



Harvey County, Kansas Emergency Operations Plan

ESF 15 – Public Information and External Communications

Coordinating Agency:

Harvey County Administration

Primary Agencies:

Harvey County Emergency Management

Support Agencies:

City of Burrton

City of Halstead

City of Hesston

City of Newton

City of North Newton

City of Sedgwick

City of Walton

Kansas Division of Emergency Management

United Way of the Plains

I. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of ESF-15 Public Information and External Communications is to establish how public information activities will be coordinated to meet the needs generated by disasters affecting Harvey County.

1.2 Scope

This (ESF) Annex describes how Harvey County will provide disaster-related information to the media and the public. It is designed to improve the ability of all participating agencies and organizations to:

- Quickly relay critical and potentially lifesaving information to those at risk.
- Provide timely, consistent information on the status of emergency operations.
- Coordinate the release of public information from all responding agencies.
- Assure the public that government is responding effectively to the emergency.
- Make credible and consistent information available to answer citizen inquiries.
- If beneficial, and applicable to the incident, establish a JIC/JIS.
- Provide ongoing and useful information regarding recovery activities; and
- Ensure a system is in place to provide information and guidance to county, city, state, federal, elected and appointed officials as appropriate.

Public warning systems, such as All-Hazard Weather Radios, the Emergency Alert System via the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, outdoor warning sirens, cable override and other emergency warning systems are discussed in ESF 2 Communications. This ESF Annex applies to all county, city and other participating agencies with assigned emergency responsibilities as described in Section 3, Responsibilities. This annex benefits Harvey County by supporting coordination with partner agencies, outside organizations and the public. This annex specifically addresses:

- Command, control, and notification including the roles of county and city agencies with responsibilities during emergent events and their working relationships with the volunteer agencies providing services.
- A flexible organizational structure capable of meeting the varied requirements of many emergency scenarios with the potential to require activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and implementation of the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).
- Designated Public Information Officers (PIOs) and existing departmental emergency public information plans and procedures.

II. Concept of Operations

This section provides a narrative description summarizing the Concept of Operations for the following ESF15 activities. 1) Command, Control, and Notification, 2) Public Notification and 3) Public Announcement/Media Releases. The narrative portions of this section provide summarized overviews for the topics listed above.

2.1 Command, Control, and Notification

The Emergency Management Director, in consultation with the County Administrator, will determine which ESFs are required for activation to support emergency operations. If it is determined that ESF 15 will be activated, the Emergency Management Director will contact the designated Coordinating Agency for ESF 15 to report to the EOC to attend an initial briefing.

Depending on the complexity or severity of the event, the Emergency Management Director, or designee, may advise the County Administrator that the need exists to declare a local emergency. For more information on a declaration of a local emergency, see the ESF 5 Annex.

The coordinator for ESF 15 is Harvey County Administration who is responsible for contacting other public information officers, to include adjacent counties and state-level PIOs, as well as primary and support agencies with liaison roles. They will then provide a briefing to the other agencies and determine the need to staff a Joint Information Center (JIC) if necessary. The JIC is usually a physical location where PIOs from organizations with primary disaster involvement come together to coordinate and disseminate information.

The ESF 15 Coordinator will provide other PIOs/agencies with the designated methods/timeframes for submitting data/information and updates to the EOC. Specific types of information that will require periodic updates include but are not limited to: shelter locations/capacities, casualty counts, road closures, evacuation routes, etc. Once a JIC is established, public information statements will be routed through Incident Command for approval.

In most cases, the JIC will be located in close proximity to the Harvey County EOC. It is imperative that the JIC maintain contact with decision makers and/or the EOC via telephone, radio, the Internet, and/or face-to-face communications. The on-scene agency PIO will address media representatives at the incident site and keep the EOC and the JIC informed of these briefings. The media staging area and information activities will take place in a safe area closest to the scene as possible.

The purpose of Harvey County's JIC is to:

- Establish and maintain contact with local radio, television and print media
- Develop and disseminate written information such as news releases, fact sheets and other reports as needed
- Schedule news conferences or interviews with department heads and other officials; brief them if appropriate
- Gather and coordinate information and serve as the "hub" for the release of timely,

- accurate, consistent, and useful disaster related information.
- Allow all involved organizations to provide consistent and accurate messages to the public.
 - Enable the EOC to concentrate on emergency coordination and refer all media and public inquires to the JIC.
 - Ensure the ability exists to answer direct inquiries from the public.
 - Monitor media coverage to verify the accuracy of information being disseminated and to control rumors by correcting misinformation quickly.
 - Be proactive in responding to the disaster related information needs of all audiences.
 - Provide ongoing information to and coordination with County, City, State and Federal elected officials
 - Develop and implement a comprehensive public information strategy to gain and maintain public trust and confidence.

The Joint Information System (JIS) describes all public information activities being conducted regarding the event, including those outside the EOC and the JIC (i.e., public information functions being carried out at the scene and from departmental offices or other remote offices and locations).

The ESF #15 Coordinator will work to establish communications with all Joint Information System (JIS) components to facilitate the exchange of information. The use of an organized JIS will help to ensure interagency communication and the release of consistent information.

As part of the JIS, the on scene agency PIO will address media representatives at the incident site and keep the EOC and the JIC informed of these briefings. Contact with JIS components will be maintained primarily by telephone and radio.

2.2 Public Notification

Since many emergencies strike rapidly, the public information system cannot always react swiftly enough to properly inform the public about the hazard and for this reason, it is important that citizens are made aware of potential hazards and appropriate protective measures prior to the occurrence of an emergency. The County will make every effort to provide ongoing public education to its citizens regarding Emergency Management activities.

Harvey County utilizes the Everbridge notification system which includes access to IPAWS (Integrated Public Alerting and Warning System). Everbridge will be used as a notification instrument to notify those registered of impending hazards affecting Harvey County.

2.3 Public Announcement / Media Releases

During the early stages of an incident social media will be the predominate means of communicating information to the public. Social media platforms provide the means to expedite and enhance the release of incident information.

The local media is a logical extension of the disaster operation and recognized as the best means to quickly get information to the majority of the public. Harvey County counts on the local media to provide emergency instructions and potentially lifesaving information to the public before, during and following a disaster. A partnership role will be maintained with the media by making every attempt to provide timely and accurate information throughout the disaster.

Emergency information efforts will focus on specific event-related information. The public information program requires a coordinated flow of information from all levels of government and private agencies through a central release point to ensure that only accurate information is presented. Close coordination and exchange of information will all key staff and department heads is vital. This will be accomplished through the following:

- Close coordination and exchange of information with all key staff and department heads.
- Collecting, compiling, and verifying information at the Inquiry Center (Rumor Control) before authorizing releases.
- An Inquiry Center may be established where citizens having questions concerning missing relatives, continued emergency services, restricted areas, etc. may call to receive accurate and verified information. The telephone numbers will be released by the media.
- The PIO will obtain verbal approval from the Chief Executive of the appointing jurisdiction prior to requisitioning any supplies or equipment which would result in expenditures of local government funds.
- Information will be released to members of the press at the Media Release Point by the Public Information Officer or authorized representatives.

Frequent news conferences and media briefings will be scheduled as dictated by the event. The ESF15 Coordinator will work with elected officials and department heads to ensure appropriate representation at news conferences.

Every effort will be made to provide emergency public information to persons with functional and access needs. Close coordination will be required between the government and volunteer and community agencies as described further in ESF 6 Mass Care, Housing and Human Services.

Many methods are used to disseminate information to the public during an emergency or disaster. Warning systems, in general, are described in Annex ESF #2 Communications. Considerations for special populations are outlined below.

General Public: Radio, television, print media, fliers, posters, brochures, information brochures are all established methods for providing information to the public. Use of a particular medium(s) will be situation dependent, based upon the urgency of the information and the intended audience.

Special Populations

- Hearing impaired: The Emergency Alerting System (EAS) provides trailers on TV screens which provide weather watch and warning messages along with other emergency information.

- Visually impaired: The Emergency Alerting System (EAS) provides audio alerting via radio and television stations. Some emergency planning and disaster information brochures are available in Braille.
- Non-English speaking: Many televisions have the capability to provide closed captioning in Spanish.
- Schools: District-wide notification will be made through the individual District offices.
- Hospitals & Long-Term Care Facilities: Notifications will be made throughout the facilities relaying local media outlet information.
- Correctional facilities: Notifications will be made from the Sheriff's Office.

Specialized Information Protocols

- Restricted Areas & Reentry - Information on restricted areas, as well as the process for reentry into an area after it has been declared safe, will be obtained from the Harvey County EOC and disseminated immediately to the media and the public
- Emergency Assistance - Information on any federal, state or local disaster assistance that might be available will be obtained from the agency offering the assistance. In some cases, this information may be given directly to the media and the public. In other cases, a telephone number will be provided for obtaining additional information.
- Casualties - Information on the number of fatalities, injured and missing will be obtained from the Harvey County EOC and disseminated immediately to the media and the public. The identity of victims will be released only after confirmation of proper next-of-kin notifications.

III. Responsibilities

3.1 Actions

Actions carried out by ESF 15 are grouped into phases of emergency management: Preparedness, Response, Recovery and Mitigation. Each phase requires specific skills and knowledge to accomplish the tasks and requires significant cooperation and collaboration between all ESF 15 agencies and the intended recipients of service.

Overall Actions Assigned to All Members	
<i>Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Collect, process, and disseminate information to and from the EOC.
2	Participate in training, drills, and exercises.
3	Develop mutual aid and other support agreements with surrounding jurisdictions and the private sector.
4	Identify public information needs required for facilities that serve vulnerable needs populations.
5	Identify public information needs required for individuals with vulnerable needs.

Overall Actions Assigned to All Members	
<i>Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Designate personnel to coordinate ESF-15 activities in EOC and JIC.
2	Manage the collection, processing, and dissemination of information between ESF-15 and EOC or incident command.
3	Inform the public of health and/or safety concerns, status of emergency situation, and ways to reduce or eliminate the associated dangers.
4	In coordination with the EOC team, release emergency information.
5	Implement a proactive public information strategy to meet media needs.
6	Activate and staff management functions of the JIC.
7	Resolve any conflicting information and dispel rumors.

Overall Actions Assigned to All Members	
<i>Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Return borrowed resources and those obtained through agreement, lease, or rental when those resources are no longer required.
2	Evaluate response and recommend changes to ESF-15 Annex to correct shortfalls and improve future response activities.
3	Provide documentation for possible financial reimbursement process for recovery activities.
4	Participate in after action meetings and prepare after action reports as requested.
5	Participate in briefings, incident action plans, situation reports and briefings.
6	Compile a written record of events, including any printed materials, news releases, tapes and clippings.
7	Assess effectiveness of information and education programs.

Overall Actions Assigned to All Members	
<i>Mitigation Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication</i>	
1	Establish contacts and develop working relationships with the media.



3.2 Responsibilities

The following list identifies the responsibilities designated to each agency/organization for this ESF. The Coordinating and Primary Agency and their responsibilities are listed first. The Supporting Agencies follow in alphabetical order.

Coordinating: Harvey County Administration	
Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Maintain a central personnel roster, contact, and resource lists to support ESF-15 tasks.
2	Identify who is responsible for initial notification of ESF-15 personnel.
3	Identify responsibilities for liaison roles with state and adjacent county PIOs.
4	Develop and maintain ESF-15 Annex.
5	Identify all viable methods to reach the public including but not limited to radio, television, print media flyers, posters, brochures, informational booths and the Internet.
6	Develop pre-scripted media releases and public advisories.
7	Pre-identify media outlets, establish contact lists, and provide training on emergency public information procedures.
8	Train emergency responders on public information procedures on referring media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
9	Provide continuous and accessible public information about disasters and recovery activity.
10	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
11	Identify personnel or process used to provide public information to individuals with limited English language ability.
Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Provide field support for emergency responders at the scene.
2	Participate in EOC briefings, incident action plans, situation reports and meetings to support ESF15.
Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Continue all emergency public information activities based on the circumstances and the organizations involved in the recovery efforts.
2	Distribute information on what to do when returning to your damaged home.
3	Maintain records of all news releases to support documentation after the disaster.
Mitigation Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Provide information and increase awareness about safe rooms and other shelter methods.
2	Provide ESF-15 representative for update of mitigation plan.

Primary: Harvey County Emergency Management	
Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Identify who is responsible for initial notification of ESF-15 personnel.
2	Identify responsibilities for liaison roles with state and adjacent county PIOs.
3	Develop standard operating guides and checklists to support ESF-15 activities.
4	Train personnel on EOC operation, JIC operation, the Incident Command System (ICS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).
5	Develop and maintain ESF-15 Annex.



6	Identify all viable methods to reach the public including but not limited to radio, television, print media flyers, posters, brochures, informational booths and the Internet.
7	Ensure adequate space and equipment is available for the operation of a JIC.
8	Provide continuous and accessible public information about disasters and recovery activity.
9	Identify personnel or process used to provide public information to individuals with limited English language ability.
Response (During Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Provide field support for emergency responders at the scene.
2	Participate in EOC briefings, incident action plans, situation reports and meetings to support ESF15.
Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Distribute information on what to do when returning to your damaged home.
2	Distribute information on how and where to apply for different types of disaster assistance.
3	Release information concerning the need for volunteer goods and services.
4	Provide information regarding available disaster recovery programs and resources to the media and the public.
Mitigation Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Promote preparedness information that will lessen the impact of disasters, such as having a disaster preparedness kit and family disaster plan.

Supporting: City of Burrton

Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Pre-identify media outlets, establish contact lists, and provide training on emergency public information procedures.
2	Train emergency responders on public information procedures on referring media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
3	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Continue all emergency public information activities based on the circumstances and the organizations involved in the recovery efforts.
2	Maintain records of all news releases to support documentation after the disaster.
Mitigation Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Provide information and increase awareness about safe rooms and other shelter methods.
2	Conduct all-hazard safety visits to increase home hazard prevention actions.

Supporting: City of Halstead

Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Pre-identify media outlets, establish contact lists, and provide training on emergency public information procedures.
2	Train emergency responders on public information procedures on referring media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
3	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Continue all emergency public information activities based on the circumstances and the organizations involved in the recovery efforts.



2	Maintain records of all news releases to support documentation after the disaster.
Mitigation Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Provide information and increase awareness about safe rooms and other shelter methods.
2	Conduct all-hazard safety visits to increase home hazard prevention actions.

Supporting: City of Hesston	
Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Pre-identify media outlets, establish contact lists, and provide training on emergency public information procedures.
2	Train emergency responders on public information procedures on referring media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
3	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Continue all emergency public information activities based on the circumstances and the organizations involved in the recovery efforts.
2	Maintain records of all news releases to support documentation after the disaster.
Mitigation Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Provide information and increase awareness about safe rooms and other shelter methods.
2	Conduct all-hazard safety visits to increase home hazard prevention actions.

Supporting: City of Newton	
Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Pre-identify media outlets, establish contact lists, and provide training on emergency public information procedures.
2	Train emergency responders on public information procedures on referring media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
3	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Continue all emergency public information activities based on the circumstances and the organizations involved in the recovery efforts.
2	Maintain records of all news releases to support documentation after the disaster.
Mitigation Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Provide information and increase awareness about safe rooms and other shelter methods.
2	Conduct all-hazard safety visits to increase home hazard prevention actions.

Supporting: City of North Newton	
Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Pre-identify media outlets, establish contact lists, and provide training on emergency public information procedures.
2	Train emergency responders on public information procedures on referring media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
3	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Continue all emergency public information activities based on the circumstances and the organizations involved in the recovery efforts.



2	Maintain records of all news releases to support documentation after the disaster.
Mitigation Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Provide information and increase awareness about safe rooms and other shelter methods.
2	Conduct all-hazard safety visits to increase home hazard prevention actions.

Supporting: City of Sedgwick	
Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Pre-identify media outlets, establish contact lists, and provide training on emergency public information procedures.
2	Train emergency responders on public information procedures on referring media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
3	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Continue all emergency public information activities based on the circumstances and the organizations involved in the recovery efforts.
2	Maintain records of all news releases to support documentation after the disaster.
Mitigation Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Provide information and increase awareness about safe rooms and other shelter methods.
2	Conduct all-hazard safety visits to increase home hazard prevention actions.

Supporting: City of Walton	
Preparedness (Pre-Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Pre-identify media outlets, establish contact lists, and provide training on emergency public information procedures.
2	Train emergency responders on public information procedures on referring media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
3	Establish process to verify information is accurate and valid before public release.
Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Continue all emergency public information activities based on the circumstances and the organizations involved in the recovery efforts.
2	Maintain records of all news releases to support documentation after the disaster.
Mitigation Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Provide information and increase awareness about safe rooms and other shelter methods.
2	Conduct all-hazard safety visits to increase home hazard prevention actions.

Supporting: Kansas Division of Emergency Management	
Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Release information concerning the need for volunteer goods and services.
2	Provide information regarding available disaster recovery programs and resources to the media and the public.

Supporting: United Way of the Plains	
Recovery (Post Event) Actions for ESF 15 - External Communication	
1	Release information concerning the need for volunteer goods and services.