



Section 9202

Joint Information Center Manual

Communicating during Environmental Emergencies

Northwest Area: Washington, Oregon, and Idaho

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Joint Information Center Manual

9202.1 Introduction

This guide is designed to help communicators during response to environmental emergencies that occur or may occur in the northwestern United States— Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. This Joint Information Center (JIC) Guide is based on and draws heavily from the National Response Team JIC model and serves as Section 9202 of the Northwest Area Contingency Plan (NWACP). The Regional Response Team (RRT)/Northwest Area Committee (NWAC) Communications and Public Outreach Workgroup will regularly update the contents of the document.

To submit comments or corrections, please use the RRT/NWAC website: <http://www.rrt10nwac.com/Comment/Default.aspx>

National Response Plan, Emergency Support Function #15 – External Affairs Annex: https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1470148861791-ef933ffb72424da5925348b4695b4a00/ESF_15_External_Affairs_20160705_508.pdf

9202.2 Incident Management System

9202.2.1 Functional Units

The NWACP requires the use of the National Incident Management System to manage environmental emergencies. The organization of incident management is built around five major functions, described below.

9202.2.2 Command

Command sets objectives and priorities and has overall decision-making responsibility. The Information Officer (IO) and the Liaison Officer are appointed by and report directly to the Incident Commander.

9202.2.3 Operations

Operations conducts tactical operations to carry out response, develops tactical objectives, and directs all resources.

9202.2.4 Planning

Planning develops plans to accomplish objectives; collects, evaluates, and provides most incident information; and maintains resource status.

9202.2.5 Finance/Administration

Finance/Administration monitors and analyzes costs and provides accounting, procurement, and time recording.

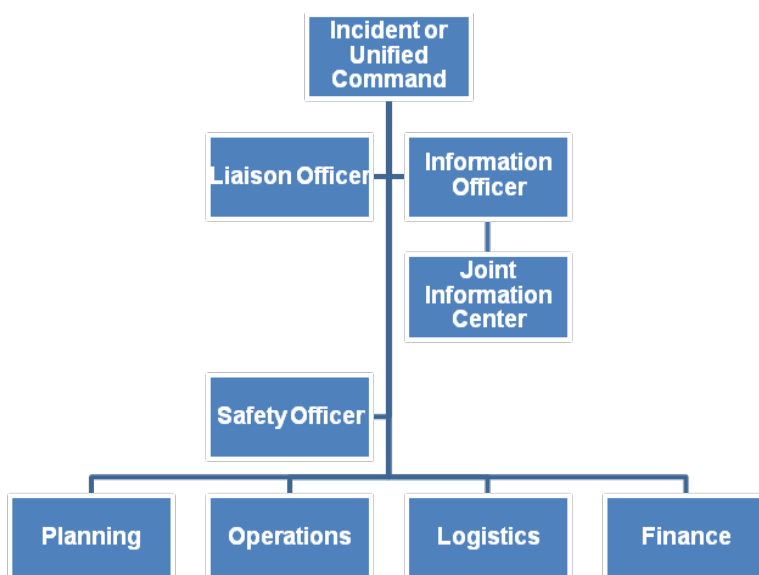


Figure 9202-1 Incident Command Structure

9202.2.6 Mandates

Certain federal laws require incident response to be managed or co-managed by a Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and, in some cases, the United States Department of Defense or the United States Department of Energy Federal On-Scene Commander.

Individual state mandates also contain requirements for designation of a State On-Scene Coordinator. For certain types of incidents, on-scene coordination may be delegated from a federal agency to a state counterpart. Federal on-scene coordination using the Incident Command System is required under these mandates or programs:

- National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan;
- Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act;
- Oil Pollution Act;
- Clean Water Act; and
- Occupational Safety and Health Act.

9202.2.7 Unified Command

When multiple organizations are involved in response, a Unified Command is established and may be composed of up to five on-scene coordinators, one each representing federal, state, tribal, and local jurisdictions, and the responsible party (RP), when known. A JIC is activated when the Unified Command model is used.

9202.2.8 Joint Information System

In response to most “routine” or “minor” environmental incidents, public information activities are carried out by the lead response agency, in coordination with other organizations. In these cases, the lead IO usually conducts activities from the office or another remote location, as directed by the Incident Commander, via phone and email with agency counterparts. Early notification and coordination includes timely review of draft news releases and other materials, and collaboration to determine other information needs.

9202.2.9 Public Records

Most information (with the exception of information about active enforcement, investigations, and security sensitive matters) collected, generated, or distributed during incident response is part of the public record and can be potentially released to the media and public if requested. All response personnel should adhere to these public trust responsibilities and ensure that copies of all documents are maintained and submitted daily to the Documentation Unit.

9202.3 Initial Information Officer – Pre-Joint Information Center

When an incident occurs, there is a high demand for quick information. Public perception is often shaped by impressions formed in the first few hours of a response.

When a state environmental or emergency management agency, the USCG, or the EPA first learns about a spill, the respective IOs should quickly contact one another to share information in an effort to release a joint media statement. The goal should be to get this first release issued within 30 minutes of the initial notification and no longer than two hours after notification is received.

Until a JIC is established, communication with the media and other key audiences is carried out by a lead agency’s information office, either remotely or on site. The Initial IO carries out activities with or without assistance. The time needed to travel to the Command Post and have basic JIC operations in place will affect decisions about how and by whom communications are conducted. For example, issuing the initial news release within 30 to 120 minutes of notification may require that facts be provided over the phone or electronically to an agency IO operating from the office or a remote location.

The Initial IO is concerned with both communications (who to communicate with, both media and public) and logistics (how to communicate), if operating from the Command Post or remote locations.

In order to build trust with the public and among agencies responding to the incident, every press release should include a “cooperative response statement.” This statement should include, by name, all the primary participating agencies responding to the spill incident.

9202.4 Activities of Initial Information Officer

The following includes tasks an Initial IO should accomplish within the first 24 hours of an incident response to set up a functional JIC:

- Share latest information immediately with other lead agencies. (Call the state environmental agency, the USCG, and/or EPA);
- Sign in and receive necessary identification or clearance if operating on scene (consider having the federal Transportation Worker Identification Credential card);
- Contact the Incident Commander or Unified Command;
- Obtain objectives for the response;
- Establish a dedicated phone line, email address, and website, if possible, for inquiries from the media;
- Gather basic facts about the incident: who, what, when, where, and how;
- Make contact with the Situation Unit Leader and Environmental Unit Leader for incident information;
- Draft, spell-check, and proofread news release and information released to a website;
- Obtain review and approval of all news releases and web information by Incident Commander or Unified Command;
- Proofread and finish release. (If significant changes are made, the release must be re-approved by the Incident Commander or Unified Command);
- Obtain approval for fact sheets and web-based information;
- Attach or post fact sheets, photographs, video footage, or other information if relevant to the incident;
- Distribute initial news release to media, affected agencies, and other audiences within 30 minutes whenever possible, but no later than two hours;
- Contact other local agency communicators for assistance or information about their community;
- Respond to media calls and other requests for information;
- Conduct media interviews;
- Begin to develop a media plan, setting the next time and place for updates, briefings, news conference, etc. This should be closely coordinated with the Incident Commander and the Planning Section Chief;
- File copies or create a log of callers, time of calls, questions, and responses;
- Find answers to questions by the media or key audiences;

- Brief the next shift of IOs; and
- Assess the need for community relations personnel and work with the Liaison Officer to ensure community outreach is well coordinated within the response team.

Related Links

- Incident Status Summary – ICS Form 209.
- [JIC Supplies Checklist](#).
- [News Release Sample – Initial](#).

9202.5 Joint Information Center

A JIC is created under Unified Command to effectively manage communication resources and public messages when multiple organizations are involved in incident response. The need to form a JIC is determined by the Incident Commander or Unified Command as advised by the incident IO. Ideally, a JIC should be located in or near the Incident Command Post and staffed by personnel from the participating organizations. If the JIC is located in the Command Post, it is imperative that any media representatives present be given an adequate work space that is physically separated from working Command and General Staff personnel. Satellite JICs may be needed for response to major incidents involving large geographic areas.

9202.5.1 Primary Joint Information Center Objectives

- Gather, package, and distribute accurate information and data in a timely manner.
- Inform the public, primarily through the news media and a dedicated website.
- Analyze public perception and community expectations.
- Evaluate communications.

9202.5.2 Overall Joint Information Center Objectives

- Gather, analyze, produce, and distribute information about the incident.
- Ensure timely release of accurate information to media and other audiences.
- Establish and maintain the official incident website.
- Review, for approval or revisions, any public information developed in response to the incident by other agencies.
- Capture digital images in video and photos for use by response organizations and media.
- Develop, recommend, and execute public information products, plans, and strategies.
- Coordinate closely with incident Liaison Officer.
- Monitor and measure media content and public perception of the incident.

- Inform the Incident Commander/Unified Command regarding public reaction, attitudes, and needs.
- Prepare appropriate response personnel for news conferences and interviews.
- Identify and correct rumors and misinformation.
- Evaluate response communications when the JIC is deactivated.
- Produce a log and organize all JIC materials for distribution to the Documentation Unit each day.

9202.5.3 Joint Information Center Set-up and Logistics

A Logistics Section staff member, in consultation with local community leader(s) or state emergency management agency, may help select a location for and set up the JIC. A dedicated Information Technology Specialist may also be recruited.

JIC space should:

- Be located in or as near the Command Post as possible;
- Be large enough to accommodate the anticipated number of JIC personnel and the Liaison Officer, if possible, working in any given shift;
- Have adequate numbers of tables, chairs, and electrical outlets or power strips approved within fire codes;
- Accommodate a phone bank with dedicated lines and computers connected to the Internet; and
- Provide quick access to printers, copier, fax, and email.

Two things needed immediately are:

- A phone – if land lines are initially scarce, consider using a dedicated land line to take incoming calls from media and use cell phones to call out; and
- A computer with necessary software, printer, and internet capability. Electronic distribution of news releases can be handled by the JIC or by an office of a participating agency.

Related Links

- [JIC Supplies checklist.](#)

9202.5.4 Joint Information Center Deactivation

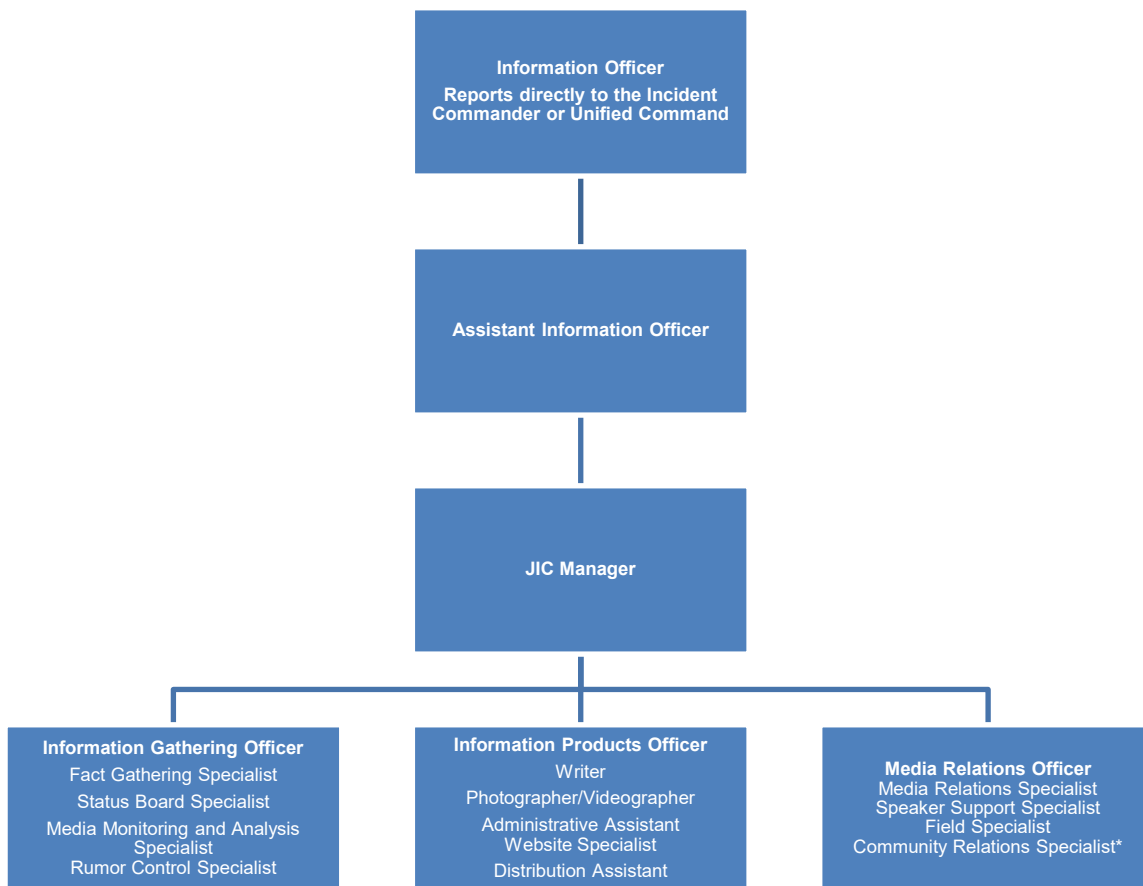
The Incident Commander/Unified Command, with advice from the Public Information Officer (PIO), determines when to deactivate the JIC. PIO may also be referred to as the Information Officer (IO) and they are the same position.

When deactivating a JIC:

- Notify community and local officials about the closing and provide regional contact information;
- Notify media and agency communication managers about the closing and provide regional contact information;
- Prepare a comprehensive deactivation news release for lead agency headquarters approval and distribution;

- Provide casebooks to communication managers whose organizations will assume responsibility for ongoing information;
- Complete an after-action report and participate in evaluation discussions;
- Return equipment and supplies;
- Update list of equipment and supplies; and
- Inventory and replenish “go-kits.”

9202.6 Joint Information Center Organization, Positions, and Responsibilities



*An incident may require a significant community relations effort. In these cases, a separate Community Relations Unit should be formed.

Figure 9202-2 Joint Information Center Organization

9202.6.1 Joint Information Center Organization

A JIC is a flexible organization that can expand or contract, depending on the incident and number of available personnel. Staff within the JIC may be assigned to fill different roles from day to day, depending on priorities. While no two JICs are structured exactly the same, they should generally operate with key functional units filled by one or more personnel.

9202.6.2 Incident Information Sources

The Situation Unit within the Planning Section generates and coordinates nearly all incident information. JIC personnel should review the job descriptions found in the Field Operations Guide for the Resource Unit Leader, Situation Unit Leader, and Environmental Unit Leader and be familiar with the information these groups can provide the JIC. A schedule must be established for information updates from these groups each day that conforms as closely as possible to the Planning Cycle established by the Planning Section Chief. JIC personnel determine what visual materials or displays are needed for a press conference, working with the Situation Unit Leader to produce maps or other display needs.

Examples of displays include:

- **Base Maps** – used in the field by field observers; these depict where an incident is, from a ground perspective, and where workers are;
- **Over Flight Maps** – used during over flights; these depict where oil and equipment actually are located;
- **Response Resource Status Map** – depict where majority of response resources are operating;
- **Situation Maps** – depict where the oil is located; also can depict various Geographic Response Plans in the area, staging areas, Command Post, and other relevant materials;
- **Resources at Risk and Protection Strategy Maps** – show where natural, cultural, and economic resources at risk are located and activities are being conducted to protect them;
- **Trajectory Maps** – depict where the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts that the oil will spread over time;
- **Road Maps** – depict road closures;
- **Nautical Charts**; and
- **Digital photographs and/or video.**

9202.6.3 Information Officer

The RRT/NWAC prefers that the spiller not fill the IO position. This applies to both government agency and private industry spillers. However, the RRT/NWAC recognizes that Unified Command holds the discretion to fill the position with whomever they choose. Unified Command should consider credibility with the media and public, as well as previous experience in drills or spills, familiarity with the Northwest Area plan tools and policies and with Emergency Management Support Function #15. Upon concurrence of Unified Command, the spiller may fill the IO position.

The RRT/NWAC encourages RPs to designate an Assistant IO (see below) to participate in meetings attended by the IO and to be present during briefings by the IO or delegate.

The IO is appointed by and reports to the Incident Commander or Unified Command. The IO should be trained in the Incident Command System (ICS), familiar with the NWACP, and experienced in public affairs, public speaking, crisis communication, media relations, and principles of JIC management.

The IO will:

- Oversee JIC operations in accordance with this JIC Manual, ensuring adequate space, equipment, and available personnel;
- Appoint personnel to key positions based on skill level and previous training;
- Coordinate with the Liaison Officer to assign responsibility for community outreach.
- Participate in Unified Command meetings and provide advice for handling issues;
- Develop public information plans, goals, and strategies for specific operational periods;
- Analyze public perceptions and make necessary strategic adjustments;
- Provide direction for handling controversial and sensitive issues;
- Establish daily schedules for news conferences, briefings, tours and public meetings. These should be closely coordinated with the Operational Planning Cycle. This ensures that the IO has the latest information available;
- Prepare Unified Command for news conferences;
- Moderate news conferences and assist with public meetings. It is suggested that the task of news conference moderator be assigned to someone other than the spiller, if the spiller is filling the IO position;
- Conduct media briefings;
- Develop plans for media tours and assist the Liaison Officer with very important person (VIP) tours and visits;
- Obtain approval from Unified Command to disseminate public information products;
- Seek general approval from Unified Command to post simple, factual updates to the Incident Website without Unified Command review;
- Monitor traditional, electronic, and social media; correct misinformation and identify trends and issues;
- Coordinate exchange of information among other sections and participating agencies; and
- Resolve disputes among JIC personnel or organizations involved with public information.

Related Links

- [JIC Supplies checklist.](#)
- [Daily Briefing checklist \(for IO or Designee\).](#)

- [News Release Sample – Initial.](#)
- [News Conference/Public Meeting Worksheet.](#)
- [Moderator Script Outline.](#)
- Daily Unit Log – ICS Form 214.
- Individual Log – ICS Form 214a.

9202.6.4 Assistant Information Officer

The Assistant IO (from the RP) helps the IO by carrying out assignments and tasks as directed by the IO. The Assistant IO may attend all the same meetings as the IO. The Assistant IO should have the same level of technical capability and qualifications as the primary IO and should be prepared to assume the duties if the IO is unable to carry them out. Unlike a deputy, an assistant does not have decision-making authority unless specifically delegated by the IO and cannot step in for the IO in his or her absence.

9202.6.5 Joint Information Center Manager

When a JIC manager is required, he this position is appointed by and reports to the IO to supervise and coordinate activities of the Information Gathering, Information Products, and Media Relations Units. The position should be filled by an experienced public information specialist with a similar level of technical capability and qualifications as the primary IO. He or she must be familiar with the ICS. Necessary skills include managing people and projects, writing, editing, proofreading, and community and public outreach skills.

The JIC Manager:

- Ensures that JIC operations and personnel are functioning well and promptly addressing emerging needs;
- Assigns JIC positions, work, and deadlines;
- Notifies agency communication managers when the JIC has been activated;
- Reviews and revises, when necessary, public information materials developed by government agencies prior to web-posting or distribution;
- Sets staff work hours and the daily JIC operations schedule;
- Establishes internal communication procedures;
- Ensures that approved, spell-checked news releases adhere to Associated Press style and that other materials are distributed internally and externally;
- Requests information technology support from the Logistics Unit to install and provide expertise in computers and telephone equipment or programs; (JIC information technology support typically is most needed in the first days of incident response and for ongoing periodic troubleshooting thereafter);
- Completes daily unit log;

- Ensures that all JIC costs are accounted for, including travel and other reimbursement vouchers, and provided to the Finance/Administration Section; and
- Briefs JIC personnel at the beginning of each shift.

Related Links

- [Agency Communication Managers E-List.](#)
- Daily Unit Log – ICS Form 214.
- Individual Log – ICS Form 214a.
- [JIC Supplies checklist.](#)

9202.6.6 Information Gathering Unit

Information Gathering personnel are responsible for gathering, analyzing, and displaying up-to-date information about incident response. They also monitor and respond to traditional and social media coverage, and attempt to control rumors. Information Gathering positions should be assigned to people with any combination of skills in public affairs, crisis response, journalism, JIC operations, and management.

Information Gathering personnel:

- Gather, manage, and analyze information from all parts of the JIC and Unified Command;
- Post and distribute incident information to JIC personnel and to the Documentation Unit for posting in the Command Post;
- Respond rapidly to requests for information from Media Relations Specialists;
- Analyze and respond to media and social media reports; and
- Respond rapidly to breaking news and rumors.

9202.6.6.1 Fact Gathering Specialist

Fact Gathering Specialists gather, analyze, and distribute up-to-date information about incident response to other JIC personnel. A Fact Gathering Specialist essentially fills the role of “internal reporter” and must possess good listening, note-taking, and writing skills. Fact Gatherers should be familiar with the ICS—especially the Planning Section Situation Unit—and have a working knowledge of key concepts, terminology, and subject matter. Fact Gathering Specialists must use critical resources, including Operations Section briefings and Planning Section meetings. Fact Gathering Specialists should also request the Situation Unit Leader to obtain specific types of information for the JIC.

The Fact Gathering Specialist:

- Attends Planning/Situation meetings, takes good notes, and seeks clarification when needed;

- Routinely checks for new or updated information from the Planning Section Situation Unit;
- Quickly finds and provides answers to questions from JIC personnel; and
- Locates fact sheets, maps, aerial photos, and other resources to be attached to and distributed with news releases or posted on the incident website.

9202.6.6.2 Status Board Specialist

Status Board Specialists display incident information on status boards in the JIC. Status Board Specialists should work with the Planning Section's Situation Unit to maintain information boards in conspicuous areas of the Incident Command Post and in the field when possible. The Status Board Specialist should distribute copies of news releases, fact sheets, current command message(s), and talking points to all members of the JIC.

The Status Board Specialist:

- Displays information on status boards in the JIC; and
- Provides a synthesis of status-briefing information to members of the Information Products Unit and other JIC personnel.

Related Links

- Incident Status Summary – ICS Form 209.

9202.6.6.3 Media Monitoring and Analysis Specialist

Media Monitoring and Analysis Specialists evaluate the content and accuracy of news and social media reports and identify any trends or developing issues. Persons in this position should provide daily or more frequent coverage synopses of prominent/sensitive issues, inaccuracies, and viewpoints and recommendations for corrections to the Media Relations Officer.

The Media Monitoring and Analysis Specialist:

- Monitors blogs and social media/networking sites;
- Monitors, clips, and distributes all incident-related news from print and electronic media;
- Gathers perspectives from the media, public, affected communities and other stakeholders about the progress of the response efforts; and
- Identifies potential issues of concern, problems, and rumors and reports information to the PIO, Rumor Control Specialist, and appropriate agency or staff.

9202.6.6.4 Rumor Control Specialist

Rumor Control Specialists receive, verify, and ensure that facts are disseminated to dispel false rumors regarding the incident.

The Rumor Control Specialist:

- Monitors incoming emails, online communities (blogs, social networks), and local print and broadcast media to evaluate/validate rumors;
- Receives rumor reports from others in response (e.g., Media Relations Specialist or Community Relations Specialist or those who work with media or the public in the field);
- Identifies and reports rumors that may cause greatest concern or problems to the Information Gathering Officer, Information Products Officer, Media Relations Officer, and Community Relations Officer/Specialist; and
- Reports results of each rumor investigation to Unit Officers noted above.

9202.6.7 Information Products Unit

Information Products personnel are responsible for developing, writing, and distributing information-based materials. Information Products positions should be assigned to people with some combination of skills in public information, journalism, photography, web management, desktop publishing, and ICS and JIC experience.

9202.6.7.1 Writer

Writers produce news releases and nearly all other print material. At least one, and often more, news releases are produced each day. Other products include fact sheets, talking points, meeting agendas, and presentation materials. Depending on staffing levels and skills, Writers may collaborate with Media Relations Specialists to produce radio feeds and visual material for media and others. They may also work closely with the Website Specialist (see below), who formats material for posting on the official incident website and provides that material to other organizations for posting.

Writers should possess a combination of skills in writing, editing, design, and layout.

The Writer:

- Develops communication and outreach products (e.g., news releases, talking points, briefings, fliers, fact sheets, public service announcements, etc.);
- Takes publication-quality digital photographs for media and other users;
- Produces digital broadcast-quality video clips, radio feeds and Public Service Announcements; and
- Develops briefing packets and handouts for news conferences, VIP tours, public meetings, and other venues.

Related Links

- [News Release Sample – Initial](#).

9202.6.7.2 Photographer/Videographer

The Photographer/Videographer shoots high quality digital photos and video for release to the public and media. Personnel in this position should possess advanced skills and experience in digital photography, digital videography, and digital editing and broadcast production. In addition, it is possible that the Safety Officer may require Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) certification for the Photographer/ Videographer to capture images from the hazard site.

The Photographer/Videographer:

- Shoots and edits photographs of high (print) quality;
- Shoots and edits video of broadcast quality;
- Catalogs and manages all photos and videos;
- Provides all photos and videos to the Administrative Assistant for the casebook and the Website Specialist for the JIC Website; and
- Obtains high quality photos or video from responders when possible.

9202.6.7.3 Administrative Assistant

An Administrative Assistant provides support to the Information Products Officer and his or her staff. This position ensures that all information posted on the incident website is timely, accurate, continuously updated, and approved by Unified Command.

The Administrative Assistant:

- Provides support for media briefings and town meetings;
- Works with Logistics Section to obtain, set up, and run audio/visual support for briefings;
- Provides all JIC files and products to the Documentation Unit by the end of each shift;
- Establishes contacts and schedules regular times to retrieve information from all sections within the ICS structure;
- Catalogs, files and copies all JIC printed materials; and
- Produces and maintains a casebook.

9202.6.7.4 Website Specialist

The Website Specialist ensures that all information posted on the incident website is timely, accurate, continuously updated, and approved by Unified Command. This position also provides material to other organizations for web posting and, if practical, monitors those websites. The position should be filled by a person with strong skills in creating and formatting web pages and working with digital images.

The Web Coordinator may be located in the Command Post or in a response agency's office to:

- Maintain and update incident website and incident social media accounts;

- Route email inquiries to Media or Community Relations Specialists;
- Ensure appropriate approval of all items prior to posting on the incident website, blog, or social media accounts;
- Maintain a JIC blog if applicable;
- Use the incident website and social media accounts as forums to address questions, concerns or misinformation found on other websites, blogs, and chat rooms; and
- Establish a link that directs users to the incident website when the Command Post is deactivated.

9202.6.7.5 Distribution Assistant

Distribution Assistants are appointed by and report to the JIC Manager. They are responsible for emailing news releases, fact sheets, and other materials developed for the media and public. They may also distribute information door to door, when necessary. Coordination with the Liaison Officer will ensure distribution to numerous non-media audiences.

9202.6.8 Media Relations Unit

The Media Relations Unit is largely responsible for communicating with the media and the public. Personnel selected for these positions must possess experience in journalism, media relations, public affairs, public speaking, and crisis communications.

Media Relations personnel:

- Provide support for news conferences, briefings, public meetings, tours, and other activities;
- Support development and modification of communications and outreach strategies;
- Support development of materials and logistics for VIP tours;
- Field inquiries from reporters. (Stay on message. Stick with facts approved by Unified Command);
- Serve as incident spokespersons in print and broadcast media;
- Assist in organizing and hosting news conferences, media briefings, and public meetings;
- Coordinate with the Liaison Officer;
- Analyze news coverage and community feedback to determine the effectiveness of communication efforts;
- Recommend and develop strategies for providing information to news media;
- Escort reporters and others during tours;
- Develop and implement community outreach programs;
- Identify and correct rumors or misinformation;
- Maintain records of media calls;

- Maintain contacts lists of media; and
- Promote story and feature ideas to target media.

9202.6.8.1 Media Relations Specialist

Media Relations Specialists rely on Fact Gathering Specialists to provide and update information. Media Relations Specialists should have experience interacting with the media.

The Media Relations Specialist:

- Serves as the incident spokesperson;
- Staffs the media phone-bank and responds quickly to information requests, using talking points, news releases, and fact sheets as resources;
- Conducts print and broadcast media interviews;
- Prepares speakers prior to interviews; and
- Provides other Media Relations and JIC support as assigned.

Related Links

- [Media Content Analysis worksheet.](#)

9202.6.8.2 Speaker Support Specialist

Speaker Support Specialists coordinate meetings, interviews and other engagements.

The Speaker Support Specialist:

- Identifies, schedules, and prepares response personnel and subject matter experts for news briefings and interviews;
- Advises the PIO and JIC Manager on times for news briefings; and
- Works with the Administrative Assistant regarding the set-up and audiovisual needs for news briefings and media interviews.

9202.6.8.3 Field Specialist

Field Specialists provide support to media and various JIC personnel in the field.

The Field Specialist:

- Coordinates with the Safety Officer to make sure that it is safe to escort people to the incident scene;
- Ensures that media are properly prepared with information and equipment prior to field visits; and
- Accompanies media to the incident scene and other field locations.

9202.6.8.4 Community Relations Specialist

Community Relations Specialists are appointed by and report to the JIC Manager. However, they may work jointly with, or directly for, the Liaison Officer, depending on incident-specific needs. The Community Relations Specialist

should possess skills in public involvement, community outreach, public speaking, listening, and strategy development.

The Community Relations Specialist disseminates site-specific information developed by the Information Gathering Unit to the local community by methods other than mass media. Dissemination methods include:

- Community and public meetings;
- Community bulletin boards;
- Community websites;
- Community web calendar(s);
- Walk-in or walk-up information centers;
- Central community phone hot line (part of the JIC; use “dispatchers” to take all initial calls from both media and public; information about wildlife or where spilled oil is located must be reported to the Operations Section);
- Recorded message information;
- Door-to-door canvassing;
- Use of volunteers to disseminate community information;
- Contacts with schools and churches and community centers; and
- Contacts with nonprofit and service organizations, including neighborhood groups.

The Community Relations Specialist:

- Assists the Liaison Officer with arranging tour logistics for elected officials;
- Assesses public perception, summarizes public concerns, or analyzes content when requested by the IO or JIC Manager;
- Elevates important community concerns or site-specific knowledge through the proper chain-of-command;
- Interprets (oral) or translates (written) incident information for non-English-speaking communities;
- Provides background and context to the IO and JIC Manager about affected communities, including information about local economic and cultural concerns, past impacts from spills or other disasters/emergencies, organizations that can provide community and individual support, and opinion leaders;
- Maintains records of public calls;
- Recommends and coordinates community outreach efforts or programs; and
- Determines need for and format of public meetings and other public gatherings.

Related Links

- [Field Escort Equipment and Communications checklist.](#)

9202.7 Joint Information Center Protocols and Procedures

A JIC is responsible for media relations and public information during incident response. The following protocols and procedures guide JIC activities.

9202.7.1 Unified Command Approves News Releases

Unified Command must approve all news releases prior to distribution. The Unified Command should review draft releases for factual accuracy, while avoiding getting bogged down in copyediting.

The IO is responsible for ensuring that Unified Command review and approval occurs quickly. If approval is delayed because of disagreement about factual statements, the IO should employ two tactics:

- 1) Re-word statements to satisfy Unified Command or,
- 2) Delete disputed statement(s) and try to resolve any issues before the next news cycle.

9202.7.2 Unified Command Approves Web Content, Publications and other Materials

Besides press releases, Unified Command also must approve other public information developed by individual agencies responding to an incident. Review and approval must occur prior to publication, Web posting, or distribution. The IO or delegate will help facilitate this process. Whenever possible, review is completed as soon as practical, but no more than within two hours. In some instances, such as posting simple factual updates from the Situation Unit (ISC 209-OS), the IO may negotiate with Unified Command whether these products need their prior review.

9202.7.3 Coordination of Public Information among Other Agencies

Coordination of public information by other agencies is required when the IO or JIC Manager notifies agency communication managers that a JIC has been activated. Coordination also occurs when public information specialists operate from their agency offices to form a “virtual JIC.” Especially in the case of a virtual JIC, the IO should ensure that news releases list points of contact from all organizations participating in the JIC. This coordination loop helps avoid surprises and aids Unified Command to speak with a consistent voice. The IO, on behalf of the Unified Command, may be called upon to resolve any disagreements that may arise.

Related Links

- [Agency Communication Manager E-List.](#)

9202.7.4 Coordination with the Liaison Officer

Coordination with the Liaison Officer is an important responsibility of JIC personnel. A Liaison Officer is appointed by and reports to the Unified Command. The Liaison Officer is the point of contact for federal, state, and local agency representatives and elected officials with a vested interest in the response. Calls received by the hot line may be directed to the Liaison Officer. The Liaison Officer coordinates all calls from public and private entities offering assistance or requesting information. The IO is responsible for ensuring that the Liaison Officer's messages are consistent with those from the JIC.

9202.7.5 Communication Plans

Communication plans for the JIC provide the context and tactics for achieving communication objectives. These plans should not be confused with the communication plan developed by the communications unit of the Logistics Section for the operational and tactical response. Plans are developed by the IO for a specific operational period to help the JIC "get ahead of a story" or anticipate issues, pitfalls, problems, and opportunities. Personnel from various parts of Incident Command may be responsible for certain plan deliverables. Any response personnel affected by a communication plan should be included as early as possible.

Related Links

- [JIC Communication Plan Outline](#).

9202.7.6 Incident Website and Social Media Accounts

At the formation of a JIC, the PIO should provide a recommendation to establish an incident-specific website and use of social media accounts. The PIO should advise Unified Command of the options for hosting the incident-specific website, including agency supported site or purchase of site hosting platform.

The incident website could include news releases, fact sheets, photographs, video clips, maps, and other approved documents. The Website Specialist works closely with the JIC Manager to ensure that all information posted is accurate, updated, and approved.

9202.7.6.1 Best Practices for Use of Websites

- The website should be the "flag ship" for all official information on the response, and agency social media should drive people to this website.
- The name and URL for the website should have a neutral, recognizable brand.
- The website ideally should be stood up within the first 24 hours.

9202.7.6.2 Timely Request for Unified Command to Approve Release of Information

As early as possible after the initial response, the PIO is advised to secure general consent from Unified Command to post simple, real-time factual updates on the website and via existing/established agency social media accounts without further Unified Command involvement/approval. Such approval is meant to help the JIC be the first and best source of timely information. This will also help the Information Products and Media Relations Units manage rumors, fact-check, and supply time-sensitive and vetted information from a single, official release point.

This request should also include guidance for responders and Command Post staff on the use of personal social media accounts.

Related Link:

- Website and Social Media Use Memo Template

9202.7.6.3 Determining the Use of Social Media

Early in the response, the PIO should establish Unified Command's level of comfort with using social media, and make recommendations based on the needs of the response. Inform IC/UC that a more formal plan will be provided before launching response sites.

9202.7.6.4 Best Practices for Social Media

- The use of social media should support the IC/UC communication goals, not drive them. As the PIO considers the affected communities who need information about the response, sometimes social media is a great way to communicate, but not always.
- Social media is a dialogue with the public and an information dissemination and engagement tool. It should be used as a two-way communication tool and not as a mechanism to "push" information. Be prepared with sufficient staffing to engage and respond to comments and concerns in a timely manner.
- Establish the unique #hashtags for the incident to help information identity and tracking as information is posted.
- Search out, amplify and cross-post and tag incident partners to gain wider coverage and reach.
- Social media efforts should closely align with JIC operations so that information is being released online in concert with public and media interests. Therefore, the Social Media Specialist should be located in the JIC and work under the Assistant PIO for Community Relations.
- Use social media to drive audiences to an up-to-date incident website.
- Social media should be monitored regularly for incident-related posts, comments and information to keep aware of public interest, public information needs, and any need for fact checking or rumor control

9202.7.6.5 Privacy Settings and Policy

- Official social media sites shall be publicly viewable to the full extent available. Site managers should set the site's privacy and account settings of official sites to ensure maximum public availability of content.
- This does not apply to personal social media sites. Personnel should be vigilant to protect their own privacy and the privacy of others online.

9202.7.6.6 Records Management

- Each agency will need to determine their requirements for the management of social media and website content including photos, video, etc. The need for resources allocation and clear procedures for record retention should be communicated to JIC staff.
- EPA will follow its established social media records retention guidelines: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-07/documents/2155-p-06.pdf>
- Washington State policy states it is not necessary to retain social media posts provided that the information was initiated, recorded and approved in another record first.

9202.7.6.7 Accessibility and the Website

The JIC's Webmaster should ensure that accessibility requirements are followed:

- Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires federal web sites be accessible to people with disabilities.
- Sites should have text equivalent for every non-text element.
- Text alternatives for each photo/graphic should be coded Video and multimedia need captions or transcripts.

9202.7.6.8 Correction Policy

Mistakes will happen. Consider the following procedure for correction:

- Timely corrections such as spelling and punctuation edits can be done immediately.
- Factual or contextual errors (names, dates, places) should be flagged with "CORRECTION" to post.
- Corrections to a tweet can be nested into the original tweet.
- Corrections to Facebook posts can be done via edits to the original post, though it is good practice to indicate in the post that a correction is being made, and what you are correcting.
- Minor updates can follow the same procedure as corrections.

Related Links

- Social Media Account Checklist

9202.7.6.9 Social Media Implementation Information in the Joint Information Center Communication Plan

This section outlines a content management plan for social media sites and outlines how content will be gathered, developed, repurposed and released on social media.

Consider the following:

- How frequently will you post, minimum number of posts per day/operations period.
- Posts should be real-time and timely, as much as possible, is UC aware and approving of this.
- What effect are you trying to achieve by putting information out.
- What content can be posted.
- What content cannot be posted.
- Will you get original content.
- Will you be considered as a source for breaking news.
- What content will be consistently and readily available.
- Generally the JIC would not post other news media content into the incident social media.
- Keep an open mind and seek other content to post online.

9202.7.6.10 Review and Approval Process

- Outline who has release authority and how the chain of approval for publishing content will flow.
- This may require varying levels based on the type of content (i.e. original, repurposed, imagery, etc.). This section is essential to avoid unnecessary delays in the posting of information and ensures maximum disclosure, minimum delay.

9202.7.6.11 Evaluating and Analyzing Social Media Use

Determine how social media efforts will be evaluated. Social media can be used to create valuable reports for the response leadership. The following shall be considered:

- Analyze comments to determine gaps in public understanding and awareness of response operations and status. (See: Social Media Analysis Worksheet).
- Track trending topics, arising issues and misperceptions (“Rumors”). Make recommendations to the PIO about how and when to respond to persistent “rumors” and how you will address or deal with fact-checking.
- Use the metric systems for each social media tool to produce quantitative and qualitative reports on engagement.

9202.7.6.12 Comment Moderation

The PIO should recommend to Unified Command on comment moderation during the response. To ensure the public engagement and to set expectations for how comments are reviewed, moderated and responded to consider the following:

- Develop a comment policy, such as no profanity, no pornography.
- Comments shall be moderated prior to posting when the technology on the site allows. This requires ensuring the specific settings are enabled on social media accounts for this action. Use of this practice will require dedicated resources to conduct moderation.

- Comments submitted on official sites in connection with the transaction of public business may become a federal or state record. A disclaimer should be included on the social media accounts and website informing users.
- If comments violate the comment policy; they should not be posted. These comments shall be hidden or deleted upon the discretion of the Unified Command or their designee.

9202.7.7 Documents to the Documentation Unit

All documents generated by the JIC must be provided to the Planning Section Documentation Unit at the end of each shift. These materials include:

- News releases,
- Fact sheets,
- Other material developed for the media or public,
- Talking points,
- Media query forms,
- Rumor forms,
- Phone messages,
- Copies of electronic messages, such as emails and social media entries, and
- Communication plans.

While electronic files may be kept, a hard copy is vital for overall documentation of incident response from all sections of Unified Command. The Administrative Assistant is responsible for collecting all documentation at the end of a shift and providing it to the Documentation Unit.

Related Links

- [Daily Briefing checklist \(for PIO or Designee\)](#).
- Incident Status Summary – ICS Form 209.

9202.7.8 News Releases

A news release is a written document distributed to media via email within 30 minutes of response activation and thereafter as needed. The JIC should strive to meet news cycles (10:30 to 11 a.m. and 3:30 to 4 p.m.) and provide up-to-date information as much as possible throughout each operational period. The process can be streamlined by following the following guidelines:

- Limit length to 250 to 300 words—about one printed page;
- Use 12 point Times New Roman or 11 point Arial fonts (universal for all computers);
- Use quotes judiciously, if at all. Deciding who is quoted and what they say can take considerable time, but quotes can be important statements of empathy. Early narrative news releases represent the best place opportunities for quotes—ongoing releases are largely quantitative in content and don't need quotes;

- Avoid logos or other layout flourishes that can keep press releases from getting past newsroom spam blocking programs and complicate electronic transmittal;
- Summarize quantitative information; and
- Use an asterisk to indicate new information when updating frequently.

9202.7.9 Procedures for News Releases

- Write, edit, spell-check, and proofread a draft release.
- Obtain a review and approval from Unified Command or Incident Commander. (If significant changes are made, the news release must be re-approved by the Incident Commander or Unified Command.)
- Proofread and finish the approved release.
- The news release should have “Joint Information Center” in the heading even though it may be distributed by a state agency, USCG, EPA, etc.
- Post on JIC tracking board. Distribute to Unified Command and the Planning Section Distribution Unit to ensure distribution within the Command Post.
- Use news releases as key information sources when responding to calls and conducting JIC briefings / tours.

The news release process should roughly follow this process:

- **Fact Gathering Specialist:** Attends briefing or meeting, and obtains new information from Situation Unit; provides information to **Writer**.
- **Writer:** Writes news release, spell-checks, and proofreads; provides draft to IO for approval by UC.
- **IO:** Obtains approval from UC and returns to **Writer**.
- **Writer:** Incorporates changes and finishes the release. If changes are substantive, IO resubmits to UC for approval.
- **Website Specialist:** Formats and posts on incident Website.
- **Distribution Assistant:** Distributes to **Media Relations Specialist**; externally via email and internally to designated locations.

9202.7.10 News Release Distribution

Timely distribution is crucial. Electronic distribution can be handled by either the JIC or a response agency’s office – whichever is most expedient and up-to-date. News releases and updates should be distributed to:

- News media;
- Governor’s Office;
- JIC staff and other interested personnel in the response organization;
- Response organizations’ headquarters and/or regional offices;
- State and congressional elected officials from that area;
- Tribal officials;

- Local officials and local emergency management departments;
- Special publications; and
- Environmental and other advocacy organizations.

The Community Relations Specialist and Liaison Officer are responsible for non-media distribution and they jointly maintain those distribution lists.

9202.7.11 Handling Media Calls

The JIC's primary activity is handling media phone calls and electronic queries. News releases provide the basic reference for Media Relations Specialists who field calls from reporters or conduct on-camera interviews. It is essential adequate personnel be assigned to the media phone bank. Media Relations Specialists should use Media Query forms to track all media calls, questions, and answers. As much as possible, incoming calls from reporters should not be transferred to voice mail.

9202.7.12 News Conferences

News conferences should be held when there is new, important information. A news conference is generally held within the first 12-24 hours of a response and thereafter daily – even twice a day – for major incidents. The Incident Commander or Unified Command personnel are the main speakers at news conferences; however, technical specialists from other sections may also be needed. Personnel from nearly all positions in the JIC will play some part in preparation.

News conferences should not be held inside the incident Command Post due to privacy concerns and potential distractions to response personnel. Establish a consistent area to conduct media news conference / interviews that will not impact response personnel. To hold a news conference:

- Select the appropriate time – typically about two hours before news deadlines (10 a.m. or 3 p.m.), or as soon as possible after a major development;
- Whenever possible, select and schedule a location that is easily accessible, has power and plenty of parking, minimal background noise, and a good backdrop;
- Set up space (audio-visual, chairs, public address system, etc.);
- Notify media about time, location for the news conference, including a map or driving directions;
- Produce briefing packets with news releases, fact sheets, FAQs, maps, etc.;
- Identify speakers' order of presentation;
- Schedule and conduct speaker preparation in advance of the news conference. Speaker preparation is essential. Time spent will depend on incident circumstances. Each speaker should have one to three main messages that contribute to a good overall picture;

- Develop or rehearse questions and answers (Q&A) for each speaker – not for distribution but help each member of Unified Command think ahead about answers to questions that may be asked;
- Appoint a news conference moderator – usually the IO – who will:
 - Greet the assembly,
 - Explain the purpose of the news conference,
 - Set the agenda,
 - Introduce the speakers,
 - Discuss format,
 - Call on reporters,
 - Provide sources for additional information,
 - Control the amount of time spent on any given subject, and
 - End the news conference on time.
- Sign in attendees;
- Call on local reporters first or early in the Q&A session;
- Assign a JIC staff person to record the event with a digital recorder or camera;
- Assign a JIC staff person to take written notes of each question asked (and by whom) and answers given; and
- Assist reporters with any additional needs immediately following the news conference.

Related Links

- [News Conference / Public Meeting worksheet.](#)
- [Audience sign-in sheet.](#)

9202.7.13 Moderators

Moderators set the tone for and facilitate news conferences and public meetings. Have a predetermined message for each news conference. Provide correct spellings and titles for any speaker or place names with peculiar spellings. State the speakers' organizations and positions in the Unified Command.

- Do not let any one speaker or reporter dominate the news conference. Limit each speaker to about three minutes. Stick to that time.
- Remain available after the news conference.

Related Links

- [Moderator Script outline.](#)

9202.7.14 Media Briefings

Media briefings are less formal than news conferences and are generally conducted by the IO or designee. A media briefing quickly provides certain types of information, such as where cleanup crews will be working or where photographers and camera crews can get photos and video footage. They are a good way to also give reporters the day's general schedule and time of the next news conference, public meeting, etc. Send an advisory to reporters or make calls

at least an hour in advance of JIC media briefings. All meeting and briefings should be scheduled on the daily meeting schedule, ICS Form 230, so that no conflicts occur.

Related Links

- Daily Meeting Schedule – ICS Form 230.

9202.7.15 Tours for Media and VIPs

Tours for media and VIPs should be planned for early in major incidents. Several JIC personnel will be involved in logistics, preparation, and escort. Coordination occurs with the Liaison Officer, Safety Officer, and Logistics Section to address protocol, safety requirements, transportation, and escort concerns. The Unified Command should be informed and may wish to accompany certain VIPs. To coordinate a tour:

- Work with the Operations Section to choose a few good vantage points for viewing incident effects and response work;
- Work with the Operations Section to make sure affected field personnel are alerted to tour schedules and that someone is designated to answer questions about their work;
- Work with the Logistics Section to arrange for group transportation;
- Obtain necessary safety gear and safety briefing for group members;
- Prepare information packets and talking points for tour guides, using only information approved by the Unified Command;
- Choose a technical responder, such as someone working in the Planning Section Environmental Unit, to accompany the tour and answer technical questions; and
- Drive and time the tour in advance.

Related Links

- [Field Escort Equipment and Communication checklist.](#)

9202.7.16 Media Pools

Media pools (for tours) may be necessary if access is restricted and should be used only as a last resort. Reporters general do not prefer this method but will accept the decision if they understand the necessity. The IO will determine the need for media pools. It is key that journalists selected for media pools understand that they are expected to supply copy, video, audio, or still photographs to all reporters requesting the material. Make sure local reporters are included in pools whenever possible. Follow the steps above for media tour preparation. A media pool should consist of:

- One TV video crew (camera operator, sound technician, and reporter);
- One still photographer from wire service, newspaper, or magazine;
- One print reporter from wire service, newspaper, or magazine; and
- One radio reporter.

9202.7.17 Editorial Board Meetings

An editorial board meeting might be requested if an Incident Command Post operates longer than 10 days, or when there is strong and sustained public interest. Editors are a conduit to community opinion leaders. A JIC representative requests a meeting with a newspaper's managing editor and opinion page editor. Two or three Unified Command representatives should attend. Reporters may or may not be present.

Editorial board meetings do not typically result in a story, but may result in an opinion piece or serve as background for future stories. Editorial board participants should receive as much speaker preparation as they would before a news conference. Editorial board meetings are nearly always held at the newspaper's primary office.

To prepare for an editorial board meeting:

- Review articles about the incident and editorials from previous days and week to have a sense about what editors are thinking and reporters are writing;
- Develop two to three key messages for each speaker;
- Conduct a dry run of speakers and prepare for Q&A;
- Develop information packets that include names and contact numbers;
- Provide corrections if the paper has published serious factual errors its reporters and/or editors have refused to correct. Do not belabor minor points; and
- Expect the meeting to last 30 to 45 minutes.

9202.8 Community Relations Protocols and Procedures**9202.8.1 Public Meetings**

Public meetings are necessary under a variety of circumstances. Many JIC personnel play a role in organizing and hosting public meetings. The JIC Manager works with the Community Relations Specialist and Liaison Officer as well as other JIC staff to determine the need and format of meetings. Options include open house events with multiple information displays, or more traditional venues featuring speakers with audience questions. The Liaison Officer coordinates with local elected officials who may—or may not—wish to participate. A representative of the RP, if known, should consider using a public meeting as an opportunity to express regret about the incident.

Based on the IO's recommendations, Unified Command will decide whether to hold public meetings and/or mobilize a Community Relations Specialist or Unit. IO recommendations should be based on one or more factors, including:

- Injuries or deaths as a result of the incident;
- Potential health risks;
- Degree of community outrage, fear, or grief;
- Damage to the natural environment or potential harm to wildlife;

- Proximity of incident, command center, or staging areas to neighborhoods, schools, and other key community resources;
- Lack of local news and information sources or disproportionate media attention;
- Need for road detours and other emergency measures;
- Damage to or restriction from community resources like parks or public buildings;
- Damage to cultural resources;
- Response efforts continuing for several days or more;
- Widespread rumors and other unconfirmed or inaccurate information; and
- A community's or RP's past history with a disaster or emergency response.

To prepare for a public meeting:

- Select the time and a location that is easily accessible and Americans with Disabilities Act compliant, with plenty of parking, power, and minimal background noise. It is always best to conduct a meeting at the end of the work day to ensure adequate time for community members to arrive after getting off work;
- Determine meeting format (open house, audio/visual presentation, panel discussion, web conference);
- Ensure adequate set-up (tables, chairs, easels, displays, sound system, etc.);
- Identify speakers with technical expertise (health, wildlife, fish / shellfish, tribal interests, economic impacts, etc.);
- Schedule and conduct speaker preparation;
- Arrange for language interpreters, if needed;
- Develop talking points and internal Q&A for speakers;
- Develop and package handouts and presentation materials;
- Appoint a meeting moderator;
- Staff a sign-in table and information posts; and
- Handle inquiries from media and public.

Related Links

- [News Conference/Public Meeting worksheet.](#)
- [Moderator Script outline.](#)
- [Audience sign-in form.](#)

9202.8.2 Community Bulletin Boards

Community bulletin boards can be placed at frequently visited locations in communities such as grocery stores, libraries, schools, churches, Chamber of Commerce office, fire stations, ferry terminals, bus stops, park-and-rides, tourist

information centers, public boat launches/marinas, coffee shops, community centers, and fishing license outlets.

These bulletin boards convey information that is especially pertinent to local residents or recreationists, including road closures, transportation detours, boating restrictions, health considerations, reporting oiled birds or wildlife, etc. Posted materials can include maps, fact sheets, news releases, and contact information. Bulletin boards must be updated frequently. Postings must be removed when information is outdated or no longer relevant.

9202.8.3 Community Websites

Community websites and community web calendars can also serve as credible communication tools for the same type of information posted on community bulletin boards. Some public access channels can also provide simultaneous webcasts and/or cable broadcasts of meetings.

9202.8.4 Information Centers

Walk-in or walk-up information centers should be considered when there is a high demand for public information due to circumstances such as evacuations, human health risks, property damage, and environmental damage.

9202.8.5 Telephone Hot lines

Telephone hot lines or recorded message lines can be a useful tool to provide residents with a phone number dedicated for community calls. This helps ensure that citizen calls are not pre-empted by other priorities and keeps the main JIC line reserved for media. Recorded messages may be appropriate to inform residents about rapidly changing conditions such as road closures, potentially harmful exposure to pollution, and progress about incident response. Recorded messages should be updated frequently to provide information to callers who might otherwise swamp incoming telephone lines. If a hot line is established, the Community Relations Unit needs to be adequately staffed to handle the volume of calls.

9202.8.6 Door-to-Door Canvassing

Door-to-door canvassing can be used when it is important to warn, instruct, or reassure residents. This method can help inform residents about what they are hearing, seeing, or smelling, and can correct rumors or misperceptions. If evacuation is recommended and/or required, notification is generally the responsibility of the local sheriff's office and should not be initiated by the JIC.

9202.8.7 Elevating Information

Elevating information that may have value to the Unified Command or Incident Commander is a rare, but important, function of the Community Relations Specialist/Unit. For example, if a local citizen or group raises an issue or has knowledge that may aid or hamper the response, that information should be elevated through the proper chain-of-command.

9202.8.8 Interpretation and Translation

Interpreting or translating incident information into other languages may be needed in communities with a large community of non-English-speaking residents. For further information about non-English-speaking populations, go to the [U.S. Census Website](#).

Some agencies maintain lists of employees with language skills who might be recruited for incident response. The Washington State Department of Ecology has five multi-lingual teams fluent in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Russian, and Vietnamese. Some communities also have readily available resources for overcoming language barriers (such as the Immigrant and Refugee Organization in Portland).

Other resources that may have language services include community groups, community centers, and local churches. While community members may have credibility and trust within the community, they may lack the translation skills for technical information. It is good to keep in mind that many languages have different dialects, which can hamper interpretation.

9202.8.9 Using Volunteers

Using credible community volunteers to disseminate information door to door or staff an information center can be useful in building trust. Volunteers also can be a critical resource when many residents need to be individually contacted in a short amount of time. Unified Command must always approve using volunteers. They must be properly trained to understand the scope and limitations of their role. One source of well-trained emergency volunteers is the Community Emergency Response Teams found through emergency management departments in many counties.

9202.8.10 School Districts

Local school districts should be notified immediately. In addition to providing necessary safety precautions for students, schools have excellent systems for providing information to families. Schools are also good places for public meetings and other response assistance.

9202.8.11 Local Churches, Nonprofits, and Service Organizations

Local churches, nonprofits, and service organizations can provide communication networks to inform members, and often have available meeting space or other types of support. These organizations have the additional value of credibility among their constituents.

9202.9 Analyzing Public Perception and Content

To provide Unified Command with the best possible communications guidance, a JIC must have accurate, ongoing analyses of public perception and media content. Given the quick pace of an incident response, this analysis may not be formal. The Community Relations Specialist and Media Monitoring and Analysis

Specialist will play a big role in determining public perception and working with JIC personnel to:

- Monitor primary newspaper, radio, television, and websites;
- Attend town meetings;
- Conduct phone or door-to-door surveys;
- Coordinate and facilitate focus groups, depending on the magnitude of the incident;
- Track calls and requests from reporters and the public;
- Identify potential problems or rumors, and report them immediately to the IO and appropriate agency or office; and
- Identify significant minority communities and determine the most effective ways to communicate with them.

9202.9.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is the review of both media reports and community comments to help determine the effectiveness of JIC communication efforts. Areas for evaluation include visual images, information sources, factual statements, and key messages. In conducting an evaluation, consider:

- Overall themes or key messages in media reports and quotes by local citizens;
- Statements about confusion, fear, or anger;
- Visual images used by media or described by citizens, including metaphors, analogies, or stories;
- Information sources quoted by media reports or community members; and
- Accuracy of “factual” statements.

9202.9.2 Media Content Analysis

Media content analysis considers:

- Length of a news report, either as broadcast minutes, newspaper column-inches, and number and tone of media blog entries;
- Placement of news articles—lead stories, front page, or placed elsewhere;
- Sources quoted in news reports;
- Accuracy of “factual” statements;
- Key messages stated by sources, quoted in the report, or implied as the overall theme of the report or interview;
- Visuals such as pictures, word analogies, or anecdotal stories that help explain environmental, health, or safety issues; and
- Negative words or phrases that might influence public perception or understanding of the issue.

Related Links

- [Media Content Analysis worksheet.](#)

9202.9.3 Community Feedback

Community feedback helps a JIC shape, modify, and target communication products and strategies—especially when there is a high degree of public outrage. Community feedback tools include questionnaires at public meetings or posted on websites and blog sites, surveys conducted door to door or by phone, and focus groups. Use of these methods is dependent on the magnitude of the incident.

9202.9.4 Telephone Surveys

Telephone surveys can be conducted randomly or targeted to elected officials, organization directors, church pastors, school principals or counselors, neighborhood association officers, police or fire department personnel, and others in the affected community.

9202.9.5 Focus Groups

Focus groups involve a moderator who interviews and facilitates a discussion among multiple people at the same time. Focus groups yield a great deal of qualitative information. The moderator should be skilled in interview techniques and facilitation, with good listening abilities.

Sometimes, specific concerns point to the need to target a distinct group, such as Indian Tribes or workers or residents directly affected by the incident. In other cases, a broad assessment is desired, with people representing different organizations, points of view, ethnic backgrounds, neighborhoods, incomes, professions, or other variables. The goal is to get as complete a picture as possible of the different perceptions regarding incident response.

Related Links

- [Sample Questions for Focus Group of Interview.](#)
- [Focus Group Preparation.](#)
- [Audience Sign-in Form.](#)

9202.10 References

Aerial Photos of Washington's Shorelines

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/shorephotoviewer/Map/ShorelinePhotoViewer>

Assessing Oil Spill Damage

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/0208004.html>

Coping with Technological Disasters: A User Friendly Guidebook (Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council)

http://www.pwsrca.org/wp-content/uploads/filebase/programs/oil_spill_prevention_planning/coping_with_technological_disasters.pdf

Emergency Spill Response in Washington State

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/971165cp.html>

EPA Emergency Response Program <https://www.epa.gov/emergency-response>

EPA Oil Program <http://www.epa.gov/oilspill/>

Exxon Valdez: Then and Now 2009 <https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/ppr/response-resources/publications-conferences/exxon-valdez/>

FAQ: Oil Pollution Act https://www.uscg.mil/Mariners/National-Pollution-Funds-Center/About_NPFC/OPA/

Geographic Response Plans <http://www.oilspills101.wa.gov/northwest-area-contingency-plan/geographic-response-plans-grps/list-of-geographic-response-plans/>

Internal Oil Transfers
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/991307.html>

NOAA Office of Response and Restoration <http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/>

Oil Spills in Washington State: A Historical Analysis
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/97252.html>

The Pacific States - British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force
www.oilspilltaskforce.org/

Table 386. Oil Spills in U.S. Water -- Number and Volume
www2.census.gov/library/publications/2011/compendia/statab/131ed/tables/12s0386.xls

RRT/NWAC www.rrt10nwac.com

Spills Notification Rule
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/92119.html>

Daily Briefing Checklist (for Information Officer or designee)

Date/time:

Name of Lead Public Information Officer:

Name of Joint Information Center Manager:

Date/Time of press conference:

Inquiries:

Name of field escorts:

Media analysis:

Speaker prep:

Editorial board prep:

Community outreach:

Inquiries:

Public meetings:

Community feedback:

Volunteer inquiries/organizations:

Protocol:

Tour support:

Escorting:

News releases:

Fact sheets:

Photo/video:

Audio/visual support:

Joint Information Center Supplies Checklist

Necessities

- Cell phones:
 - Information Officer
 - Assistant Information Officer
 - Joint Information Center Manager
 - Internal Affairs Manager
 - External Affairs Manager
 - Community Relations Unit Manager

- Computers – at least 3 needed with external drive and software
- Computer memory sticks (at least 8 GB memory each; virus scanned)
- Computer software (Windows, Word, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Internet Explorer, Outlook)
- Computer Wi-Fi card
- Internet connectivity
- Land phone (DSL and/or normal cords)
- Phone / email lists with internal Ecology contacts
- Phone / email lists with external state, federal contacts
- Phone / email lists with JIC participants & ICS contacts
- Media phone / email list
- Printer

Supplies

- Batteries, replacements for all equipment (AAA, AA, 9-volt, C, D, camera, lithium, etc.)
- Binder clips, various sizes
- Binders (3-ring) with dividers, several
- Clipboards
- Copier
- Digital cameras (still and video)
- Digital recorders
- Dry erase markers and eraser
- Easels
- Extension cords with 3 prongs – 4 20-foot cords
- File folders
- Flip chart paper, 4 pads
- 3-hole punch
- Name tags
- Power surge protectors
- Printer cartridges – at least 4
- Printer paper – 6 reams (4 white, 2 colored)
- Push pins
- Radio, AM/FM
- Staplers – with extra staplers
- Scissors
- Tablets (writing tablets)

- Tape – clear, masking, blue, duct
- TV and DVD player / recorder
- White sheet (if A/V screen is unavailable)
- Whiteboard

News Conference/Public Meeting Worksheet

Event:

Date:

Time:

Location:

Methods for notifying public:

Translation/Interpretation Needs:

Length of conference or meeting:

Audio/visual materials:

Moderator:

1. Presenter/Handout:

2. Presenter/Handout:

3. Presenter/Handout:

4. Presenter/Handout:

5. Presenter/Handout:

Refreshments:

Special needs arrangements:

Notes:

Audience Sign In

Please Sign In

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL OR STREET ADDRESS

News Release Templates

News Release Sample – Initial

For immediate release – Oct. 14, 2004

Contact: Joint Information Center (206) 220-7237

Coast Guard, Ecology department investigate oil sheen

SEATTLE -- The U.S. Coast Guard received a report this morning of an oil sheen in Commencement Bay, south of Vashon Island, Wash.

The Coast Guard and Washington State Department of Ecology have established a unified command and information center to respond to the oil spill of unknown origin.

A crew member aboard a tugboat in Commencement Bay reported the spill this morning. Thick fog hampered the response efforts early in the day.

Reconnaissance teams are checking waters and shorelines—via helicopter, boat and on foot—in Commencement Bay, Colvos Passage, Dalco Passage, and Quartermaster Harbor to determine the extent of the spill and whether wildlife are at risk.

Local governments and tribal authorities are being notified of the spill and response operations. Participating agencies include the Washington Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The unified command has hired National Response Corporation and Clean Sound Cooperative to clean up oil and install protective booms to protect sensitive habitat.

###

The following two templates are included as examples of news releases that might be issued in the pre-JIC phase of a response, before Unified Command and a JIC have formed. The templates are designed to be as inclusive as possible and highlight initial coordination and participation among responding public and private entities. Specifically, they offer contact information for one media lead from each agency actively producing the release and/or participating in the response. However, if no media person from a particular agency involved in the response has been identified—and confirmed—as a principal point-of-contact, then no contact information for that agency should be included.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – (date and time)

Contacts: _____, (state or federal agency) media relations; (name, your office **and/or** work cell # -- or the stand-by phone #360-701-7401 **and/or** regular work cell #)
_____, (other agency) media relations; phone/cell #

(State or Federal Agency) and (federal, tribal, local agencies) responding to (oil spill/hazardous material release) in/at _____

(DATELINE) – The (state or federal agency), (other state and/or federal agencies, RP, tribal, local and county entities, and private cleanup contractors) are responding to an oil spill at/near _____ in county/city.

More information about the spill will be provided as soon as it becomes available.

###

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – date and time

Contacts: _____, (State or federal agency) media relations; (name, your office **and/or** work cell # -- or the stand-by phone #360-701-7401 **and/or** regular work cell #)
_____, (other state or federal agency) media relations; phone/cell #

Incident Web site for continuing updates: (if applicable, list URL)

(State or federal agency) and (other state/federal/tribal, local agencies) responding to (oil spill/hazardous material release) in/at

(DATELINE) – The (State or federal agency), (other state, federal, tribal, local agencies, responsible party, and private cleanup contractors) are responding to an (oil spill/ hazardous material release) at/near _____ in county/city.

The (spill/release) was reported to (state or federal agency) at about (time). State and federal authorities have responders and investigators at the site to determine the source, type, and location of the (spilled oil/hazardous material) and to plan cleanup strategies.

(State or federal agency) and (other agencies) are working to: (Choose appropriate bullets for oil spill **OR** hazardous material)

(Oil Spill bullets)

- Hire private spill cleanup contractors.
- Get boats, oil skimming vessels, oil containment boom and other response equipment in the water.
- Take samples of the spilled oil.
- Investigate potential sources of the spill.
- Conduct aerial over flights to determine the magnitude of the spill and track its location.
- Identify important fish and wildlife habitat areas.
- Observe and respond to potential shore line and wildlife impacts.

(Hazardous Material spill bullets)

- Identify the source of the release and contain it.
- Identify the extent of the contamination and potential human contact.
- Get the appropriate cleanup equipment on site.
- Take samples of the spilled material.
- Drill monitoring wells to test ground water.
- Identify and protect important fish and wildlife habitat areas.
- Observe and respond to potential soil and wildlife impacts.

(If oil, add these messages :)

Oil is visible in the surrounding water and shorelines (inside harbor/inlet/sound from x to y). Oil spilled to water typically forms oily patches that spread out quickly. These “oil slicks” can cover many acres of water.

All oil spills cause environmental damage, regardless of size. Oil is toxic to the environment and the damage starts as soon as the oil hits water. A single quart of oil has the potential to foul more than 100,000 gallons of water.

The following templates are included as examples of news releases that might be issued once a JIC has been established under Unified Command. The templates are designed to highlight coordination response and participation among responding public and private entities. Unified Command logos should be included on the releases.

Incident name Joint Information Center Established

Joint Information Center
(Unified Command logos/names here)

News Release #?

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Incident name joint information center established Location, State

A Joint Information Center has been established at location to disseminate response information for the incident name.

The media is requested to use the phone numbers listed below for incident response inquiries and interviews.

(###) ###-####

A website with incident response information can be found at the following URL:
www.incidentwebsite.com, @twitter, other social media tools

Members of the Unified Command are responding to a type spill near location, today. The ---- was reportedly carrying nearly max capacity gallons of type of product, but it is not known how much of the product was discharged.

The cause of the incident is under investigation.

###

Incident Media Briefing

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

News Release #?

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Incident name media briefing location, State

The incident name unified command is holding a media briefing at the location today to discuss response topic.

WHEN: time, day

WHERE: building name, room number, exact location, street address, city, state

WHO: (name, agency), Federal On Scene Coordinator
(name, agency), State On Scene Coordinator
(name, agency), Local On Scene Coordinator
(name, representing) Tribal On Scene Coordinator
(name, agency), Responsible Party

BACKGROUND: Incident summary, something happened at some place someday. Typically can be the lead paragraph from previous release.

Please visit www.incidentwebsite.com for incident response information. @twitter, other social media tools

###

Response Continues

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

News Release #?

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Incident name spill response continues location, State

Members of the unified command continue to coordinate product type spill recovery operations in the location, dateline.

Responders have recovered more than ----- gallons of oily water mixture and -- yards of solid soiled waste. More than ----- feet of containment boom and -- responders have been deployed to conduct shoreline assessments and recover as much product as possible.

Shipping traffic is still required to maintain minimum safe speed from ----- to ----- to minimize the impact to clean-up operations. The unified command will continue to closely monitor the situation and will adjust commercial traffic accordingly.

The unified command consists of representatives from the who.

What happened, where at approximately --: a.m. dateline.

[Statement about public health warnings, air, water etc..., wildlife impacts] There have been no reports of impacted wildlife. Air monitoring is being conducted by [agency] and results are at safe levels.

[Statement about use of volunteers needed?] The use of volunteers is not requested at this time. However, if you would like to register as a volunteer, go to www.oilspills101.wa.gov.

The cause of the incident is under investigation. Drug and alcohol tests will be performed.

Please visit www.incidentwebsite.com for incident response information. @twitter, other social media tools

###

Unified Command Approves Dispersants

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

News Release #?

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Unified Command has approved the use of dispersants for the Incident name, location, State

The Unified Command has approved the use of the chemical dispersant name in order to break up the oil slick and protect shoreline habitat, seabirds and marine mammals from becoming oiled due to the fuel spill recovery operations in the location, dateline.

Dispersants break down oil into smaller particles helping it to disperse and sink below the surface. Before dispersants are used a range of criteria must be met:

- The application of dispersants must be within a pre-authorized dispersant use zone, as designated by the Northwest Area Contingency Plan, or it must be authorized on a case-by-case basis by the Region X, Regional Response Team.
- The application of dispersants must provide an environmental benefit for species at risk and/or species of special concern.
- The application of dispersants must be done safely and in accordance with standard marine and aviation practices.

Federal and state trustee agencies identified the list species of special concern in which dispersant use will potentially benefit as species of special concern and of significant risk of injury from this oil spill, especially if the spill were allowed to spread and hit sensitive habitats and shorelines.

Wildlife and resource agencies believe that these species will be benefited by the use of dispersants and will monitor the operations as appropriate for these species.

(Provide any information, as necessary on fisheries and plans for any seafood tainting panels)

The unified command consists of representatives from the who.

[Statement about public health warnings, air, water etc..., wildlife impacts] There have been no reports of impacted wildlife. Air monitoring is being conducted by [agency] and results are at safe levels.

[Statement about use of volunteers needed?] The use of volunteers is not requested at this time. However, if you would like to register as a volunteer, go to www.oilspills101.wa.gov.

The cause of the incident is under investigation. Drug and alcohol tests will be performed.

Please visit www.incidentwebsite.com for incident response information. @twitter, other social media tools

###

Fishing Activity Suspended

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

News Release #?

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Fishing activity suspended due to incident name spill response location, State

Members of the unified command have suspended all fishing for human consumption in the areas affected by the oil until at least date, or when state health officials have determined that fishing can safely be reopened.

Unified Command is working with local health departments and other agencies to conduct the fish safety evaluation.

These agencies are collecting samples of fish and shellfish from the area impacted by the spill. Samples of fish are being collected from various locations in water body and along the coast. The samples will be tested for toxic chemicals that are found in the oil, which can accumulate to dangerous levels in fish and shellfish. The main toxins of concern in the oil that was released are a group of chemicals called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). Long-term exposure to high levels of PAHs is associated with an increased risk of developing cancer.

Safety guidelines call for avoiding consumption of any fish or shellfish from water body until analysis of the collected samples is completed. Visible oil or oily smell are obvious indications of contamination, but fish and shellfish from the spill area could still pose a potential risk even if there are no visible signs of contamination.

In addition, health officials are asking people to stay away from shore areas until cleanup efforts are completed. After beaches are reopened, people who find oil deposits along the shore should report them to [phone# for ongoing response information – or the number of the state environmental agency (DOE, ODEQ, IOEM) monitoring the incident.

Safety advice for beaches in the spill area:

- Avoid direct contact with spilled oil, which can cause skin irritation. Prolonged contact may cause rashes.
- If you get oil or tar on your skin, wash it off with soap and water, and be certain to wash your hands before eating.
- If you get oil on your clothing, wash it in the usual way. There is no need to use harsh detergents, solvents, or other chemicals to wash oil from skin or clothing.
- Do not burn driftwood or other debris that may be contaminated with oil.
- Use common sense. Do not swim in water with an oil slick and do not swallow water from the area. Oil-contaminated water can cause choking and lead to severe pneumonia if it gets into the lungs.
- There is no risk of adverse health effects from breathing air near spilled oil unless there is prolonged exposure to fumes in closed spaces.
- Fish and shellfish caught from waters outside the spill area remain as safe to eat as before the spill, but marine life from the spill area should be avoided until the evaluation of its safety is completed.

[Statement about public health warnings, air, water etc..., wildlife impacts] There have been no reports of impacted wildlife. Air monitoring is being conducted by [agency] and results are at safe levels.

[Statement about use of volunteers needed?] The use of volunteers is not requested at this time. However, if you would like to register as a volunteer, go to www.oilspills101.wa.gov.

The cause of the incident is under investigation.

Please visit www.incidentwebsite.com for incident response information. @twitter, other social media tools

###

Volunteer Hotline Established

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

News Release #?

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

Incident name volunteer hotline established location, State

The unified command has activated a Volunteer Hotline at number for people who would like to contribute to the product type spill recovery operations near location, dateline.

The Volunteer Hotline will provide updates on the spill response and will allow potential volunteers to provide their contact information, availability, and applicable skills. You can also register at www.oilspills101.wa.gov.

“We appreciate the public’s outpouring of support and their desire to help out in the unfortunate event,” said Name, Public Information Officer for the Incident name Response. “We are doing everything we can to minimize impacts to the environment and protect the wildlife that lives here. At this time, we are evaluating how we may best use volunteers in our response in a way that is both safe for the volunteers and productive.”

Volunteers have been used in previous oil spill responses, with activities coordinated through the Unified Command. By calling the Volunteer Hotline number or registering on the www.oilspills101.wa.gov, prospective volunteers will get the most up-to-date information on whether their time and skills will be needed.

Volunteers and others should stay away from the spill site and not attempt to rescue oiled wildlife, as this may hamper clean-up efforts and increase the danger to both wildlife and humans. Oil is a toxic substance and only those with hazardous materials training are authorized to clean up oil. For the safety of both the public and the animals, only trained wildlife specialists will handle oiled wildlife.

The public can help at this time by reporting any oiled animals to number. The wildlife response organization name uses modern equipment and facilities and has trained staff to care for the oiled

wildlife. Personnel experienced in animal capture and handling will respond at the earliest opportunity, presenting the best chance for wildlife survival.

The public's cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Please visit www.incidentwebsite.com for incident response information. @twitter, other social media tools

###

Fact Sheet Templates

Initial Incident Details

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

Situation Report

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

FACT SHEET: Incident name spill response near location, State

Members of the Unified Command continue to coordinate product type spill recovery operations in the location, dateline.

Incident summary, something happened at some place someday. Typically can be the lead paragraph from previous release. Cleanup operations for product released from the vessel name will continue and are being closely monitored until long term salvage or oil pollution mitigation plans can be finalized.

Unified Command:

- Members consist of the who.
- Agencies contributing to the response include who else.

Current activity:

- Responders continue oil/water mixture removal from the -----.
- Crews continue to tend the hard boom while removing and replacing the sorbent boom used to collect the oil.
- Responders deployed skimmers.
- Responders place recovered oil into a temporary storage tank where it will decant, settle and separate, for later quantification.

Quantities:

- Vessel name had a max capacity of ----- gallons aboard at the time of the incident.
- ----- gallons of oil/water mixture recovered to date.
- The Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund (OSLTF) is currently at \$--- million. More information on the OSLTF is available at http://www.uscg.mil/npfc/About_NPFC/osltf.asp.

Equipment and personnel on scene:

- ---- skimmers
- ---- skiffs
- ---- temporary storage tanks for recovered oil
- ---- vacuum truck
- ---- personnel from -----
- ---- on scene recovery capacity compared to state requirements---- and federal requirements----

* Note: Only use this metric if the on scene capacity is greater than state and federal requirements.

Safety:

- The Coast Guard Vessel Traffic Service has requested vessel and recreational traffic inbound and outbound direction of ----- travel with no wake as a safety measure for responders working in and on the water.

Wildlife:

- --wildlife impacts have been reported at this time. Crews will monitor for oiled wildlife for the duration of the spill cleanup. Anyone seeing oiled wildlife should report it to XXX-XX-XXXX.

Fishery Closure:

- Location

Ship Facts:

- Built in ----.
- Length -----
- Beam -----
- Draft -----
- ----- Flagged
- Max capacity of the tanks is approximately ----- gallons.

Photo and video resources

###

Unified Command

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

News Release

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

FACT SHEET: Unified Command

An effective Unified Command (UC) is indispensable to response activities and requires a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each participating organization. Success requires unity of effort, which respects the chain of command of each participating organization, while harnessing seamless coordination across jurisdictions in support of common objectives.

Use of the Incident Command System (ICS) is an important element across multijurisdictional or multiagency incident management activities. It provides a structure to enable agencies with different legal, jurisdictional, and functional responsibilities to coordinate, plan, and interact effectively on scene. As a team effort, the UC is made up of Incident Commanders (IC) from agencies with jurisdictional authority and/or functional responsibility for the incident. This allows each agency or IC to provide joint support through mutually developed incident objectives and strategies established at the command level. Each participating agency maintains its own authority, responsibility, and accountability, while the UC provides a forum for these agencies to make consensus decisions.

The need for UC arises when incidents:

- Cross geographic boundaries (e.g., two states, international boundaries);
- Involve various governmental levels (e.g., federal, state, local);
- Impact functional responsibilities (e.g., Search and Rescue, fire, oil spill, EMS); or
- Some combination of the above.

The UC is responsible for: (1) developing a single set of objectives; (2) using a collective, strategic approach; (3) improving information flow and coordination; (4) creating common understanding of joint priorities and restrictions; (5) ensuring that no agency's legal authorities are compromised or neglected; and (6) optimizing the combined efforts of all agencies under a single plan.

UC representatives must be able to:

- Agree on incident objectives and priorities;
- Have the capability to sustain a 24-hour-7-day-a week commitment to the incident;
- Have the authority to commit agency or company resources to the incident;
- Have the authority to spend agency or company funds;
- Agree on constraints/limitations, priorities, decisions and procedures;
- Agree on an incident response organization;
- Agree on the appropriate Command and General Staff position assignments to ensure clear direction for on-scene tactical resources;
- Commit to speak with “one voice” through the PIO or JIC, if established;
- Agree on managing sensitive information and operational security issues;
- Agree on logistical support including resource ordering procedures; and
- Agree on cost-sharing and cost accounting procedures, as appropriate.

In general, a successful UC is a team. A UC is to skillfully use the strengths of each IC and acknowledges each representative’s unique capabilities and authorities. A UC has a shared understanding of the situation and agrees on common objectives to bring the incident to closure. A UC is open to different perspectives and knows that contentious issues may arise, but that ICS inherently relies on the UC framework to provide the forum to resolve problems and find solutions.

###

Boom

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

News Release

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

FACT SHEET: Boom

Spilled oil may be contained by using a floating physical barrier called boom. Boom floats on the surface, but parts may extend above and below it. Because oil floats on water, the boom needs only to prevent surface movement at the top of the water to be effective.

Boom length is measured in feet, and it is not unusual for thousands of feet of boom to be deployed for even a modest spill. Boom sizes are described in inches of freeboard and skirt. A 6-by-12 boom has a six-inch-high freeboard and 12-inch-deep skirt. Boom typically is manufactured in high-visibility colors, such as white, yellow or orange, for easy tracking by response teams and for the safety of vessels operating nearby.

Boom is not a perfect containment device. Waves can carry oil over a boom and a current may force oil under it. Boom is more effective directing oil which moves at a slight angle to the line of boom than as a barrier blocking the slick's movement. Such circumstances may require replacing light boom with boom having higher freeboard and deeper skirt. Multiple lines of boom are more effective at containing oil than a single line.

Limitations on the use of boom include the time required to get it to the scene, load it on boats, carry it to the spill, and deploy it. Boom also has to be stored within reasonable traveling distance of a potential spill. Once used, boom has to be de-contaminated of the waste oil or chemical before it can be stored. If sorbent boom is used, it has to be disposed of safely once it has been contaminated with oil or chemical waste. Some types of boom have operational limitations, such as the loss of ballast or buoyancy if the water- or air-filled sections are breached by abrasion or handling.

A single string of boom often will serve several purposes simultaneously. Typical tasks for boom include:

- Encirclement – laying one or more barriers of boom around the source of the spill to keep it from spreading or around a section of slick to hold it in place for recovery. Tankers transferring cargo may be encircled by boom as a precaution, even though there is no spill.
- Diversion – setting one or more lines of boom at angles into or across a moving slick’s path to guide it toward an area where it can be confined and recovered, or to let it safely pass a sensitive area. Diversion is primarily used near shore on rivers. It is most effective where currents are weak and there is little wave action.
- Collection – towing boom in a “V,” “U,” “J,” or teardrop configuration through or around a slick to gather oil together for recovery or burning.
- Recovery – placing sorbent boom where it will contact floating oil and absorb or adsorb some of it for later recovery, or similarly using weir boom to catch oil and transport it to a skimmer.
- Exclusion – stringing boom around un-oiled areas to keep oil out. The exclusion booming may also divert moving oil away from a sensitive area.

Although different types of boom may look different, virtually all boom has five common components:

- Flotation device – keeps the boom at the water's surface, where floating pollutants are.
- Freeboard – the part that rises above the water's surface and prevents waves from washing pollutants over the top.
- Skirt – similar to freeboard but below the surface, the skirt prevents the current from washing floating pollutants under the boom.
- Ballast – this is the weight at the bottom of the skirt that keeps it hanging vertically against a current.
- Tension line or strength member – cables, chains or lines extending the length of the skirt or freeboard and, like the main boom cable, chain or boom, attached at the end.

In general, boom with a high freeboard and short skirt is called fence boom, because it prevents the pollutant from moving across the surface. A boom with a longer skirt and shorter freeboard is a curtain boom, and is good to prevent pollutants from moving just below the surface. Some boom includes both characteristics.

Similar to fence and curtain boom is tubular containment boom. Tubular boom has at least two sections one or more air-filled tubes above the water, for flotation and to keep oil from crossing the boom on waves, and one or more water-filled tubes below the water for ballast and to keep oil from passing beneath the boom.

Sorbent boom made of absorbent or adsorbent material to collect and hold oil within the boom itself. It is most effective with thin layers of pollutants and light winds or currents. Once soaked to capacity, the boom can be recovered and the collected oil squeezed out. Sorbent boom

requires strong supporting lines, chains or cables because of its tendency to break under pressure of wind or current. Once soaked, it is heavier than simple barrier boom and therefore requires extra effort to remove it from the water.

Recovery boom, such as three-weir boom, has four sections. An air-filled tube extending above the water for buoyancy and to keep oil from passing over the boom. A water-filled tube extending below the surface for ballast and to keep oil from passing beneath the boom. A discharge tube which collects oil from inlets between the air- and water-filled tubes and moves it the length of the boom to a recovery device. A smaller air-filled tube to keep the discharge tube afloat. Recovery boom not only holds floating pollutants in place, but is an active part in recovering pollutants from the water.

A frequent problem in the use of boom is the fact that each end of the boom must be anchored in place. On a small stream, it can be anchored to trees or rocks on land; in a harbor, it may be attached to piers or seawalls. On open water, however, the ends must be literally anchored, using lines attached to weights on the lake or sea bottom, or they must be attached to boats. The use of a boat to anchor one end of a boom means that boat cannot be used for any other assignment, and boats may be in short supply.

Sources: Department of Transportation, U.S. Coast Guard and Research and Special Programs Administration; Environmental Protection Agency; Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service.

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Oil Types

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

News Release

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

FACT SHEET: Oil Types

Oil spills along coasts affect many parts of the environment, both non-living - such as water, ocean bottom, and shoreline; and living - like sea birds, marine mammals, shellfish, and people.

Major oil spills most commonly involve oils shipped in large quantities at sea, such as crude petroleum, No. 1 and No. 2 fuel oils, diesel oil, Bunker C oil, kerosene, and jet fuel. Oils are compounds, complex mixtures that vary widely in composition.

Oils can be described as belonging to one of five groups:

- I very light oils (jet fuel, gasoline);
- II light oils (diesel, No. 2 fuel oil, light crude, home heating);
- III medium oils (most crude oils);
- IV heavy oils (heavy crude oils, No. 6 fuel oil, Bunker C);
- V group (very heavy oils).

The different types of oils behave in different ways during a spill; therefore, the response to a spill varies, depending on the type of oil and quantity released.

Other important factors in a spill are:

- Weather and season (for example bird migration, nesting, or fish spawning);
- Type of shoreline (such as sand beach, tidal flat, rocky shore);
- Exposure to wave and tidal energy;
- Types, abundance, and sensitivity of living resources.

Most oil has a density less than water and floats. The natural tendency of oil is to spread in a thin layer on the surface of the water as a sheen or film. Such sheens are extremely difficult to recover and do not remain for long periods; however, they do represent a continued threat to fish

and wildlife, particularly nesting birds. Under turbulent conditions, oil is more likely to disperse into the upper layers of the water.

Oil changes rapidly once it is spilled into water. These changes are enhanced by the processes of evaporation, dilution and emulsification (when water incorporates into the oil, forming a stable mixture). Some changes help dissipate spilled oil, but others can make it linger in the water, on the bottom, or on the shore. Evaporation tends to remove the more toxic components and reduces the toxicity of spilled oil. Emulsification, on the other hand, can slow degradation of spilled oil.

Weathering describes the physical, chemical, and biological changes that happen to crude oil and refined petroleum products once they begin to interact with the watery environment. Ultimately, the more toxic elements of oil products spilled in the marine, estuarine, or freshwater environment are broken down. Exposure to air, sunlight, wave and tidal action, and certain microscopic organisms degrades and/or disperses oil. The rate of degradation and dispersion depends on many factors like the type of oil, weather, temperature, and the type of shoreline and bottom.

Very light oils are highly volatile, which means they evaporate quickly, usually completely within one to two days after a spill. These oils are also flammable and contain high concentrations of soluble toxic compounds. Very light oils can mix with water and kill aquatic life that lives in the upper layers. Cleanup is usually not necessary, or possible, with spills of very light oil.

Light oils are moderately volatile, but can leave a residue of up to one-third of the amount spilled after a few days. These oils contain moderate concentrations of soluble toxic compounds. Light oils leave a film or layer on intertidal resources with the potential of long-term contamination. Cleanup can be very effective on spills of light oil.

Medium oils are less volatile, leaving a residue of about two-thirds of the amount spilled after 24 hours. These oils are less likely to mix with water, and oil contamination of intertidal areas can be severe and long-term. The impact of medium oils on waterfowl and fur-bearing mammals can also be severe. Cleanup is most effective with spills of medium oil if conducted quickly.

Heavy oils have far less evaporation or dilution potential, and they weather more slowly. These oils do not readily mix with water. Spills of heavy oils can cause severe contamination of intertidal areas and possible long-term contamination of sediments. Heavy oils have severe impacts on waterfowl and furbearing mammals. Shoreline cleanup in spills of this type is difficult and long-term under most conditions.

Group V oils, mostly very heavy oils, can float, sink, or hang in the water. These oils can become oil drops and mix in the water, or accumulate on the bottom, or mix with sand and then sink. As a rule, these oils are less toxic than lighter oils, however they pose significant problems to responders because they are extremely difficult to track or predict.

Spill response teams of federal, state and local agencies, organizations and industry representatives have prepared contingency plans for oil spill emergencies.

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Moderator Script Outline

Welcome to today's (this morning's/tonight's) news conference. My name is:

We will be presenting information on:

With us today are:

We will begin today with brief statements by representatives of the Unified Command. Then we will open the floor to your questions. Because of the on-going response needs, we will be available for _____ minutes today. Please allow time for everyone here to ask questions.

Following the news conference, staff of the Joint Information Center staff and I will try to help you with any further needs.

Agency Communication Managers E-List

Organization	Contact	E-mail
Washington State Governor's Office	Pearse Edwards, Communications and External Affairs Director	Pearse.Edwards@gov.wa.gov
Idaho Office of Emergency Management	Robert Feeley	rfeeley@bhs.idaho.gov
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality	Mark Dietrich	mark.dietrich@deq.idaho.gov
Idaho Department of Fish and Game	Roger Fuhrman	rfuhrman@idfg.idaho.gov
Idaho Department of Water Resources		IDWRInfo@idwr.idaho.gov
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality	Nina Deconcini	deconcini.nina@deq.state.or.us
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife		
Washington State Department of Ecology	Sandy Howard	sandy.howard@ecy.wa.gov
Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife	Bruce Botka	bruce.botka@dfw.wa.gov
Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission	Virginia Painter	virginia.painter@parks.wa.gov
Puget Sound Partnership	Katy Johansson	katy.johansson@psp.wa.gov
Washington State Department of Health	Tim Church	timothy.church@doh.wa.gov
Emergency Management Division, Washington Department of the Military	Rob Harper	r.harper@emd.wa.gov
Washington State Department of Agriculture	Jason Kelly	jkelly@agr.wa.gov
State of Washington Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development	Wendy Pugnetti	wendyp@cted.wa.gov
Washington State Patrol	Jeff DeVere	jeffrey.devere@wsp.wa.gov
Washington State Department of Transportation	Lloyd Brown	brownl@wsdot.wa.gov
Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission	Marilyn Meehan	mmeehan@utc.wa.gov

Field Escort Equipment and Communications Checklist

Personal Protective Equipment (to be determined by the Safety Officer) which may include:

- Hard hat
- Goggles
- Gloves
- Tyvek
- Rubber boots
- Personal flotation device
- Respirator
- Level A Suit
- Self-contained breathing apparatus

Communications

- VHF radio
- Cell phone

Information

- Assignment List: ICS Form 204
- Incident Status Summary: ICS Form 209
- Latest news release

Sample Questions for Focus Group or Interviews

The following are sample questions that can be used for obtaining feedback through focus groups or in interviews.

1. What was your reaction when you first learned of the incident? How and when did you first learn about it?
2. Have you discussed the incident/response with friends, family, neighbors, or colleagues? What are they saying?
3. How are you getting information about the response?
4. What are your preferred means of getting information?
5. In your mind, what questions remain unanswered?
6. In general, how would you rate the effectiveness of the response, on a scale of one to ten, ten being highest?
7. What do or would you tell others about how response is being carried out?
8. If you could change one thing about the response, what would you change? What is the main reason that one thing needs changing?
9. What would it take for the response agencies to get an “A” for their efforts to respond to this type of incident?
10. What two positive things can you tell me about the response? What are two negative things about the response?

Focus Group Preparation

Ideally, two or three sessions are held, with a different group in each. About two hours should be scheduled for each group session. The location should be a comfortable, “neutral” meeting room. The host should provide coffee, tea, and snacks. Check to make sure your meeting location complies with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

Optimum group size is 8 to 12 people. The more people you have in each group, the more time you will need for discussion, but the broader perspective you’ll have. Be realistic. In a group of 10, for instance, each person would have about 10 minutes of dialogue in a two-hour meeting. In other words, each person would have about one minute to respond to each of 10 questions.

Be clear about your goals as you craft your interview questions. They need to yield answers that help you understand how to better respond to community needs.

Develop and print an agenda for distribution among group members. You might also include a packet of materials already generated to seek feedback on their effectiveness. Focus group sessions should be taped (audio or video), along with note taking by the moderator and another appointed JIC staff in attendance. You may want to record comments on a flip chart.

Be on hand early to greet all participants as they arrive. Have them print nametags and table placards.

Sample Agenda

Moderator	Welcome and brief introduction	2 minutes
Members	Round robin introductions	3 minutes
All	Q & A, discussion	about 10 minutes per question
Moderator	Wrap-up, closing remarks	3 minutes

Joint Information Center Communication Plan Outline

Operational period:

Communication goal(s):

Summary of issue, problem, opportunity:

Key message(s):

Target audience(s):

Need for Translation/Interpretation:

Tools, tactics, and methods (how to notify or inform target audiences)

Deliverables – who will do what by when

Media Content Analysis Worksheet

Date of news:

Media outlet name:

Broadcast times:

Coverage synopses:

Issues:

Inaccuracies:

View points:

Fixes:

Who replied to:

Social Media Account Checklist

How to Create Social Media Email Accounts

After permission is received from unified command, open an email account in order to create needed social media accounts. This section outlines the various social media accounts available and how to create an account. Careful consideration should be made when choosing which social mediums to engage in.

Gmail

- These accounts will be used to create all social media accounts.
- Go to the Google homepage.
- Click the "Sign In" link at the top right of the screen and "Create an account."
- Fill in the appropriate boxes: "First Name," "Last Name" and "Desired Login Name." (Name each account created (login/username) the same as the response website name if possible).
- Choose and confirm a password.
- Fill out the remainder of the form with a security question (which will help you if you forget your password), a secondary email (if you have one), and location and word verification.
- Click on the button marked "I accept. Create My Account."

Yahoo!

- These accounts will be used to create all social media accounts.
- Go to the Yahoo! homepage.
- Click on "Sign Up" on the right side of the screen
- Fill in the appropriate boxes then click "Create My Account" (Name each account created (login/username) the same as the response website name if possible).

Facebook

- Establish a vanity URL for your page. Go to www.facebook.com/username and use the drop- down menu to select a name for the response page.
- Use the "link" and "upload" options.
- Compliment the link or photo upload using the "status" field to add an authentic note and entice readership/engagement.
- Link to relevant regional or national news stories, blog posts, press releases or web sites that post about the response.
- Make sure to carefully consider copyright issues and intellectual property rights when using other sources of information.

- Post current/upcoming events or safety/security zones, interesting facts, personal messages or quotes from response leadership and other items of interest to the response on the wall.
- Use the “Notes” option to post blog-type stories.
- Closely monitor comments and engage when appropriate. Always interact as an official spokesperson and be sure to follow the SOP and policy and practice full disclosure of who you are and your affiliation with the response.
- Engage on other official pages and the pages of various stakeholders.
- Consider yourself an official spokesperson and be sure to follow the SOP and policy and practice full disclosure of who you are and your affiliation with the response.

Twitter

- The following tips can help develop your microblog.
- Send short snippets about breaking news, countdowns, case updates, “As-It-Happens” updates, ask questions, “did you know,” hot-off-the-press information, picture of the day, things to know, area familiarization information, unit stats, etc.
- Be clever and unique, drawing the reader in so they want to click the link or re-post your message.
- Send pictures using the photo upload option or third party services like Twitpic.
- Follow other federal, state or local Twitter accounts and re-post (e.g. Re-tweet (RT)) as appropriate.
- Reply as appropriate to mentions.
- Use unique hashtags to help people follow your updates (e.g. #2011floods, #opsail2012)
- Use third party microblog services to easily manage your site (e.g. www.tweetdeck.com or www.hootsuite.com).
- Use a URL shortener that has a privacy policy (we suggest using goo.gl).
- Creating an Account
 - Go to www.Twitter.com and click on the "Get Started-Join!" button.
 - Fill out the blanks. Create a username and password that is similar to the response website created by the PIO. Twitter will automatically check the availability of your username. Enter your email address and continue.
 - After you create your account, you can manually see if any of your e-mail contacts are on Twitter. Just enter your e-mail username and password, and Twitter will automatically import anyone it recognizes.
 - Uncheck “Select All” box on the “Look who else is here” page or skip the step.
 - Go to Profile and click on Add a Photo. Click the “Choose File” button and search for Icon image designed for response.
 - If setting up a phone is available at the response then go to the "Devices" tab on your profile page and then enter your cell phone number. A confirmation message will be sent to your phone, and then you'll be able to make your first update.

YouTube

- Go to www.YouTube.com

- Click the “Sign Up” link.
- Requires a Yahoo account and an Yahoo email to sign up.
- Select a username for the site (use the name of the response if possible) and follow YouTube instructions.
- To embed a video on a response site, first upload a video to YouTube and then click on the video to view it. Copy and paste the “Embed” code to wherever you want it: blog, etc.

Flickr

- Go to www.flickr.com
Click "Create Your Account."
Fill out the required fields. Required fields are the ones with the * symbol beside them.
- Uploading Images
- Click the "upload photos" button.
- You will be prompted to choose the photo you want to upload. Click the “choose photos” button and select the location where your picture is located on your computer.
- Now that your photo is uploaded, click the “add titles and descriptions” buttons to add text to your picture.
- Be sure to add photos to a set. This is necessary to create a slideshow.
- Flickr to Twitter
- Go to www.Flickr.com
- Log in to newly created account.
- Click on “You” and select “Your Account.”
- Click on “Extending Flickr.”
- Scroll down to “Your blogs” and click “Edit.”
- Add response Twitter account and Blogger account from drop down menu.
- Now all photos uploaded to Flickr can be disseminated via Twitter or posted to Blog.

Blog

- The following tips can help develop your blog writing style.
- Style of writing should be conversational, fun and engaging, but appropriately serious to the situation. Blog writing is similar to feature writing style.
- Use your insider access to take the reader behind the scenes. For example, get a quote from a person involved or a unique picture only available on your site.
- Find a personal and interesting angle to the story. Answer the “what’s in it for me, the reader?”
- Turn a photo caption into a story with quotes and updates about the operation.
- To establish readership and credibility, blog managers should post frequently. Pre-establish content that can be posted regularly like status updates, maps, imagery, daily summaries, etc. If content or ideas are lacking, consider providing more in-depth stories about response operations or tactics (e.g. oil skimmers during a pollution response, claims processes during disasters or resources available at local shelters).
- At times, a cross-post of a relevant regional or national news story may be appropriate. Try not to favor any one news outlet and be careful of inappropriate endorsements. It may

be best to write a short introduction and include a quote from leadership to provide a command message, and then link to the story.

- Make sure to carefully consider copyright issues and intellectual property rights when using other sources of information.
 - Go to www.blogger.com
 - Click on “Create a Blog.”
 - Fill in the appropriate fields
 - Recommend using Flickr Uploadr - a good tool for uploading a group of images from a desktop (Mac & PC).
Blogger allows up to 10 email addresses to be added for notifications of a new blog entry (click Settings, Email & Mobile).

Instagram

- If using this tool, keep in mind Instagram is different from other social networks in that it is primarily a mobile platform.
- Once your account is set up, you will have a page that can be viewed on desktop, but the majority of your activity will take place within the mobile app.

Google Maps

- Login into Google account.
- Go to Google Maps <http://maps.google.com/maps>.
- Type in the address of location used for media briefing or other pertinent locations. (Hit “Enter” to begin search.)
- Click on the blue text of the address after it appears.
- In the white pop-up box click “Save To My Maps.”
- Select “Create New Map.”
- Fill in “Title” (on left).
- Add any other features that may be needed.
- Click the “Save” button and “Done” button (on the left).
- On the map (top right) click on the “Link” icon.
- Copy HTML to embed in Website.
- Paste HTML to Response site page “Media.”