

## **Emergency Support Function Annex for ESF # 15 (External Affairs) to the State of Alabama Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)**

### **Emergency Support Function (ESF) #15 — External Affairs**

**Primary Agency:** Alabama Emergency Management Agency

**Support Agencies:**

- Governor's Office
- Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries
- Alabama Power Company
- American Red Cross
- Alabama Department of Public Health
- Alabama Law Enforcement Agency
- Alabama National Guard
- Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Alabama Department of Transportation
- Alabama Forestry Commission
- Department of Tourism
- Governor's Office on Disability
- Serve Alabama, Governor's Office of Volunteer Services
- 211 Connects Alabama

#### **Primary Points of Coordination and Associated Actions:**

- News/social media: provide disaster-related information to traditional news media outlets and provide same information to social media channels
- ESFs with public relations staff: develop assignments for public information officers from support agencies
- ESF#5 (Emergency Management): send Situation Reports (SITREPs), electronic briefings, request mission assignments, receive consolidated SITREPs, and issue executive summaries.. Sit-reps are to be posted to the ema.alabama.gov site by one of the AEMA PIOs or designee.
- Volunteer and Donations Group: coordinate information concerning types and quantities of donated goods and volunteer services needed and the location of these services.

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Purpose**

The purpose of this ESF is to establish a mechanism that efficiently provides and disseminates information to the general public, media, legislative and congressional officials, and ensures effective communication with people with disabilities (i.e., cognitive disabilities) in the event of a disaster.

### **B. Scope**

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ESF #15 applies to natural or manmade disasters and catastrophic events when it is necessary to augment the disaster response capability of local government by State and/or federal resources.

### **II. Policies**

- A.** The Alabama Emergency Management Agency External Affairs staff is responsible for the following policies:
  - Disseminating information through all pertinent methods concerning specific disasters, associated threats, and protective actions to the news media, general public and elected officials
  - Providing a central point for the news media and the general public to access information concerning protective actions taken by the State.
  - Establishing a format for managing and staffing of public information telephone lines before, during, and after a disaster.
- B.** The Governor's Office of Legislative Affairs is responsible for the following actions:
  - Establishing contact with legislative offices representing affected areas to provide information on the incident.
  - Responding to legislative inquiries.
  - Coordinating with the local liaison officers (LNOs) on all Public Affairs issues to ensure coordinated efforts.
- C.** The Alabama Indian Affairs Commission (AIAC) is responsible for:
  - Providing a Tribal Relations Officer to coordinate with any tribal governments affected on all aspects of incident management operations.
  - Organizing and managing a Tribal Relations Field Component to facilitate State Government relations with tribal governments and their incident management organizations, communities, victims, and tribal advocacy groups.

### **III. Situation**

#### **A. Disaster Condition**

A significant natural disaster or man-made disaster has the potential to hinder traditional means of communication to those living within and near the impacted areas. For those outside the impacted cities or counties, the demand for information will be overwhelming for several days depending on the extent of the emergency event.

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### **B. Planning Assumptions**

The following planning assumptions have been made:

- 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.
- The demand for public information outside the disaster area may exceed the capabilities of Alabama Emergency Management Agency external affairs staff.
- The demand for public information in the disaster area may exceed the capability of the local government to provide service. The county EMA director will need to request PIO assistance through the Emergency Management Information Tracking (EMITS) System. AEMA will then send a member of their staff, or task a supporting agency. If the state External Affairs staff gets overwhelmed they can receive support from the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)
- In the aftermath of disaster, information is usually more difficult to verify because of the nature of the disaster. External Affairs staff deployed to a disaster area needs to be virtually self-sufficient.

## **IV. Concept of Operations**

This section details facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications necessary to effectively accomplish stated goals in response to an incident.

### **A. Goals**

The following goals have related objectives, tasks, and procedures specified in this ESF's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):

- To create a State external affairs response that provides for the coordination of public information among all ESFs and affected counties.
- To coordinate the use of State public information resources.
- To provide a system for the receipt and dissemination of public information, data, and directives pertaining to activities among ESFs and affected counties.
- To facilitate effective communication with people who have disabilities that impact communication.

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### **B. General**

The Alabama Emergency Management Agency will act as the primary coordinating agency for ESF #15. Depending on the subject matter expert and severity of the situation, the Governor's Communication Director and staff will assist with the media advisories and releases and will be in demand from reporters and news organizations. Lead or support agency staff will locate to the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) on a 24-hour schedule to facilitate the flow of public information.

The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) will also provide assistance to ESF #15 because they have several PIOs throughout the state.. When the SEOC is activated Alabama EMA's Public Information Manager (PIO) or designee will notify public information officers for each State agency and alert them of impending operations. In the aftermath of a federally declared disaster, the AEMA PIO or designee will travel to the affected area. That individual will coordinate with local public information officers and will be located at a Federal/State joint information center.

Depending on the severity of the disaster, a 24-hour public information line handling citizens' inquiries maybe established. This line will be staffed with PIOs and other staff members from supporting agencies In addition; ESF #15 may provide personnel for running joint information centers for federally declared events.

In the event of a catastrophic disaster, ESF #15 and Serve Alabama, Governor's Office of Volunteer Services (Serve Alabama) will work together to release information concerning what volunteer goods and services are needed in the disaster area, and where volunteers and donors may go to deliver such goods or potential services. All ESFs should regularly provide information to ESF #15 to keep government officials and citizens aware of current events.

### **C. Organization**

During disasters, the SEOC will act as the central coordinating facility for receiving and dissemination of public information. Information flow to the SEOC will occur directly from news and social media reports and citizen public information phone calls. Information will also flow from county liaisons in local EOCs, local officials, and joint information centers to the SEOC. Information will flow from SEOC in the form of media advisories, news releases, social media and situation reports. Information will also flow from ESF #15 to public information personnel in local EOCs as well as FEMA/State joint information centers. The Alabama Emergency Management Agency, as the primary agency, will determine the support agencies required for the specific disaster. This determination will result in an organization designed to meet the demands of the event.

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### **D. Notification**

Pre-incident and ongoing activities will be monitored by the State Emergency Operations Center and reported to AEMA staff. AEMA will notify the Governor's Communication Director, and the ESF support agencies as needed.

### **E. Response Actions**

This section lists actions to be performed by ESF #15 in response to a disaster.

#### **1. Initial Actions**

ESF #15 will perform the following initial actions if activated for a disaster in the order listed below:

- Staff ESF #15 as needed in the SEOC.
- Check equipment in the Joint Information Center and the Media Room to ensure everything is functioning properly.
- Assign someone personnel from the Fusion Center to social media monitoring
- Brief the media spokesperson for the Initial Assessment Team.
- Establish an initial news briefing time and location
- Establish a public information line in order to handle phone calls from individuals attempting to contact the Governor's Office or AEMA for information.
- Prepare a Situation Analysis by reading and watching the latest media reports, checking social media feeds for trending topics and look for trends in calls coming in from the media and public. This Situation Analysis continues throughout the response and short-term recovery phase and should include the following:
  - a. A general description of the situation as it pertains to ESF #15 and an analysis of the ESF #15 operational support requirements.
  - b. A prioritized listing of significant actions that ESF #15 will initiate to provide operational support.
- Determine the level of response required by ESF #15 to respond to the event.
- Initiate notification of the required personnel and support organizations to achieve the required level of response.

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- Prepare a list of objective based priority actions based upon the Situation Analysis. The action list should be revised as the situation changes.
- Mobilize public information resources and coordinate response.
- Prepare briefings on status of response operations.
- Prepare an After-Action Report to identify lessons learned and improvements.

### **2. Continuing Actions**

ESF #15 will continue to perform the following actions if activated for a disaster:

- Provide updates to the news media concerning disaster conditions and State actions taken pursuant to those conditions.
- Regularly disseminate information from summary reports to the news media.
- Provide trained public information staff in support roles to assist local response and recovery efforts.
- Staff citizen public information lines.
- Coordinate with State Volunteer and Donations Coordinator (Serve Alabama) to provide public information concerning what types of volunteer services and donated goods are ~~required~~ needed.
- Coordinate with the Governor's Office on Disability to facilitate effective communication with people who have disabilities that impact communication.

### **F. Recovery Actions**

Recovery actions for ESF #15 include the same actions as listed in 1 and 2 above.

#### **1. Initial Actions**

ESF #15 will perform the following initial actions after a disaster:

- Staff the public information function of the Joint Field Office (JFO).
- Brief and instruct media spokesperson(s) for damage assessment teams.

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- Coordinate with State Volunteer and Donations Coordinator (Serve Alabama) to determine what volunteer goods and services are most needed in the disaster area.
- Ensure all state PIOs and the Governor's Office on Disability are on the news release distribution list.

### **2. Continuing Actions**

- Continuing actions for ESF #15 are the same as the response actions listed in sections 1 and 2 above as appropriate.

## **V. Responsibilities**

This section lists the primary agency and the support agencies for this ESF and their associated responsibilities.

### **A. Primary Agency**

The Alabama Emergency Management Agency is the primary agency responsible for ESF #15. The Alabama EMA is responsible for the dissemination of emergency information to the general public during disasters, particularly during non-catastrophic disasters. The AEMA will provide updated information to the news media in the form of press briefings, situation reports, news releases, or emergency broadcast announcements.

### **B. Support Agencies**

Table 1 below lists support agencies for ESF #15 and their responsibilities.

**Table 1. Support Agencies and Responsibilities for ESF #15.**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<b>AEMA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will act as the primary coordinating agency during catastrophic disasters.</li></ul>
<b>Other Support Agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Perform Public Information Services for their respective agencies in coordination with AEMA Subject Matter Expert and the Governor's Office.</li></ul>