

4. EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

4.1 Introduction

The ability to provide the public, media and DOE employees with accurate and timely information is based on an effective Emergency Public Information (EPI) program. To be effective, emergency public information should be coordinated with onsite and offsite Federal, state, local and tribal Emergency Response Organizations (ERO). The EPI program provides the means for a facility to coordinate the timely exchange of information among representatives from DOE and other organizations. This coordination is critical to prevent dissemination of confusing, conflicting, and erroneous information.

Departmental and emergency response credibility is enhanced through an effective emergency public information program, which is based on a day-to-day public information operation that can be expanded for an emergency response. This capability to expand is developed in cooperation with onsite and offsite organizations through the detailed planning and coordination of plans, procedures, education, and training.

This chapter will identify the emergency response components of the EPI program and their roles during emergency response; emergency facilities necessary to support response; establishment of media interfaces; development and release of emergency information; development of EPI training, drills, and exercises to including offsite organizations; development of an emergency public education program; and organization of a Joint Information Center (JIC) with representatives of offsite agencies.

Base Program. EPI requirements are focused in Chapter IX of DOE O 151.1. This chapter applies to Base Program facilities/sites, since all emergencies will require some EPI response. The extent of the EPI program and organization for Base Program facilities/sites depends on the types of Operational Emergencies identified and the potential consequences. The detailed structure of EPI described in this chapter is appropriate for Hazardous Material Programs or Base Programs which potentially affect more than the facility/site itself (e.g., a substantial oil spill), but is useful as general guidance for other Base Program facilities and sites.

4.2 EPI Organization

Operations/Field Offices and sites/facilities are responsible for developing and implementing EPI Plans and organizations. The EPI Plan should specify roles and identify individuals within the EPI organization by position and responsibility. EPI activities and the number of EPI staff required to respond effectively to an emergency will vary with the nature, severity, duration, and public and media perception of the emergency. For

example, while full notification and activation of the EPI organization would likely be required during a Site Area Emergency or General Emergency, only partial notification and activation may be required during an Alert. This section provides guidance for establishing an EPI response organization to meet the needs of the media, public, and employees during all emergency events.

The overall emergency response to and recovery from an Operational Emergency is directed and coordinated by the site emergency director. The Operations/Field Office public affairs director is responsible for DOE EPI activities during the response to and recovery from an emergency. The EPI organization supports and enhances the onsite and offsite emergency operations.

4.2.1 Initial EPI Organization

Prior to activation of the JIC, the following functions should be staffed, commensurate with the graded approach for the DOE Emergency Management System.

- A Public Affairs Director within the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) who reports to the Emergency Director and directs and coordinates EPI activities; who coordinates preparation and release of all EPI directly with the Emergency Director; and who communicates from the EOC directly to the facility established to disseminate emergency information.
- A Public Information Officer assigned to the EPI response team involved in an offsite response deployment to provide information regarding DOE roles and capabilities.
- A News Writer to develop news releases in coordination with the Public Affairs Director.
- An Authorized Derivative Classifier, on call for events that may have security implications, to review news releases for classified material.
- A Media Relations Coordinator to respond to media and public inquiries.
- An Employee Communications Coordinator to inform employees and respond to their inquiries; should also be assigned liaison responsibility to employee families.
- A Government Coordinator to ensure notifications and updates are provided to cognizant representatives of all local, state, tribal, and Federal government organizations.

4.2.2 Full EPI Organization (after activation of the JIC)

When the JIC is activated, the JIC management team, which includes the JIC Manager, News Manager, DOE spokesperson, and outside agency representatives, should be located where it can most effectively share and coordinate information. These position titles may vary slightly from site to site, but the functions of information coordination, production, dissemination, and monitoring and analysis of media coverage and public perceptions should be incorporated into the JIC organization. Internal and external organizational relationships should be depicted in the Emergency Plan. The primary responsibilities of each member of the EPI organization are identified as follows.

- **Public Affairs Director.** A DOE representative, usually located in the Operations Office EOC, who reports to the Emergency Director and directs and coordinates all EPI activities; coordinates preparation, approval, and release of all EPI; communicates with Public Affairs Liaison in DOE Headquarters EOC; communicates from the EOC directly with the JIC about ongoing emergency activities to identify which activities may require news releases and/or media briefings; and resolves issues and questions from the JIC Manager.
- **News Release Writer.** Works directly with the Public Affairs Director to gather confirmed information on the event and prepares news releases.
- **Joint Information Center Manager.** Responsible for overall management of the JIC, the timely release of clear and accurate information to the public and media; oversight of the JIC facility and JIC staff; and remains in direct communication with the Public Affairs Director. Ensures coordination with, and among, local, state, tribal, and Federal designated representatives at the JIC and other locations, and accommodates JIC administrative support needs.
- **Joint Information Center News Manager.** Accommodates the news media; coordinates news conferences; provides media kits and news releases to the media; and assists the JIC Manager in all matters pertaining to interaction with the media. Serves as an extension of the JIC Manager by tracking inquiries between the EOC and the JIC; keeping the Public and Media Inquiry Teams updated on emergency events; ensuring that the JIC Manager has adequate review of information prior to media briefings; ensuring that communications are maintained with the EOC; and remaining in direct communication with the JIC Manager.
- **Media Monitoring Team.** Monitors broadcast and print media coverage of the emergency; records broadcast coverage; retains copies of print media coverage; reviews all media coverage for inaccuracies and rumors; provides the JIC Manager

with reports; and periodically, or upon request, provides to the JIC News Manager an updated analysis of issues, including perceptions of the public and media.

- **Media Inquiry Team.** Contacts the media upon activation of the JIC; ensures that approved news releases are provided to the media; updates the media not present at the JIC; receives and assimilates incoming data from media monitoring team and others; and responds to incoming telephone queries and requests. Reports to the JIC News Manager through a team leader. Information for response to media calls may be obtained from status boards, news releases, chronologies, fact sheets, supervisor's notes from news conferences, resource books, and other approved written materials.
- **Public Inquiry Team.** Answers inquiries from the general public with accurate, up-to-date information to prevent the spread of misinformation. Information for response to public calls may be obtained from status boards, news releases, chronologies, fact sheets, supervisor's notes from news conferences, resource books, and other approved written materials.
- **Joint Information Center Support Staff.** Provides administrative and logistical support and equipment needs including, but not limited to, outgoing services, such as distribution of all fax notifications on a designated fax list; accomplishment of incoming fax services, such as passing all incoming fax messages to the JIC Manager as soon as possible; reproducing news releases and distributing them to the JIC staff, media, and others in the JIC; and messenger services.
- **Offsite Agency Public Information Representatives (representatives of local governments, states, tribes, and Federal agencies).** Coordinate information to be released to the media; provide accurate, timely, and applicable information to the public about emergency operations within their jurisdictions; participate, as appropriate, in news conferences.
- **DOE Spokesperson.** Briefs the media and/or public on site response and recovery activities and event status. A technically skilled, senior-level DOE manager trained in crisis/risk communications, the spokesperson represents site management and must be a credible source of information. Usually is recognized as a spokesperson for DOE and contractor management.
- **Technical Spokesperson.** Interprets technical information to the media and public in lay terms, including pertinent information on radiological, chemical, other hazards, and operational implications of the incident, as needed. Technical support may be provided to the DOE spokesperson and other JIC staff.

- **Employee Communications Coordinator.** Informs employees of event status and emergency response and recovery activities in support of the Emergency Director. Responds to employee inquiries. May also make communications concerning special situations involving employee families.
- **Authorized Derivative Classifier.** On call for events that may have security implications. Reviews news releases for classified material.

4.2.3 Position Descriptions and Staffing

Position descriptions should describe the critical functions of each position and include checklists. A checklist should itemize the duties relevant to each emergency response position, beginning with notification and continuing with the tasks to be performed throughout an emergency until normal operations resume. At a minimum, each position should be staffed with a primary and one alternate. If possible, a third person should be assigned to serve as a second alternate.

4.2.4 Facility Description

The JIC must provide adequate space and equipment to accomplish the functions addressed in the previous section. Additionally, the JIC must provide for coordination of emergency information among onsite and offsite organizations.

JIC plans should provide work space for reporters and camera crews. This space could be an auditorium or other area within proximity of the JIC, where press conferences and associated media activities might be accomplished (i.e., phones, facsimile, work space, podiums, lighting, microphones, etc.). Requirements should be established on the basis of a media needs analysis.

The EPI Plan and site/facility emergency plan must specify the exact locations of the JIC by building name, street address, city, and state, as well as driving instructions from airport(s), major cities, and alternate routes. For Hazardous Material Operational Emergencies, an alternate JIC also should be included in areas where the primary JIC is inside the EPZ and the JIC may need to be evacuated.

The EPI and site/facility emergency plan should also address the following topics.

- **Physical Security.** Security is imperative in all aspects of an EPI Program. Security personnel should be on call to control access to the JIC by designated response personnel. Security should control access to the site by the media as required by procedure. Special cases of exception should be approved by the

Emergency Director or the designated representative. Procedures for badging should be provided.

- **JIC Identification/Media Sign-in.** Procedures for maintaining 24-hour points of contact for media and procedures for media arrival and sign-in to the JIC should be established.
- **Equipment and Supplies.** Equipment associated with the functions addressed above should be based on a media needs analysis, be readily accessible, and include items such as adequate phone lines for JIC staff; television, newspapers, and radios for media monitoring; computers and printers for news release preparation and chronology maintenance; facsimile machines and copiers; media kits or information pamphlets which include information on the site, plant, emergency procedures, and/or general schematics/photographs, visual aids for briefings to include maps, site plans, schematics, and EPZs; and Internet access information, as appropriate.

4.2.5 Training

Training is an essential part of a successful EPI Program and is required by DOE O 151.1. Specialized training is necessary for emergency responders to understand how to deal with the public, employees, and media. The following concepts should be used while developing an EPI training program.

- All EPI Program team members should receive initial training prior to participation in an event, drill, or exercise. Training should include an overview of EPI emergency preparedness and response; DOE policy on emergency management, site plans, and procedures; site/facility operation; hazardous materials risks; and facility-specific orientation training. Position-specific training should include cross-training.
- Each team member should receive comprehensive, annual requalification training in their respective functions, as well as in the concept of operations of the entire EPI Organization and its relationship to the whole site emergency response effort. This requalification training should include a:
 - summary of “key topics” covered in the initial training;
 - demonstration of functional capabilities through tabletops, stop-action drills, and other related activities; and
 - detailed review of findings and lessons learned from exercises.

- JIC operations training should be made available for appropriate DOE personnel, offsite emergency management representatives, government officials, state emergency management personnel, county commissioners, tribal representatives, and county health officials.

4.2.6 Drills and Exercises

Exercises are valuable to evaluate JIC plans and procedures and provide DOE staff with experience in working with offsite EROs. Drills also help train JIC personnel in the public information functions that must be performed in an emergency. At a minimum, both drills and exercises should be used to retrain, evaluate, and provide experience to personnel in the areas proved deficient during past drills, exercises, or actual events, or to implement new ideas and procedures.

This guidance also applies to developing scenarios whereby all persons with a response role in the EPI Program are sufficiently drilled. The EPI organization always should have a representative on the scenario development team for an exercise involving EPI to ensure the objectives of the EPI organization are incorporated and lessons learned are fed back into the JIC operation and EPI Program.

Every EPI team member should participate in at least one exercise annually. During an exercise, particular attention should be placed on the EPI team's performance; the effectiveness of information coordination, production, dissemination, monitoring and analysis functions; and the overall effectiveness of disseminating timely and accurate information to the public and media.

4.3 Media Relations

The news media is the major conduit through which the public perceives how DOE and contractors respond to an emergency. Within available resources, every effort should be made to accommodate the needs of the media. Cooperation should result in balanced, accurate information dissemination. Senior DOE management should be accessible, prompt, and forthright in dealing with the media prior to, during, and after emergency events. Credibility and empathy are imperative. Effective and prompt interface with the media and the public before, during, and after an event builds such credibility.

4.3.1 Guidelines

The following methods are suggested for use in emergency situations at DOE sites or involving DOE assets offsite.

- During an emergency, or as other events warrant, the EPI Organization and the JIC should be established as the single authoritative source of information regarding the event response, protective actions implemented onsite and recommended to offsite authorities, and long-term implications.
- If the health and safety of the public and/or site personnel are in jeopardy, this must be addressed immediately and candidly. Response to public perception also must be addressed immediately and candidly. "Perception is reality."
- Avoid use of technical jargon during news conferences. While it is important to have available technical details of an incident or accident, it is imperative that an explanation in lay terms be made as quickly as possible.
- Continuing education should be provided to the news media. The media should be invited and encouraged to participate in emergency response training, including drills and exercises, and to acquaint themselves with the facility management, emergency plans, and emergency points of contact. This education could be accomplished through special events at the site, editorial board visits, tours, or similar activities.

4.3.2 News Releases

Considerations for preparation, approval, and dissemination of news releases are as follows.

- A timely response to public/media is imperative to establish credibility. "Fill-in-the-blank," pre-format news releases should be prepared and approved in advance. An initial announcement may state: ***"There has been an X at X facility; details will be available at a news conference at X location. A Joint Information Center has been established and the media inquiry phone number is X. The public inquiry phone number is X."***
- The approval process should not be a hindrance. DOE Headquarters approval of initial news releases is not required in an emergency in order to provide health and safety information to the public. However, copies of news releases should be provided to DOE Headquarters as soon as practicable. Subsequent news releases should be coordinated with the Headquarters Public Affairs representative in the Headquarters EOC (EMT). Procedures for the approval protocol for news releases must be established. All individuals and alternates who are responsible for such approvals should be designated responders within the emergency organization.

- While DOE Orders stipulate that news releases and other associated notifications or news conferences occur in a “reasonable” time frame, DOE should adhere to the standards of other Federal agencies and private industry by releasing information within 1 hour of the event. Also, JIC organizations should be cognizant of the deadline schedules of all media (radio, television, and print) to maximize the timing of press releases.
- Chronological files of news releases, pending releases, media inquiries, and rumor control should be maintained for reference. Printed material supplied to the media should be numbered for easy reference.
- Photographs, maps, charts, and other visual aids should be prepared in advance. Materials should be easy to read and of print and broadcast quality.

4.3.3 News Conferences

News conferences should be held as emergency events or public and media interest warrant. However, there should be a minimum of two news conferences a day for the duration of the emergency. They should be scheduled with media deadlines in mind. News conferences should be announced in advance so maximum attendance, and therefore, maximum information dissemination, can be achieved.

Information provided at news conferences or in news releases should be coordinated with and monitored by each organization represented in the JIC to ensure consistency. This cooperation should include procedures for verbal and/or written acknowledgment of review of news releases and participation in meetings prior to news conferences to determine what is going to be addressed and who will speak.

4.4 Offsite Coordination

EPI plans should provide for cooperative interface and coordination of public education and information activities with local, state, tribal, and Federal response organizations.

4.4.1 Public Education

A program to educate the public is the foundation of an effective and accurate EPI Program. Up-front planning can ensure that the public understands the messages given during an emergency, which explain the risks posed to them and the protective actions they must take. The public education program therefore must be based on the actual risks posed by the site/facility/activity as defined by the Hazards Survey/Hazard Assessment process. The Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) or local emergency

management agency should be involved in communicating this information to the community and planning the offsite responses.

Education should include information on notifications and protective actions, both onsite and offsite. Information may be disseminated in lectures, radio programs, or written materials, such as calendars, brochures, telephone books, etc., to be used in residences, offices, hotels, and other public locations. Information should include shelter-in-place, evacuation routes, relocation centers, locator services, risks and hazards onsite, and appropriate radio frequencies and/or television/cable stations used for public information and Emergency Alert System announcements. A 24-hour general public information phone number for public inquiry should be publicized. A media kit should be available for all radio, TV stations, newspapers, and other periodicals.

Other items to be addressed include special needs such as transportation for the handicapped, hospital information, respiratory protection, and "radio-protective" drugs, where applicable. Issues concerning special facilities such as schools, prisons, nursing homes, senior citizen or child care facilities, shopping centers, and businesses within the EPZ should be addressed. Transportation is an important element of which the public should be aware (e.g., bus service, ambulances, and traffic control procedures used by local law enforcement). Agricultural information also is important. State and local representatives will need to provide educational material to farmers, market vendors, milk producers, and others dependent on land within the EPZ or potentially affected areas.

An annual media day is an excellent time to implement the public education program. The local media must be seen as part of the emergency management team. If the media is educated in the risks posed by the site/facility/activity, it can better fulfill the role of communicating effectively and accurately to the public. The media also must understand the elements of the site/facility/activity emergency information program. An open house, in conjunction with media day or the site annual exercise, is an excellent way to involve the media in public education and gain support from the community.

4.4.2 Offsite Response Organizations

EPI plans should provide for cooperative interface and coordination of public education and information activities with local, state, tribal, and Federal response organizations. There should be continual interface with local, State, Tribal, and Federal representatives, local executives, and the Governor's office to ensure accuracy of information during an emergency. These interfaces should be arranged and documented in formal plans, memoranda of agreement or understanding, and/or other arrangements. Local, state, and tribal governments should be encouraged to prepare their own public information response plans and implementing procedures in conjunction with the site/facility EPI planning

effort. Local, state, and tribal governments should be encouraged to participate in EPI training and drills/exercises conducted by the site.

4.5 Bibliography

DOE 151.1 Chg 2. *Comprehensive Emergency Management System*. October 25, 1996.

Title 40 CFR 300. *National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan*.

CANCELED

This page intentionally left blank.