

SEDGWICK COUNTY
EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN
2025-2030



ESF 15 – External Affairs

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Coordinating Agency:

Sedgwick County Communications Office
Sedgwick County Emergency Management

Primary Agency:

City of Wichita Strategic Communications Department

Support Agencies:

Adjutant General's Office, Kansas Division of Emergency Management
Adjutant General's Office, Office of Public Affairs
American Red Cross
City of Wichita IT/IS Department
Cox Communications
Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
KAKE TV-10 (ABC)
Kansas Department of Transportation
Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP)
Kansas Public Television Service (KPTS)
KCTU TV-5
KFDI (101.3 FM)
KRZZ (96.3 FM)
KSAS-TV (Fox)
KSN TV-3 (NBC)
KWCH TV-12 (CBS)
NOAA National Weather Service (NWS)
Sedgwick County Division of Information Technology
Sedgwick County Government
Sedgwick County Health Department

I. Purpose and Scope

Purpose

The purpose of ESF 15 is to provide accurate, coordinated, timely, and accessible information to those affected, including governments, media, the private sector, and the local populace, including children; those with disabilities and others with access and functional needs and limited English proficiency.

Scope

This ESF coordinates actions to provide the required external affairs support to county and incident management elements. This Annex details the establishment of support positions to coordinate communications to various audiences. This ESF applies to county departments and agencies that may require public affairs support or whose public affairs assets may be employed during an emergency. This scope describes:

II. Policies, References and Authorities

Local

- Sedgwick County, Communications Policy 1.200, News Release and Conferences Policy
- Sedgwick County, Communications Policy 1.201, Social Media Policy
- Sedgwick County, Information Technology Policy 3.400, Email Guidelines: Signature Blocks and Other Guidelines
- Sedgwick County Code of Ordinances Chapter 9.
- Kansas Homeland Security Region G- Hazard Mitigation Plan 2019

State

- Executive Order 05-03, Use of the National Incident Management System (NIMS);
- Kansas Statutes Annotated (KSA), 48-9a01, Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC);
- KSA 48-904 through 48-958: as amended, State and County Emergency Management Responsibilities;
- KOMA – Kansas Open Meetings Act;
- KORA- Kansas Open Records Act;
- Kansas Response Plan.

Federal

- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 29 C.F.R 1910 and 29 C.F.R 1926;
- National Response Framework;
- Homeland Security Presidential Directive – 5: Management of Domestic Incidents;
- Presidential Policy Directive – 8: National Preparedness; and • Comprehensive Planning Guide (CPG) 101.

III. Concept of Operations

Command, Control and Notification

When Emergency Management is notified of an event that requires the activation of the EOC, the Emergency Management Director and emergency management staff will determine which ESFs are required for activation to support emergency operations. If it is determined that ESF 15 will be activated, the Emergency Management Director will contact the designated Coordinating Agency for ESF 15 to report to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to attend an initial briefing.

Sedgwick County Emergency Management and Sedgwick County Communications will act as the lead agencies for ESF 15. Depending on the severity of the situation, other local Public Information Officers (PIO) and County staff will assist with media advisories and releases. Lead or support agency public information staff will operate from the Sedgwick County Emergency Operations Center on a 24-hour schedule to help maintain the flow of public information.

The coordinator for ESF 15 is Sedgwick County Communications and is responsible for contacting other public information officers, to include adjacent counties and state-level PIOs, as well as primary and support agencies with liaison roles. They will then provide a briefing to the other agencies and begin to gather important information such as shelter capacity/availability and to

determine availability of staff to support a Joint Information Center (JIC) if necessary. The ESF 15 Coordinator will provide other PIOs/agencies with the designated methods/timeframes for submitting data/information and updates to the EOC. Specific types of information that will require periodic updates include but are not limited to: shelter locations/capacities, casualty counts, road closures, evacuation routes, etc.

Public Announcement/Media Releases

If the situation dictates, emergency public information activities will be coordinated from a Joint Information Center (JIC). The JIC is usually a physical location where PIOs from organizations with primary disaster involvement come together to coordinate and disseminate information. Activating a JIC will help Sedgwick County departments and participating organizations coordinate their activities and help to ensure consistent and accurate information is disseminated. In most cases, the JIC will be located in close proximity to the Sedgwick County EOC. However, it may be located anywhere to support emergency activities. Wherever it is located, it is imperative that the JIC maintain contact with decision makers and/or the EOC via telephone, radio, the Internet, and/or face-to-face communications.

Regardless of how the JIC is structured or where the JIC is located, it is critical that ESF 15 maintain a person in the EOC anytime the level of activation requires the formation of a JIC. In some rare cases this could be done in a virtual environment. Once a JIC is activated, all emergency public information activities, including media inquiries, should be coordinated through the JIC. The JIC will become the central coordination point for all emergency public information and external communications activities. Once a JIC is established, public information statements will be routed through Incident Command for approval.

The purpose of the Sedgwick County JIC is to:

- Gather and coordinate information and serve as the “hub” for the release of timely, accurate, consistent and useful disaster related information
- Allow all involved organizations to speak from “one sheet of paper” providing consistent messages to the public
- Enable the EOC Team to concentrate on emergency decision-making and refer all media and public inquiries to the JIC
- Ensure the ability exists to answer direct inquiries from the public
- Monitor media coverage to verify the accuracy of information being disseminated
- Be proactive in responding to the disaster related information needs of all audiences
- Develop and implement a comprehensive public information strategy to gain and maintain public trust and confidence

Regardless of the incident, the function of the JIC remains essentially the same, while the number of departments and agencies involved as well as the location and the quantity of information to be disseminated will vary greatly. At a minimum, the following functions must be performed regardless of these variables:

- Establish and maintain contact with local radio, television and print media
- Develop and disseminate written information such as news releases, fact sheets and other reports as needed

- Schedule news conferences or interviews with department heads and other officials; brief them if appropriate
- Provide interview opportunities that meet the unique needs of each medium (television, radio, print)
- Establish and maintain a communications link or a Joint Information System (JIS) with field PIOs and all remote sites performing public information activities
- Monitor the information being released by the media to ensure appropriate information is being released and take steps to correct any inaccurate information
- Exchange information with elected officials, voluntary organizations, industry representatives, State and Federal PIOs and all other involved agencies as the situation dictates
- Provide ongoing information to and coordination with County, City, State and Federal elected officials

To the extent possible, the JIC will be staffed with PIOs from all agencies and organizations involved in the event. The number of departments and agencies involved as well as the location and the quantity of information disseminated could vary greatly. Once at the JIC, PIOs will be assigned functions to be accomplished in coordination with the JIC. These functions may need one to three individuals assigned to each:

- Social Media Coordinator
- All-other Media Coordinator
- Education Materials Coordinator
- News Conference / Press Release Coordinator
- Interview Coordinator
- Media Liaison
- Incident Command /EOC Liaison
- Elected and Appointed Officials / State and adjacent counties Liaison
- The United Way's 2-1-1 Help Line Information Coordinator
- Website Coordinator
- Very Important Persons (VIP) tour Coordinator
- Special Populations Segment Coordinator
- Incident Management Systems Coordinator

PIOs working in the JIC retain the autonomy to represent the public information needs of their respective agencies, while working closely with the EOC Team and/or JIC to ensure consistent information is being disseminated in a timely manner by all departments. Designated departmental PIOs may be asked to staff various JIC functions regardless of the level of involvement of their respective departments. This will ensure an adequate number of PIOs are available to support emergency public information activities. The PIOs working in the JIC will have two primary functions:

- Carry out the public information activities of their respective departments and agencies.
- Provide support to and assist with the overall JIC mission.

Frequent news conferences and media briefings will be scheduled as dictated by the event. The ESF 15 Coordinator will work with elected officials and department heads to ensure appropriate representation at news conferences. Since the public is familiar with the elected officials, the public will understand the authenticity and validity of the event. In addition, continuous public information about the event will be distributed through 1) the Sedgwick County Government's website, 2) press releases and 3) Sedgwick County Government social media accounts.

Access and Functional Needs

Sedgwick County has a local American Disability Act (ADA) Coordinator within the Human Resources Department that coordinates regularly with the State ADA Coordinator to ensure programs and policies are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, in large or complex disasters, the EOC Manager may choose to staff an ADA Response Coordinator directly in the EOC. If necessary, the ESF 15 Coordinator will consult with the ADA Coordinator, or ADA Response Coordinator, if assigned, to ensure incident specific operations are responded to in a manner consistent with the ADA.

Every effort will be made to provide emergency public information to those with access and functional needs. Close coordination will be required between the government and volunteer and community agencies as described further in ESF 6 Mass Care, Housing and Human Services. Consideration should be given to those who do not have access digital communications thus creating a barrier to access to disaster response/recovery information.

Digital inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of information and communication technologies. Digital inclusion includes several elements: 1) affordable, robust broadband internet service; 2) internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user; 3) access to digital literacy training; 4) quality technical support; and 5) applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration. Digital inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional and structural barriers to access and use technology.

English was identified as the primary language, Spanish as the secondary language, and Vietnamese as the third language spoken in households within Sedgwick County. Some educational materials have been translated into Spanish and Vietnamese, on occasion, other languages. Translation into additional languages will be performed as required.

The Sedgwick County Government utilizes vendors for interpretation and translation services. This service is available to all emergency response agencies and the Public Information Officers throughout the county.

The local television stations have agreed to provide information in Spanish and other languages as appropriate when they interrupt programming or when text scrolls are used across normal programming. TTY telephone services are available throughout Sedgwick County.