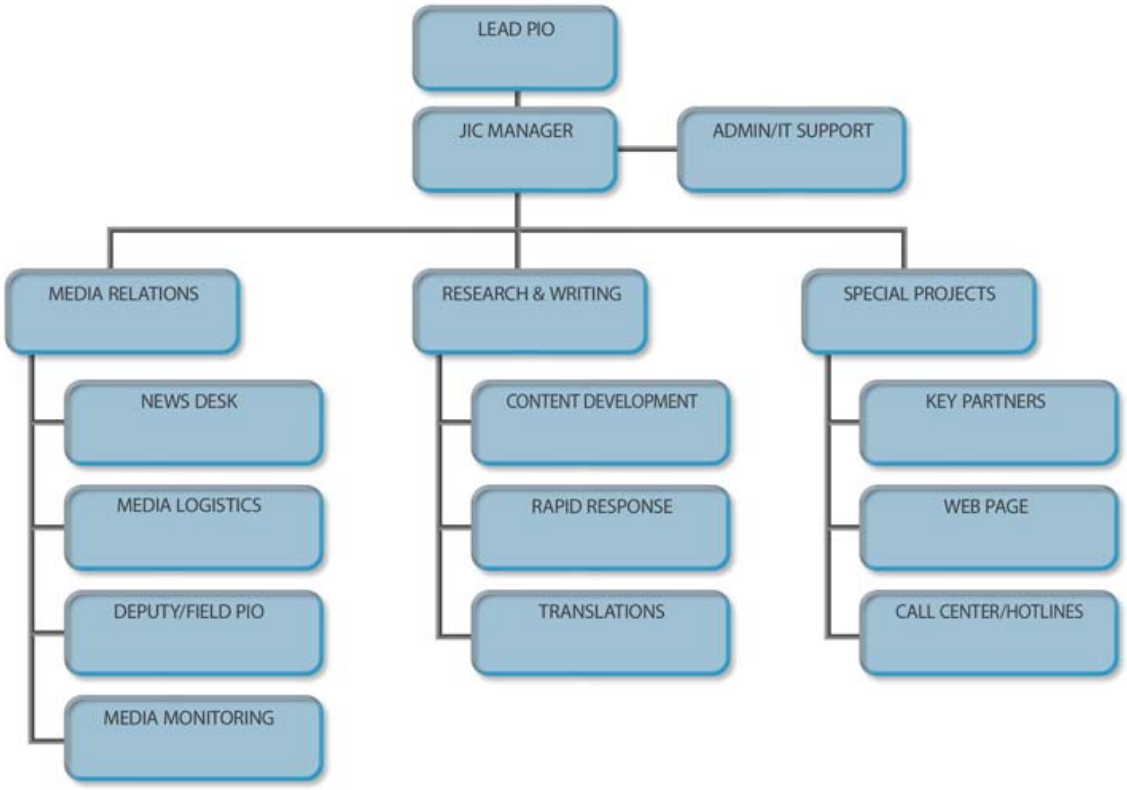
The Web Page staff reports to the Special Projects Lead. Web Page staff is responsible for posting and updating information on the incident web site. The position should be filled by a person with strong technical skills in creating, formatting and posting Web pages and working with digital images.

- ***Call Center/ Hotlines***

The Call Center/Hotline staff report to Special Projects Lead. The Call Center staff is responsible for activating, monitoring, reporting on and managing the Public Information Health Line (PHIL), and providing phone scripts and information to other Call Center/ Hotlines as necessary.

Part II: The Joint Information Center (JIC)

JIC Organizational Chart



Roles and Responsibilities

The following lists outline the main roles and responsibilities for each JIC unit position Additionally, each main JIC unit lead should have a more detailed Job Action Sheet (JAS) that outlines the key tasks that need to be carried out. *(Job Action Sheets are attached separately).*

JIC COMMAND UNIT

JIC PIO LEAD

The JIC PIO Lead reports to Incident Command and is responsible for overall JIC operations and providing prompt and organized responses to the news media as well as coordinating all public information efforts out of the JIC.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Ensures risk communication protocol is followed
- Attends Command Briefings and obtains/ provides updated information to the Health Officer, EOC command, and state/ federal responders in accordance with SEMS/ NEMS protocols
- Advises the Health Officer and chain of command regarding information to be released
- Coordinates with state and local communication partners to ensure that messages are consistent and within the scope of the organization's responsibility
- Ensures that communications are consistent with organization's role in response
- Directs the work related to the release of information
- Researches, gathers and verifies situation information
- Determines need for PIO field operations
- Reviews materials for release to media, public and partners
- Obtains required clearance for release of materials

JIC COMMAND UNIT

JIC MANAGER

The JIC Manager reports to the PIO Lead and is responsible for managing overall JIC functions, operations and staff. This includes oversight of functional units and ensuring information is shared among units. The JIC manager is also charged with managing the JIC and acts as the JIC PIO Lead when the JIC PIO Lead attends EOC command briefings.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Supports JIC PIO Lead by maintaining managerial oversight of JIC Unit Leads and operations while PIO Lead is in command meetings
- Ensures risk communication protocol is followed
- Assesses PIO Staff needs and organizes resources to fulfill those needs
- Ensures that human, technical, and mechanical supply resources are available to provide information to the public
- Ensures that admin support staff is assigned to assist with clerical/admin tasks such as making copies of materials assist with faxing, tech support, and acting as a runner and/or a scribe.
- Provides guidance and support to JIC Unit Leads and clarification on roles / responsibilities when needed
- Obtains regular reports from each JIC Unit Lead
- Briefs and shares key information with the lead PIO from unit leads
- Ensures that regular announcements with any new information, progress updates and key issues are shared with each group
- Summarizes and posts on whiteboards any new key information and critical issues as updates are made
- Clarifies issues with JIC PIO Lead and provide direction to staff as needed
- Assesses flow of operations and determine if staff reassignments need to be made based upon unit productivity

JIC COMMAND UNIT

ADMINISTRATIVE/ IT SUPPORT

The JIC Administration and IT Support Unit reports to and take direction from the JIC Manager and/or the PIO Lead to provide administrative and clerical support for JIC operations during an emergency event. Additionally, this unit is responsible for obtaining and maintaining all documentation records including operational files and communication materials, as well as providing or coordinating IT support to units.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Assists PIO Lead and JIC Manager in providing overall admin and clerical support for JIC operations
- Assists JIC Manager in contacting JIC partners and PIOs to staff JIC
- Serves as the documentation unit for JIC operations and maintains records, paperwork and files and copies of all versions of communications materials
- Submits requests to the incident EOC logistics to secure the necessary JIC equipment, infrastructure and office supplies needed for JIC operations
- Submits requests to County EOC logistics for water, food and other supplies for staff
- Serves as a scribe to update general operational status boards
- Maintains rapid response status boards with rumors, misinformation, issues, concerns, and problems as well as corrective actions taken, including corrected information
- Works with IT support to provide technical support for JIC units as needed
- Assists with distributing final approved materials to JIC units and to EOC PIO
- Assists with answering main JIC lines and routing them to appropriate unit leads, take messages, and return calls as directed by JIC manager
- Assist with clerical and word processing tasks as requested by JIC Manager
- Maintains JIC records, paperwork, files and other documentation as requested
- Serves as a runner and handle issues as they arrives

JIC MEDIA RELATIONS UNIT

MEDIA RELATIONS LEAD

The Media Relations Lead reports to the PIO Lead and is responsible for responding to all media calls and inquiries, scheduling and preparing the appropriate spokespersons, planning /scheduling news conferences and interviews and managing on-scene media & crews conducting live feeds.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Assesses news media needs and organizes resources to fulfill those needs
- Prioritizes media requests and inquiries; assists in responding to media requests/inquiries
- Activates PIO field operations and assigns staff to field locations as needed
- Reviews and obtains lead PIO approval on all media advisories, releases, statements, talking points and other related media materials prior to dissemination
- Establishes News Desk and media line to ensure rapid response to all media calls and inquiries.
- Enables media monitoring functions and rumor control to minimize and correct misinformation and rumors
- Ensures that PIO liaison communicates with field/ deputy PIOs, EOC PIOS, and all other external PIOs that need to be informed of situation
- Oversees the scheduling and briefing of appropriate spokespersons

JIC MEDIA RELATIONS UNIT

NEWS DESK

The News Desk Team reports to the Media Relations Lead and is primarily responsible for receiving and responding to all basic media calls and inquiries.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Receives and responds to initial media call inquires
- Releases approved information provided by Media Relations Lead that has already been approved by the JIC PIO Lead
- Monitors media activity and keep media log of all media calls, inquiries and actions taken
- Handles simple media requests for information and disseminate approved media statements and talking points as needed
- Responds to requests for phone interviews and/or schedule interview with a designated spokesperson working with the Media Relations Lead
- Develops list of media inquiries and questions for Research and Writing Unit to update
- Reports all media rumors to Rapid Response team to verify and correct
- Works with Rapid Response to receive updated and verified information
- Obtains approval from Media Relations Lead before releasing any new verified information
- Develops, updates and maintains contact lists for media

JIC MEDIA RELATIONS UNIT

MEDIA LOGISTICS

The Media Logistics staff reports to the Media Relations Lead. Media Logistics staff is responsible for coordinating logistics for media press conferences, briefings and other needs as determined. The Media Logistics staff report to the Media Relations Lead and interface with News Desk and Media Liaison staff.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Schedules press conferences at the direction of Media Relations Lead
- Schedule subject matter experts for media interview requests
- Ensures that all media and press materials are distributed to all JIC unit leads, including Deputy/ Field PIOs
- Handles media that show up on-site
- Coordinates and manages logistics for news conferences, media tours, media staging areas, news briefings and media centers
- Coordinates with EOC Liaison to send logistics requests to the EOC Logistics Section
- Identifies and secures site locations for news conferences and other media events
- Identifies and secures equipment needs (stage, podium, sound system, mult box, etc.)
- Addresses traffic/ transportation issues as needed
- Notifies Safety Officer and security personnel as needed
- Posts signage and media parking signs
- Greet/ escorts media that show up for media conferences and pass sign-in sheets
- Assembles press packet materials for news conferences
- Assists in distributing of press materials to on-site media
- Provides support to spokespersons as needed
- Takes notes of pertinent media questions during press conferences or interviews that need follow up

JIC MEDIA RELATIONS UNIT

MEDIA MONITORING

Media Monitoring staff report to the Media Relations Lead. Media Monitoring staff is responsible for monitoring all news media outlets and providing reports to the Rapid Response Unit regarding media trends, misinformation, rumors and accuracy.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Monitors all news media including TV, Radio, Newspapers, and news Internet,
- Provides reports that address:
  - Is the information being reported is accurate with regard to message materials,
  - what questions are not being answered with the messaging materials,
  - most frequent concerns,
  - most frequent items of misinformation,
  - unconfirmed rumors needing attention,
  - is the information reaching the public quickly enough?
- Works with Translations Staff to obtain ethnic media monitoring reports
- Monitors tickers/alerts using search engines, major and local news websites regarding the situation
- Creates a news log to document all news media regarding situation
- Shares reports for rapid response with Rapid Response staff and provide updates to all appropriate functional units

JIC MEDIA RELATIONS UNIT

DEPUTY/ FIELD PIO

The Deputy/ Field PIO reports to the Media Relations Lead. The Deputy/ Field PIO is stationed in the field (incident command /evacuation center or other designated location) to handle on-site media inquiries and requests. The Deputy/ Field PIO coordinates with the JIC and the incident commander in the field and reports information back to the JIC.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Serves as a point of contact for on-site media
- Assesses media needs and organize resources to fulfill on-site media needs
- Coordinates with incident commander on field and JIC to handle media requests
- Prioritizes and tracks on-site media requests and inquiries
- Communicates regularly and provides reports to both incident commander and the with Media Relations Lead and/or JIC
- Provides approved media messages on-site
- Acts as or support on-site designated spokesperson
- Sets up on-site media briefing areas as needed
- Distributes all approved media materials and public information materials

JIC RESEARCH & WRITING UNIT

RESEARCH AND WRITING LEAD

The Research and Writing Lead reports to the PIO Lead and is responsible for overseeing the gathering of information, the verifying and updating of information, and the final content development of materials. Content development includes materials for the media, general public and other communication vehicles such as Web, call center scripts, and other non-traditional communications.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Works with Lead PIO to develop message objectives throughout different phases of emergency event
- Works with Lead PIO to obtain verified information to use in material development
- Works closely with Media Relations to assess media information needs
- Identifies additional content requirements and material development from other unit leads
- Obtains status reports from Rapid Response on rumors and misinformation and consults with Lead PIO on how to best resolve
- Assigns and delegates staff to develop content for 3 areas: media materials, general public materials and other communication such as Web and call centers scripts.
- Obtains information from rapid response to update verified information, correct misinformation and rumors
- Obtains final approval from lead PIO on all communication materials before distributing
- Disseminates all final and approved materials to functional unit leads per approval of Lead PIO

JIC RESEARCH & WRITING UNIT

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Content development staff report to the Research & Writing Lead. The contend development staff works closely with both the Media Relations and Special Projects units to consult on media and public information materials that need to be developed. Writing staff is responsible for keeping track of updated information that has been verified and making revisions as appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Reviews message objectives with Research & Writing Lead
- Conducts in-depth research on emergency topic
- Works with subject matter experts to gather additional information
- Develops key messages/ talking points for media relations/news desk and field staff for rapid and accurate release of information
- Develops content that is appropriate for different communication vehicles: the media, general public and other communication vehicles such as Web, call center scripts, and other non-traditional communications:
    - Develops all media related materials: media advisories, media releases, media statements, and talking points
    - Develops all general public materials: situation-specific materials such as fact sheets, FAQs, Q&A's, flyers, notices, emergency alert messages
    - Develops all other communication materials: Web content, Call center scripts and other non-traditional communications
- Adapts/ revises messages based on input from Rapid Response and other functional unit leads
- Coordinates and work with translation services staff to translate all materials

JIC RESEARCH & WRITING UNIT

RAPID RESPONSE

Rapid response staff report to the Research & Writing Lead and work closely with the Media Relations and Special Projects units to collect rumors, misinformation, issues and problems that need to be resolved. Rapid Response is also responsible for maintaining a rapid response board with all rumors, misinformation, issues, problems and corrective actions and corrected information.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Collects reports of rumors and misinformation from all JIC units
- Verifies information with Lead PIO and ensures that all rumors and misinformation are responded
- to in a timely manner with factual information
- Secures additional JIC staffing for rumor control/ telephone bank if necessary
- Handles immediate issues, concerns and problems that arise and resolve quickly
- Assists other functional units in external distribution of corrected information when possible

JIC RESEARCH & WRITING UNIT

TRANSLATIONS

The Translations staff report to the Special Project Lead. Translations staff are responsible for translating all written public information materials in a timely manner, including phone scripts and Web content. Translations staff provide bilingual assistance and respond to ethnic media requests as needed. Translations staff may also be requested to assist with recording phone script messages in other language and with special population needs.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Works with pre-arranged translations service vendor if available
- Translates and writes all public information materials in appropriate languages in an efficient and timely manner if requested
- Reads and proofs all translated materials as requested
- Responds to ethnic media requests for statements and interviews as needed Provide bilingual assistance as requested
- Records phone scripts in other languages as requested
- Ensures that all materials meet cultural and language requirements for special populations
- Assists with other Special Population needs and requests as needed
- Monitors ethnic media on TV, Radio, Print & Internet news for rumors, misinformation and concerns

JIC SPECIAL PROJECTS UNIT

Special Projects Lead

The Special Projects Lead reports to the PIO Lead and is responsible for handling and distribution information to non-media partners. The Special Projects lead is responsible for managing key partner information, rumor control, ensuring that accurate information is posted on all Web pages and call centers.

Roles/ Responsibilities

- Assesses Special Projects needs and organizes resources to fulfill those needs
- Oversees and manages staff assigned to different special project areas
- Ensures information under special project areas are accurate, up-to-date, and consistent with the information that the Research and Writing and Media Relations is providing
- Provides information to key partner contacts on a regular and timely basis
- Keeps legislative and local elected official informed, conducts briefings
- Responds rapidly to rumors and coordinate response between functions
- Maintains incident Web site and monitors other emergency Web sites
- Coordinates information needs with other PIO functional areas to ensure needs are met

JIC SPECIAL PROJECTS UNIT

KEY PARTNERS

The Key Partners staff is responsible for providing prompt and organized information, reports and updates to all members of the public, including special populations.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Distributes information (news releases, fact sheets, Q&As, etc.) to key partners including businesses, hospitals, community based organizations, American Red Cross, Elected Officials via email or fax
- Assists with providing information for the public alert system and e-mail distribution lists
- Assists in coordinating and may participate in public community meetings
- Identifies and communicates with special population regarding the situation to assess their needs
- Responds to inquiries from community partners
- Distributes information internally to employees, officials, etc.
- Coordinates with Translation staff to address special populations

JIC SPECIAL PROJECTS UNIT

WEB PAGE

The Web Page staff reports to the Special Projects Lead. Web Page staff is responsible for posting and updating information on the incident web site. The position should be filled by a person with strong technical skills in creating, formatting and posting Web pages and working with digital images.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Works with Research & Writing unit to obtain approved written information and materials for Web page copy
- Formats and posts all incident information approved by the JIC PIO Lead, including news briefs, news releases, fact sheets, Q&As, etc.
- Ensures that all information posted on the incident web site is timely, accurate, continuously updated, and approved by the JIC PIO Lead
- Provides and distributes updated information for all emergency response Web sites and works with IS staff to post Web content when needed
- Provides material to other organizations for Web posting and, if practical, monitors those web sites. Coordinates with Key Partners staff
- Establishes and maintains links to other emergency response Web sites
- Monitors emergency response Web sites and Web-based information (except news media sites) to determine availability and accuracy of information
- Monitors for rumors, misinformation, issues and concerns on all key emergency and community Web sites, including blogs

JIC SPECIAL PROJECTS UNIT

CALL CENTERS/HOTLINES STAFF

The Call Center/ Hotline staff report to Special Projects Lead. The Call Center staff is responsible for activating, monitoring, reporting on and managing Call Center information and providing phone scripts and information to other Call Center/ Hotlines as necessary.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Works with Special Project Lead to identify an incident “Emergency Hotline"
- Records up-to-date scripted messages and provides phone scripts to other agency call centers as requested
- Works with Translations staff to translate all phone scripts in other languages and ensures that bilingual staff is available to record messages in other languages as needed
- Develops a call log system to monitor call volume, key issues, misinformation and rumors
- Monitors call logs to determine frequently asked questions, most frequent concerns, questions that are not being answered with the messaging materials, and what are the most frequent items of misinformation
- Provides reports of key issues, misinformation and rumors to the Special Projects Lead and the Rapid Response team
- If appropriate, conducts hotline training with appropriate staff members (Technical instructions on how to activate call center hotline)

Developing a Message

During an emergency event, it is paramount that information be timely, accurate, empathetic and caring, pertinent and credible. Additionally, risk communications should disclose what is known and explain the risks, acknowledge any uncertainty, and recognize fears. Risk communication should not dismiss fears or over-reassure any audience about the disaster. It will be important to give people specific actions to take, and make their personal responsibilities clear. By delivering sound and thoughtful communications, we can help prevent ineffective, fear-driven, and potentially damaging response to a serious crisis such as a bioterrorism.

Your First Crisis Message Should Address:

1. Statement of empathy or compassion (must come within 30 seconds)
2. What we know now (who, what, when, where, how)
3. What we don't know (why?)
4. The process (what we're doing to get additional information)
5. Our commitment (when we expect to have updated information)
6. Where to go in the meantime (usually Web site or call center)

What is a "Message"?

Simply said, a message is an overarching theme supported by three or four (and no more) significant points. Most often, a "message" communicates underlying values, not just information. Facts and figures, however, are key elements in supporting the message.

Why Do We Need A Message?

In an emergency, crisis or risk situation, a message is absolutely necessary in order to convey concerns, values, empathy, compassion and to establish credibility and authority. A message gives you a framework and by developing your message you can better control your communications with the media – and the public.

Developing Key Messages- Things to Consider

- The very first communication is the most important communication during an emergency event
- Do not wait until you have all the answers before you start to communicate
- Keep information simple & accurate
- Acknowledge the emergency, crisis or risk
- Express concern, empathy and compassion for victims, families and the community.
- Recognize peoples' fears – but do not over-do it, "feed" or "fuel" it
- If you don't have all of the information, say so – but let the media know when you'll get back to them, and then get back to them.
- By being fast & accurate, you establish your credibility with the media, identify your department as the "go to" source for information and begin to manage the public's response to the event

Part II: The Joint Information Center (JIC)

Elements of a Message in Emergency Event

In an emergency, crisis or risk event, the message includes an overarching theme (concern, empathy, compassion) and three major points with supporting facts. Make sure to keep the information simple and accurate. If you don't have all the information right away, say so -- but let the media know when you'll get back to them with updated information.

Be mindful about how much information people can absorb at any one time. This is particularly true during an emergency event, when people are emotional and upset. Address what the public needs to hear, even more than what you want to say. Adjust your response and message accordingly by thinking about tone and wording.

Acknowledge the crisis by expressing concern for victims, family and community. Do not overlook how important it is to express sympathy and empathy, as well as to acknowledge people's fears. As soon as possible, put a statement of concern on the Web site and address the emotional side of the event at the beginning of a media briefing or update.

Don't try to allay the panic people will be feeling by avoiding bad news. Panic does not necessarily come from bad news; it is more likely to come from no information, conflicting information or misinformation from authorities. Provide the best information you have in a clear and confident manner.

Element #1: Situation
"What has happened?"

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- How and why did it happen?
- Who is involved?
- Do we know the cause?
- What's going to happen next?
- Were there any injuries? How many people were affected?
- Was there any damage?
- Is there any current danger or ongoing danger?

Element #2: Risks during a Public Health Emergency
Who is at risk? Who is at the greatest risk?

- What are the signs/symptoms?
- Is it contagious, communicable and/or spreading? How?
- Are there effective treatments?
- What are they?

Element #3: Actions

What actions are being taken by Public Health?

- How is the Public Health Department responding to the event?
- What is being done?
- Who is doing it?
- Why is it being done?
- How is it being done?

What actions should you and your family take?

What does the public need to know and/or do?

- How do I respond?
- How do I protect myself/family?
- How can I get more information?
- How can I help?
- When will there be more information?