Emergency Operations Guide

INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

The North Slope Borough uses an All-Hazard Emergency Operations Plan concept based on the National Incident Management System, which is a broad, all-hazard emergency management system that encompasses all the various types of emergencies and addresses mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities.

The National Incident Management System actively encourages the development of the common management functions required for response to emergencies for all types, while recognizing the unique preparedness requirements of specific hazards. NIMS enables each level of government to integrate with other levels, public agencies, and with private sector resource providers. Optimum use and integration of existing skilled personnel, emergency facilities, and emergency equipment across all levels of government is encouraged.

The All-Hazard Incident Management Team (IMT) will be trained and experienced with the Incident Command System (ICS). The Incident Command System is adaptable to meet the needs of small to very large incidents as well as for multiple incidents. There are many factors that determine the complexity of an incident. These include:

- Size
- Location
- Jurisdictions involved
- Political sensitivity
- Organizational complexity
- Values-at-risk
- Varying agency policies
Emergency Operations Guide

Exactly when an incident goes from one complexity to the next is "in the eyes of the beholder." There is usually no clear-cut line between complexities. The jurisdictional head or designated representative must determine the complexity of an incident and assign qualified personnel as needed. In situations where multiple agencies and jurisdictions are involved, the determination of complexity and assignment of personnel should be agreed upon jointly.

The Incident Commander or Borough Emergency Manager may consider the following in determining the transition from one level of incident to another or when an IMT from outside the Borough may be required:

- Complexity of the incident
- Number of other incidents going on in the Borough
- Availability of staffing for the Borough IMT
- Duration of the incident
- Special technical needs
- Number of days the Borough IMT has been working
NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM
QUALIFIED PERSONNEL ROSTER

Incident Commander

________________________________________  Incident Commander

Command Staff

________________________________________  Public Information Officer

________________________________________  Safety Officer

________________________________________  Liaison Officer

________________________________________  Legal Officer

Operations Section

________________________________________  Operations Section Chief

Planning Section

________________________________________  Planning Section Chief

Logistics and Finance Section

________________________________________  Logistics Section Chief
SECTION 4: PUBLIC INFORMATION
Emergency Operations Guide

INTRODUCTION

Coordination with the media and the orchestration of an effective response from the entire community can best be accomplished by establishing a procedure that provides complete and accurate information before, during, and after an emergency. Effective public information can enhance respect and understanding of the local government, as well as aid in response to emergencies.

ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

During routine operations, public information for the Borough is the responsibility of the Borough Mayor's Office. Public information concerning the activities of specific departments within a community, such as police or fire, is the responsibility of the individual department's Public Information Officer until activation of the Emergency Operations Plan.

During an emergency that involves the activation of the Incident Management Team, or at the discretion of the Borough Public Information Officer (PIO), a lead PIO shall be appointed to coordinate the dissemination of information about the incident. This person shall assume the duties of the Incident Public Information Officer in the EOC, and shall be the sole person to disseminate public information with the approval of the Incident Commander.

Other local departmental and agency Public Information Officers shall support the Incident PIO as assigned, and shall refer inquiries concerning the incident to the PIO.
DISASTER EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION ORGANIZATION

In the event of an extremely complex incident, the PIO may be assisted by the staff represented in the outline below. In the absence of the Borough PIO (or at the discretion of the Incident Commander and the public information staff), the position of Incident Public Information Officer may be assumed by the Public Information Officer from the lead department or agency. Each department or agency should have an assigned primary and alternate PIO, especially if the primary PIO would have operational duties at a major incident. In addition, the PIO function should be filled at field command posts, congregate care shelters, EOCs, and the various agencies, all reporting to and coordinating with the incident PIO.
The flow of information within an incident typically begins within the incident from on-scene sources or observers. As the incident becomes more complex information will begin to flow both from and to the incident scene. The PIO must establish and maintain the two way communications between the incident and the team early in the incident.

| Information from on-scene sources  
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<th>(includes on-scene public information staff)</th>
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| Emergency Operations Center Staff  
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<th>Borough Mayor, Assembly, Staff and Media ~ Public</th>
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Emergency Operations Guide

RELEASE OF INFORMATION GUIDELINES

In emergencies, the Public Information Officer shall use guidelines in evaluating and releasing information concerning the incident.

1. Accurate information will be provided to the media. Those facts that can be confirmed should be released within twenty minutes of the event. If little information is available, the following statement illustrates a sample message that can be issued.

   **"We are aware that an (accident-incident) involving (type of incident) occurred at approximately (time), in the vicinity of (general location). Emergency crews are responding, and we will have additional information available as we are able to confirm it. We will hold a briefing at (location), and will notify the press at least one-half hour prior to the briefing. At this time, this briefing is the only place where officials authorized to speak about the incident and confirmed information will be available. Thank you for your assistance."**

2. Emergency information dissemination should be restricted to approved, specific, and verified information concerning the event, and should include:

   - Nature and extent of emergency occurrence.
   - Impacted or potentially affected areas of the community or borough.
   - Advice on emergency safety procedures, if any.
   - Activities being conducted by the community or borough to combat the hazardous conditions, or mitigate the effects.
   - Procedures for reporting emergency conditions to the EOC.

3. Information concerning the event should be consistent for all members of the media.

4. Information should be presented in an objective manner.

5. Rumor control is vital during emergency situations. Sensitive or critical information must be verified and authorized by the Incident Commander before release. Inaccurate information published by the media should be corrected. Unconfirmed rumors or information from unauthorized or unnamed sources may be responded to in the following manner.

   **"We will not confirm that until we have been able to check out the information through authorized sources. Once we have confirmed information, we will release it to all members of the media at the same time."**
6. Information that media representatives often request includes:
   - Disaster: What is it?
   - Location: Where is it?
   - Time: When did it occur?
     How long will it last?
   - Deaths: Are there any?
     How many?
   - Injuries: Are there any?
     How many?
   - What is the nature of the injuries?
   - Injured: Where are they being treated?
   - Involved Agencies: What other agencies responded?
     How many?
     What level of involvement do they have?

7. Do not release information that might hinder emergency response, prejudice the outcome of an investigation, or pose a further threat to public safety. Examples include:
   - Personal conjecture about the course of the emergency, or the conduct of the response.
   - Opinions about evidence, or a suspect or a defendant’s character, guilt or innocence.
   - Contents of statements used in alibis, admissions, or confessions.
   - References to the results of various tests and examinations.
   - Statements which might jeopardize the testimony of credible witnesses.
   - Demeaning information or statements which have no bearing on the incident.
   - Information which might be compromising.

8. In an incident involving fatalities, the names of the victims or the cause of death shall not be released without authorization from the medical examiner’s office.

9. Confidential information is not to be released. This includes the home phone numbers and addresses of borough or local personnel and volunteer emergency workers.

10. The Public Information Officer will not allow media access to the EOC except under limited, controlled circumstances, and only with the prior approval of the Incident Commander. Before being admitted to the EOC, media representatives shall display appropriate identification, and shall be escorted by a member of the public information staff.
11. Public information briefings, releases, interviews, and warnings shall be logged, and if possible, tape-recorded. Copies shall become part of the final incident package.

12. Whenever possible and appropriate, media briefings shall be scheduled in cooperation with media deadlines. For national media representatives, these times are generally 1100 and 1500 EST. Do not commit to firm briefing times unless it is certain that these times can be kept. It may be more efficient to notify the media one-half hour in advance of a briefing.
Emergency Operations Guide

MEDIA BRIEFING FACILITIES

The following areas may be available for media briefings during emergencies:
- Borough Assembly Chambers
- Local Community Conference Rooms

In the event of a major, protracted incident, it may be more convenient for the borough or community, and efficient for the media, for briefings to take place at some other central location, where activities will not interfere with the conduct of the incident.

As able, the public information staff may assist the media in such logistical support as finding hotel rooms or lodging, providing coffee and refreshments for early morning briefings, making arrangements for additional phones, etc. The PIO should not offer to pay for hotel rooms, meals or other expenses of the media.

MEDIA ACCESS TO THE SCENE

In cooperation with on-scene personnel, media representatives may be allowed restricted access to the scene. This should be done with regard to the safety of media personnel, the impact on response, and the wishes and concerns of the victims. On-scene visits by the media must be accompanied by a member of the Public Information staff. A release of liability should be signed by all representatives before they visit the scene.

If it is not safe or practical to admit all media representatives to the scene, a media "pool" may be created, where media representatives select one camera crew to take footage for all. If even such controlled access is impractical, a "staged" photo opportunity to tape response vehicles or support activities may satisfy the media's need for video footage.

Protect response personnel from unwanted media intrusion. Off-shift personnel should be provided uninterrupted rest. It may be necessary to provide security to local community emergency, fire, or police stations and allow them to disconnect telephones to ensure privacy.

Victims and families should have access to public officials without having to face the media. Try to provide a secure entrance to briefing areas, or arrange a meeting or interview room away from the press.

The media may be allowed access to response personnel at the discretion of the Public Information Officer, the Operations Section Chief, and the Incident Commander, only if such an interview does not interfere with the response effort. Borough or local personnel should not comment on the incident without the knowledge and consent of the personnel listed above.
Emergency Operations Guide

Media will often request access to space on aircraft being used in the emergency response and recovery. The PIO needs to coordinate those requests through the Operation Section Chief prior to allowing media on flights. It is often better to have the media on an aircraft under the full control of the incident instead of allowing them to fly around and over the incident on their own. Often one photographer or videographer can be accommodated who will then share their footage.

RUMOR CONTROL AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

The Public Information Officer may establish a separate “branch” to deal with providing emergency information to the public through the EAS and rumor control lines. Rumor control numbers shall be published via the media. Release will result in fewer non-emergency calls to 911 and the EOC General Staff, will aid in information gathering, and will offer the public a means of getting valid information about the incident, rather than potentially harmful rumors.

Requests for non-emergency assistance received by the public information staff should be routed to the appropriate EOC staff.

INTRA-COMMUNITY TO BOROUGH COMMUNICATIONS

The community and borough communications points, as well as community and borough staff not directly involved in the emergency response, must receive up to date information about the incident, including the numbers for Rumor Control, since the public will attempt to contact the community and borough through these familiar routes. The PIO should provide all borough and local public agencies with copies of media releases, information bulletins or other incident information to keep the agency staff informed. Establishing a “trapline” system of providing information on a daily basis to private businesses can also be useful in keeping the community informed and rumors controlled.

JOINT INFORMATION CENTERS

In a very large incident involving all levels of government, the Public Information Officer may become a member of, or feed information to, a Joint Information Center (JIC). A JIC may be set up in a central location, and is designed to allow Public Information Officers from involved response and recovery agencies to coordinate information released to the media and the public. A JIC will always be formed when there is a borough, state and federal response to an incident.
Emergency Operations Guide

PUBLIC INFORMATION FORMS

The following forms or documents have been developed to assist in overall public information coordination:

INCIDENT STATUS SUMMARY (ICS FORM 209)
This form will be completed by the Planning Section or the official requesting activation of this plan. The information contained is a brief analysis of the type of incident, damage, injuries or deaths, and initial response.

INCIDENT ACTION PLAN
This document will be completed for complex incidents by the Planning Section. It contains more detailed information about the incident, responders, and plans for control. With the approval of the Incident Commander, portions of the Incident Action Plan may be used to brief, or be release to the media.

UNIT LOG (ICS FORM 214)
The unit log is used to document action taken, instructions to unit staff, and occurrences significant to the unit.

WARNING MESSAGE LOG
The Warning Message Log is used to document time, method, and nature of warnings to the public, and is maintained by the public information staff.

All of the above forms will become part of the final incident package.

A list of local media contacts can be found in the Telephone Call List located in Volume 4. It includes area EAS stations, major television stations, and newspapers. It does not include all area media representatives.
Emergency Operations Guide

SECTION 5: COMMUNICATIONS
Emergency Operations Guide

DESCRIPTION

The EOC Communications Center is the centralized point within the EOC where incident communications equipment and operators are located for the transmission and receiving of information from field operations, off-site facilities, off-site agencies, and other communication points that have a need to communicate with the IMT. The communications center and the rigorous control of information flow to and from the center is the essence of the EOC. Without this critical communications flow there is no effective incident management.

The Communications Center is the responsibility of the Communications Center Manager, under the supervision of the Communications Unit Leader within the Logistics Section. Located within this center are the various types of communications equipment required by the IMT, including telephones, Iridium phones, fax machines, radios, and others.

As well as the communications equipment, the various equipment operators will be working in the communications center, such as: phone operators; dispatchers and radio operators; amateur radio (HAM) radio operators; and helpers.
Emergency Operations Guide

COMMUNICATIONS FLOW

Messages are received by operators in the communications center. Messages that cannot be transmitted via phone and/or radio are transferred to hard copy by utilizing the EOC message form (ICS Form-213). This form is then forwarded to the message center for proper routing to the appropriate individual and/or section.

All incident related calls should be referred to the communications center, with the exception of requests for general information that can be satisfied by the Public Information Officer staff, utilizing the prepared statement provided by the PIO staff.

All external, agency or other outside communication points shall be furnished EOC section phone numbers and the names of personnel staffing the section. Additional phones will be assigned to the PIO staff to receive calls from the media and public.

Phone lines will be dedicated to providing a communications link between the communications points and the EOC. These numbers shall not be released to the public or any other entities.

Communications between the EOC and communications points may be further augmented with written messages using the general message form (ICS Form-213).

NOTE: See Message Center section for more information on message form distribution and use.
Emergency Operations Guide

EOC MESSAGE FLOW

COMMUNICATIONS
(Phone, Radio, etc.)

MESSAGE RECEIVED

CAN MESSAGE BE HANDLED DIRECTLY BY OR RADIO

YES
TRANSMIT MESSAGE RADIO OR TELEPHONE

NO
RADIO DISPATCHER OR PHONE FILLS OUT MESSAGE FORM AND FORWARDS MESSAGE CENTER

MESSAGE FORM RECEIVED AT MESSAGE CENTER, ENTERED IN LOG AND ASSIGNED A CONTROL

IMMEDIATE ACTION

YES
ROUTE TO APPROPRIATE INDIVIDUAL SECTION FOR e.g., OPS, PLANS, LOGISTICS,

NO
GENERAL
FORWARD TO APPROPRIATE SECTION OR
COPY SENT TO PLANS

COPY SENT TO STATUS UNIT FOR DISPLAY INFORMATION IF OTHERWISE FORWARD DOCUMENTATION

DOCUMENTATION UNIT FILING

ACTION COMPLETED

DOCUMENTATION FORWARDED TO PLANS

DOCUMENTATION UNIT FILING