

ESF 15 - External Affairs

Coordinating Agency:

Cobb County Communications Department

Primary Agency:

Cobb County Communications Department

Support Agencies:

Acworth Public Information
Austell Public Information
Cobb & Douglas Public Health
Cobb County School District - Office of Communications
Dobbins AFRB - Public Information
Kennesaw Public Information
Mableton Public Information
Marietta City Schools
Marietta Public Information
Powder Springs Public Information
Smyrna Public Information

I. INTRODUCTION

The emergency support function of external affairs includes direction, policies, responsibilities, and procedures for disseminating timely, accurate, and easily understood information to the public before, during, and after a disaster or emergency situation. It is a primary goal to be prepared to respond in an emergency to all requests from the media, and the public, for life-saving information and instructions. It is also a recognized function to control the spread of rumors and false information. The appropriate local, state and congressional elected officials will also be notified on the status of response and recovery activities and assisted with constituent inquiries directed to their offices.

1. Purpose

This Emergency Support Function (ESF) supports the National Response Framework (NRF) and the Georgia Emergency Operations Plan (GEOP) ESF 15 (External Affairs). The National Incident Management System (NIMS) Proclamation, dated October 25, 2005, adopts and supports the Incident Command System (ICS) for emergency operations by Cobb County Government. Chapter 34 of the Cobb County Ordinances (Civil Emergencies) establishes county policy for emergency operations.

Cobb County Communications is responsible for the coordination of county communications resources, including the following:

1. Sufficient county assets are deployed to the field during a potential or actual disaster or emergency to provide accurate, coordinated, and timely information to affected audiences, including governments, media, the private sector, and the populace.

2. A provision for providing information in a clear, concise and accurate manner on actions to be taken by local agencies, governments and the public. Every effort shall be made to prevent and counter rumors and inaccurate information.

2. **Scope**

To provide a coordinated approach for collection, analysis, and dissemination of information in order to facilitate the overall provision of services and resources during an emergency or disaster. This includes providing communications to inform news media about emergency preparedness and response for distribution to the public; to assure appropriate agency and organization preparedness and response for protection of life and property; and to convey additional information including restrictions and limitations due to an emergency or disaster.

II. **POLICIES**

Cobb County agencies that provide or support external communication services will coordinate operations with other local, state, and federal organizations to support essential communication operations. The development of mutual aid agreements should be considered between Cobb and several other local jurisdictions within and outside Cobb County, where/if applicable.

Certain standing policies, procedures, and other forms of written directives may be modified or suspended during disasters based on circumstances. The Incident Command System (ICS) is the adopted operational structure.

A. **Direction and Control**

The Director of Cobb Emergency Management Agency (CEMA), with approval of the Commission Chairman, will implement this plan. CEMA will advise the State Operations Center (SOC)/Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA), time permitting, prior to implementation of this plan.

Implementing and utilizing ICS by external communication agencies will standardize procedures during emergencies for managing personnel, facilities, and resources.

Cobb County Communications shall be the agency with primary responsibility for external communications if an incident occurs within unincorporated Cobb County, unless otherwise specified in existing mutual aid agreements. In such instances, agencies supplying external communications equipment, and/or personnel, shall support Cobb County Communications upon request.

Other jurisdictions within the county shall direct and control incidents that occur within their jurisdictions, unless they request county assistance or specified in existing mutual aid agreements. In such instances, Cobb County Communications and other agencies shall support the affected jurisdiction(s), upon request. County designated primary and support agencies may also support entities outside of Cobb County, upon request.

The agency with primary responsibility shall provide an emergency coordinator and

alternate(s) to meet the responsibilities of the function. The designees shall represent all external communication partners in an emergency or disaster and provide operational support in the Cobb County EOC when requested.

1. **Local Response**

The local emergency management agency is authorized to provide local assistance as emergency measures under local enabling legislation.

All requests to/from external communication services outside the county shall be coordinated in accordance with adopted memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and mutual aid agreements.

2. **State Response**

The Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and the Office of the Governor provides the state government's lead role in external communications. GEMA provides direction and assistance as necessary or requested.

3. **Federal Response**

- a. FEMA will provide information and planning support to the state in a Presidential declaration.
- b. FEMA will collect, analyze, and disseminate information from respective federal agencies with ESF responsibilities.
- c. FEMA is responsible for initiating actions required to implement federal activities in response operations.

B. Notifications

1. **Local**

The local EMA shall be notified in case of a potential or actual large-scale crisis. Cobb agencies shall coordinate through Cobb Emergency Management Agency. This will ensure that resources expended are documented properly and reimbursements are available if the event is eligible for a state or federal disaster declaration.

CEMA shall serve as liaison with all other agencies in case of an actual local disaster or activation of the Cobb EOC. The external communications EOC representative will coordinate all external communication services equipment and personnel requests in accordance with adopted MOUs/mutual aid agreements. All public notifications will be managed and approved by the primary agency's lead representative from ESF 5 and ESF 15.

2. **State**

All requests for state assistance shall be routed through CEMA to GEMA.

3. Federal

All notifications of federal agencies will be provided for in the National Response Framework (NRF). All federal assistance requests will be coordinated by GEMA.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. Strategy

1. The primary agency will coordinate with appropriate agencies and organizations to ensure operational readiness. The primary agency will develop and maintain standard operating procedures (SOPs) and include Cobb County, municipal, state, federal, and other appropriate entities.
2. The primary agency will lead in developing, implementing and administering all external communications programs, as well as mutual aid agreements.
3. The primary agency will encourage continuous communication between the EOC and incident command.
4. The primary agency may elect to establish a joint information center (JIC) and will provide a joint information center commander. The joint information center commander may appoint additional public information officers as deemed appropriate.
5. All designated agencies and organizations will provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander).

| Coordinating: Cobb County Communications Department | |
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| <i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs</i> | |
| 1 | Coordinate with appropriate agencies and organizations to ensure operational readiness. |
| 2 | Develop and maintain standard operating procedures (SOPs) and include Cobb County, municipal, state, federal, and other appropriate entities. |
| 3 | Develop, implement and administer all external communications programs, as well as mutual aid agreements. |
| 4 | Develop protocol and designate a liaison for communication with local, state, and federal governments and to handle legislative inquiries. |
| 5 | Assist agencies and organizations with ESF responsibilities in development of uniform procedures for media releases. |
| 6 | Educate the public on alert messages such as watches and warnings through media such as radio, television, and newspaper. |
| <i>Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs</i> | |
| 1 | Develop, implement and administer all external communications programs, as well as mutual aid agreements. |
| 2 | Encourage continuous communication between the EOC and incident command. |

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| 3 | Elect to establish a joint information center (JIC) and will provide a joint information center commander. |
| 4 | Provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander). |

Primary: Cobb County Communications Department

Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs

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|---|---|
| 1 | Coordinate with appropriate agencies and organizations to ensure operational readiness. |
| 2 | Develop and maintain standard operating procedures (SOPs) and include Cobb County, municipal, state, federal, and other appropriate entities. |
| 3 | Develop, implement and administer all external communications programs, as well as mutual aid agreements. |
| 4 | Develop protocol and designate a liaison for communication with local, state, and federal governments and to handle legislative inquiries. |
| 5 | Assist agencies and organizations with ESF responsibilities in development of uniform procedures for media releases. |
| 6 | Educate the public on alert messages such as watches and warnings through media such as radio, television, and newspaper. |

Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs

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|---|---|
| 1 | Develop, implement and administer all external communications programs, as well as mutual aid agreements. |
| 2 | Encourage continuous communication between the EOC and incident command. |
| 3 | Elect to establish a joint information center (JIC) and will provide a joint information center commander. |
| 4 | Provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander). |

Supporting: Acworth Public Information

Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs

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|---|---|
| 1 | Elect to establish a joint information center (JIC) and will provide a joint information center commander. |
| 2 | Provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander). |

Supporting: Austell Public Information

Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs

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| 1 | Elect to establish a joint information center (JIC) and will provide a joint information center commander. |
| 2 | Provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander). |

Supporting: Cobb & Douglas Public Health

Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs

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|---|---|
| 1 | Elect to establish a joint information center (JIC) and will provide a joint information center commander. |
| 2 | Provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander). |

| Supporting: Cobb County School District - Office of Communications | |
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| Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs | |
| 1 | Elect to establish a joint information center (JIC) and will provide a joint information center commander. |
| 2 | Provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander). |

| Supporting: Dobbins AFRB - Public Information | |
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| Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs | |
| 1 | Elect to establish a joint information center (JIC) and will provide a joint information center commander. |
| 2 | Provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander). |

| Supporting: Kennesaw Public Information | |
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| Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs | |
| 1 | Provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander). |

| Supporting: Marietta Public Information | |
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| Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs | |
| 1 | Elect to establish a joint information center (JIC) and will provide a joint information center commander. |
| 2 | Provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander). |

| Supporting: Powder Springs Public Information | |
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| Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs | |
| 1 | Elect to establish a joint information center (JIC) and will provide a joint information center commander. |
| 2 | Provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander). |

| Supporting: Smyrna Public Information | |
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| Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs | |
| 1 | Elect to establish a joint information center (JIC) and will provide a joint information center commander. |
| 2 | Provide personnel, equipment, operations, and maintenance at the request of the external communications coordinator (or the JIC commander). |

B. Actions

| Overall Actions Assigned to All Members | |
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| <i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs</i> | |

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| 1 | Designate a primary spokesperson or communications coordinator for emergencies. |
| 2 | Maintain a media directory. |
| 3 | Support disaster public awareness initiatives through dissemination of information, news articles, public service announcements (PSAs), and presentation of audio-visual materials. |
| 4 | Establish communication resources to provide people with sensory disability (e.g., visual and hearing impaired) and non-English speaking persons with emergency management information regarding emergencies or disasters. |
| 5 | Develop protocols for agencies and organizations with functional support responsibilities (e.g., American Red Cross for opening shelters, Department of Transportation and law enforcement regarding evacuation routing) to inform the media about emergency and/or disaster plans. |
| 6 | Participate in drills and exercises to evaluate public information capacity. |

| Overall Actions Assigned to All Members | |
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| <i>Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Affairs</i> | |
| 1 | Define public notification timeframe regarding an emergency or disaster and disseminate information to the media. |
| 2 | When the EOC is activated, the public information officer will report to the EOC when directed by the chief executive officer (CEO) or the emergency management director. |
| 3 | Maintain a system to ensure accurate dissemination of emergency information such as location, type of hazard, extent of damage, casualties, shelters open, evacuation routes, and other protective actions. |
| 4 | Provide a designated area for media briefings and/or press conferences and conduct briefings in a timely manner. |
| 5 | Provide updates (e.g., response to inquiries about missing relatives, restricted areas of access, and reentry) regarding the emergency or disaster. |
| 6 | Establish media responsibilities and appropriate spokespersons from local government, agencies, and organizations with ESF responsibilities. |
| 7 | Continue provision of public safety and other necessary assistance information throughout the recovery phase. |
| 8 | Provide advanced media releases to CEMA. |
| 9 | Coordinate with other jurisdictions that share the media market. |
| 10 | Maintain records of expenditures and document resources utilized during recovery. |

IV. REFERENCES

During the development of this plan, the following authorities and references were considered:

REFERENCES

1. Comprehensive Preparedness Guidance (CPG) 101, Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans, Version 3.0, September 2021.
2. National Incident Management System (NIMS)
3. National Response Framework (NRF), Fourth Edition, October 2019.

4. Georgia Emergency Operations Plan
5. Cobb County Code of Ordinances Chapter 34 – Civil Emergencies
6. Mutual Aid Agreements, where/if applicable

AUTHORITIES

1. 44 CFR Part 13 - Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements.
2. 44 CFR Part 206 - Federal Disaster Assistance for Disasters Declared after November 23, 1988.
3. Public Law 106-390, Disaster Mitigation Act 2000 - To amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to authorize a program for pre-disaster mitigation, to streamline the administration of disaster relief, to control the Federal costs of disaster assistance, and for other purposes.
4. Public Law 93-288, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 5121 - The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, which provides authority for response and recovery assistance under the Federal Response Plan, which empowers the President to direct any federal agency to utilize its authorities and resources in support of State and local assistance efforts.