

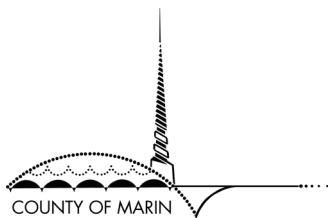


COUNTY OF MARIN

Public Emergency Communications Annex 2026

Annex to the County's Emergency Operations Plan



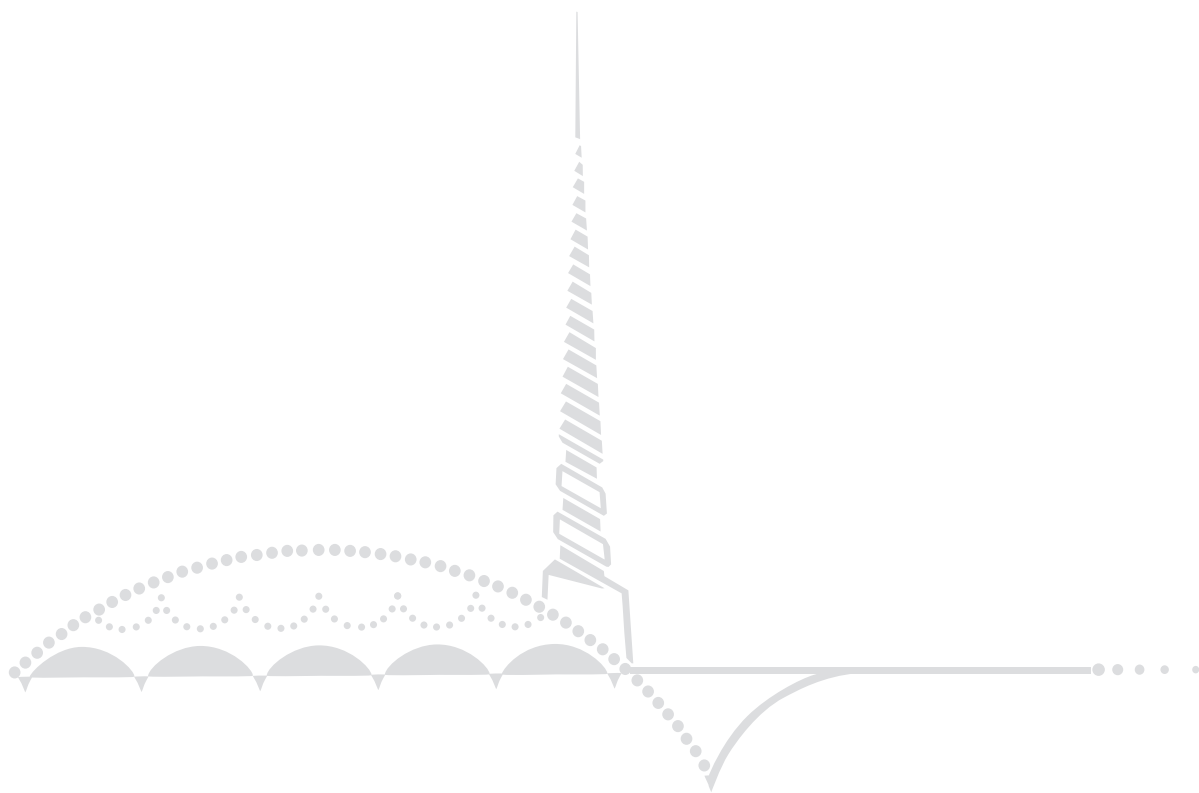


This document has been developed on behalf of the Marin County Operational Area, by the County of Marin's Office of Emergency Management.

MARIN OPERATIONAL AREA

Public Emergency Communications Plan

April 2026



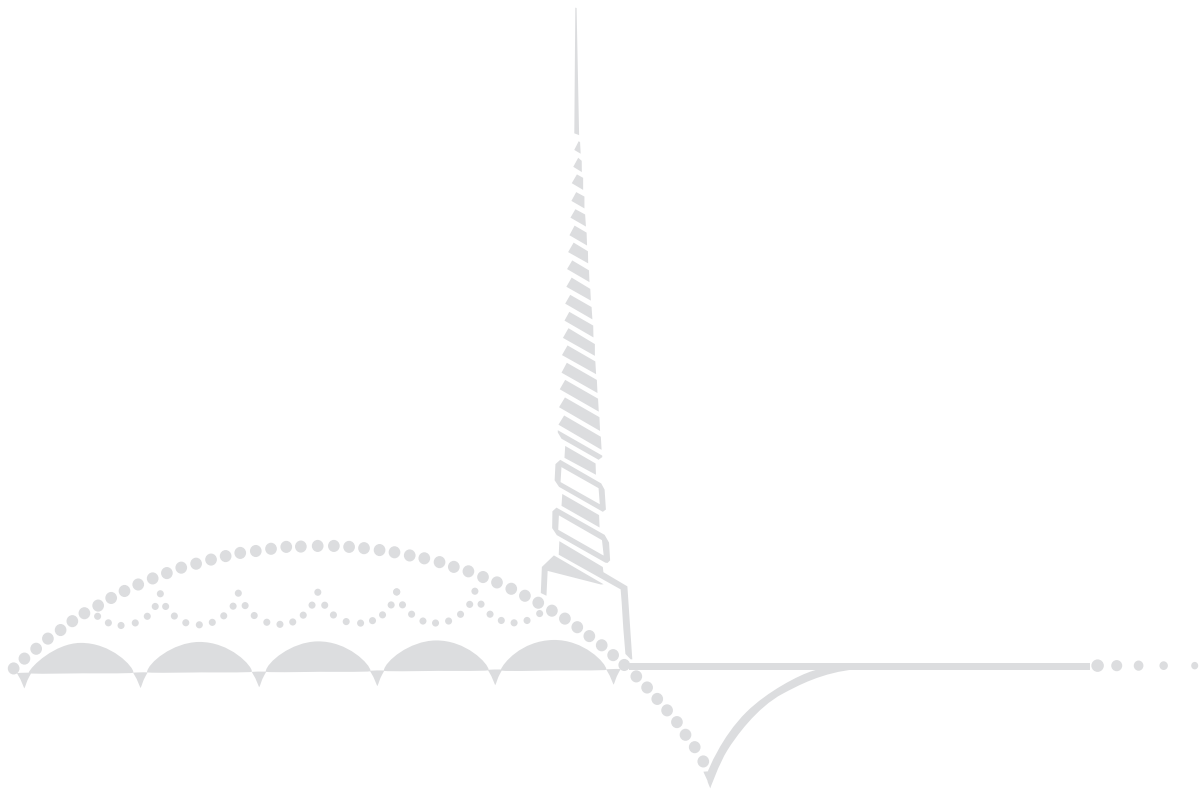
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ANNEX ADOPTION

The Marin County Operational Area Emergency Communications Annex establishes public emergency communication policies, procedures, and organizational framework to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters affecting the community. This Plan is compliant with the Standardized Emergency Management System/National Incident Management System (SEMS/NIMS) and the Alert & Warning Guidelines (2024) issued by the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES).

By this promulgation, the County of Marin formally adopts this public emergency communications Annex to serve as an element of the Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan. All jurisdictions, agencies, and partner organizations assigned responsibilities herein agree to 1. Familiarize themselves with its contents and procedures; 2. Maintain the capability to execute assigned functions during an emergency; and 3. Participate in plan training, exercises, and periodic reviews to ensure the plan remains current and effective.

This plan will be reviewed and updated after incidents and exercises by the Marin County Office of Emergency Management to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness and is consistent with other emergency response plan in use within the Marin OA.

This plan has been reviewed and approved by Marin County OA jurisdictions and formally adopted by The Office of the County Executive’s Communications Office and Marin County Fire Department’s Office of Emergency Management on April 7, 2026

Supervisor Mary Sacket Board President Marin County Board of Supervisors	Date
Derek Johnson County Executive Office of the County Executive	Date
Laine Hendricks County Communications Director Office of the County Executive	Date
Steven Torrence, Director Office of Emergency Management Marin County Fire Department	Date



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■ How to Use this Annex

The Marin Operational Area Public Emergency Communication Annex is a guide for Public Information Officers (PIO) and communications staff who are providing public information ahead of an incident and or serving in an activated Emergency Operations Center during an incident, emergency, or disaster. Users of this Annex should consult the EOP Base Plan first to understand overall emergency management structures and policies.

Once an incident's scope and needs are determined, this Annex should be referenced for specific procedures, resource coordination mechanisms, and operational details related to public information. This Annex is designed as a hands-on tool for PIOs to get up to speed quickly and provide timely and relevant information for the public to protect life safety, property, and the environment.

This Annex is outlined in eight sections and a comprehensive Annex with tools and checklists.

SECTION 1 **Introduction**

Defines the Annex's purpose, scope, objectives and planning assumptions and identifies the primary and secondary users of the Annex. This section also discusses basic concepts for coordinating emergency information across Marin OA partners.

SECTION 2 **Concept of Operations**

Addresses the relationships, organizational structure, and emergency management phases relating to crisis communications within the Marin OA. This section defines the Marin OA Joint Information System (JIS) and the Joint Information Center (JIC) concept.

SECTION 3 **Roles, Responsibilities, and Tools**

This section defines the roles and responsibilities for Emergency Public Information within the Marin Operational Area (OA). It outlines how responsibilities transition from daily operations and Joint Information System (JIS) activities to the expanded Joint Information Center (JIC) structure activated during an emergency. It also explains how Public Information functions integrate within the EOC and JIC organizations and provides a description of JIC position roles and responsibilities to ensure coordinated, accurate, and timely information sharing during an emergency incident.

SECTION 4 **Preparedness Phase**

Describes the Preparedness Phase which creates the foundation for ensuring jurisdictions have the ability to quickly disseminate information that could help the community prepare for an emergency. This is done by developing templates and tools and engaging with the community prior to any incident occurring.

SECTION 5 **Activation Phase**

Outlines authorities and process to activate this Emergency Communication Annex and the JIC. Includes notification protocols for JIS members and initial actions the activation phase calls for when Marin OA agencies start their response to an incident.

SECTION 6 **Response Phase**

The Response section outlines information management processes from gaining situational awareness to establishing message priorities, and strategies for streamlining content review and approval. This section discusses use of the Marin OA JIC.

SECTION 7 **Recovery Phase**

The Recovery section specifies continuing communication processes and messages, outlines the transition from response message to recovery. Focuses on short and long-term recovery messaging and details specific actions for deactivation of the EOC/PIO function and Joint Information Center.

SECTION 8 **Messaging Strategies**

This section describes Marin OA's strategies for developing public messaging. It discusses the operational framework by which messages are to be created in addition to target audiences, responding to and managing misinformation, call center establishment, and alerts and warnings.





■ Quick Start Guide

You should use this quick start guide to quickly familiarize yourself with key concepts for public information before entering the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) or the Joint Information Center (JIC) in relation to Emergency Public Communications in the Marin OA.

This Public Emergency Communications Annex establishes communications priorities, objectives, and coordination activities across four phases of an emergency incident: (1) Preparedness, (2) Activation, (3) Response, and (4) Recovery. This Annex governs crisis communications and public information strategies; it does not include alert and warning (see 2026 County of Marin Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan)



KEY CONCEPTS

- The jurisdiction or agency experiencing an incident has the primary lead for public information.
- If additional support is needed due to the size, scope or nature of the incident, the lead jurisdiction may request Marin OEM to activate this Annex and engage the JIS and or establish a JIC to coordinate countywide messaging.
- Local jurisdictions remain the first point of contact for incident-specific messaging unless OEM assistance is requested.
- The Joint Information System (JIS) is a standing network of Marin OA PIOs and communications staff that coordinate to ensure consistent and accurate public information before, during, and after emergencies. Members of this group of PIO's are activated when an emergency occurs to staff the Joint Information Center (JIC) which collects, verifies, and releases information to the public and media.
- The JIC plays a critical role in contributing to situational awareness and ensuring a consistent flow of two-way information sharing both internally in the EOC and externally with the media and the members of the public.
- Reciprocal communication among field personnel, EOC sections, other PIOs, content developers and the public ensures consistent, timely, and coordinated information.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Providing information to the public in a timely and consistent matter is key to saving lives and protecting property.
- Equity, accessibility, and inclusion guide all actions. Messaging inclusion of Whole Community considerations, including AFN and equity, communication needs are incorporated into all elements of this Annex and operationalize the foundational concepts of Whole Community in the EOP Base plan.
- This Annex provides a flexible framework that is scalable and adaptable based on the scope and public information needs of the incident.

JIC ACTIVATION

When is a JIC Activated?

- To support public information messaging during EOC activations.
- For incidents that impact multiple OA jurisdictions.
- When multi-agency coordination is required.
- When there is a significant need for public information.
- For planned activations of the Marin County EOC to support major or high-profile events or instances that require a prolonged operational response

JIC Operations

- Upon Activation, the EOC Director will designate a Lead PIO who serves as a member of the Management Section and oversees JIC operations.
- Designated members of the Joint Information System (JIS) operate under a JIC Organizational Structure.
- The JIC operates under established protocols and reporting lines to ensure coordinated public information management.
- The JIC is responsible for three (3) core functions of Emergency Communication: (1) Information Gathering and Analysis, (2) Content Production and (3) Information Dissemination.

Initial Steps for Lead PIO

1. Establish Situational Awareness (Who, What, Where, When, How).
2. Establish location for the JIC
 - Determine staffing needs with EOC Director and engage with Logistics Section to notify JIS members to report for duty.
3. Determine if PIOs are needed to work at the Incident Command site to manage media in the field
 - Issue initial statements
 - Work with Management Section to develop messaging strategy.

Initial Steps for JIC Staff: Your First Steps on Arrival

- Check in at the EOC front desk.
- Report to the JIC and check in with the Lead PIO or JIC Manager to receive role/assignment.
- Review the current EOC Action Plan (EAP) or SitRep, if available, to gain most current situational update.
- Start an ICS Form 214 (Activity Log). Record all actions/decisions.
- Receive briefing from Lead PIO.

The goal of Emergency Public Communication is to get the Right Information, to the Right People, at the Right Time so that people they can make Informed Decisions for themselves and their families.



Quick References

Definitions of JIS/JIC.....	Section 2
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Description of JIC Positions.....	Section 3
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Section 1 Introduction

The Marin Operational Area Emergency Communication Annex (“the Annex”) establishes how emergency public information will be coordinated and delivered within the Marin County Operational Area (Marin OA). It defines public notifications, and outlines how the Marin OA leverages the Joint Information System (JIS) and activates and operates a Joint Information Center (JIC) to support response operations during emergencies.

This Annex complies with state and federal requirements, incorporates FEMA and Cal OES best practices, and aligns with the Whole Community framework to ensure inclusive communication for all populations. The Annex will be updated as new community demographic data and communication capabilities become available.

This Annex replaces other public emergency communications plans or annexes in the Marin OA. It may be used as a standalone guide or in coordination with the EOP.

This Annex will be reviewed, exercised, and revised periodically to address changing community demographics, address needs and to incorporate new guidance and lessons learned.



1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Annex is to establish a framework for timely, accurate, and coordinated dissemination of information during emergencies impacting the Marin Operational Area (OA). It guides PIOs and communications staff in carrying out their responsibilities within the Joint Information System (JIS) or when supporting an activated Emergency Operations Center (EOC). This Annex ensures that communications with the public are clear, consistent, and reliable, thereby strengthening public trust and supporting effective emergency response.

The purpose of this Annex is carried out through the following supporting objectives, which define how Public Information Officers (PIOs) and communications staff will achieve clear, coordinated, and consistent communication during emergencies. These supporting objectives translate the overarching purpose into specific, actionable goals for the Marin Operational Area.

- Supporting Objective 1: Define the roles and responsibilities of PIOs and communications teams before, during, and after an incident or emergency.
- Supporting Objective 2: Establish a common concept of operations for developing and issuing emergency public information across all Marin OA partners.
- Supporting Objective 3: Define the purpose, function, and protocols of the Marin OA Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC) during activation.
- Supporting Objective 4: Define activation and notification criteria for Marin OA PIO and Joint Information System staff.
- Supporting Objective 5: Support the development of hazard-specific messaging templates and resources which are adaptable and readily accessible for use in a variety of hazards.
- Supporting Objective 6: Ensure all procedures, templates, and resources comply with accessibility standards, AFN considerations, and Whole Community principles.

1.2 Approach

This Annex is consistent with emergency management principles and concepts established in other Marin OA emergency plans and includes best practices for emergency communication and response. It is guided by alignment with the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), consistency with the 2026 County of Marin Operational Area (OA) Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), and a commitment to Whole Community considerations that prioritize equitable communication strategies for historically underserved populations. The Annex establishes clear activation triggers, operational priorities, and centralized procedures for crisis communications, while also providing specific guidance for the efficient development and delivery of messages to ensure a coordinated and consistent “unified voice” during emergency incidents.

1.3 Nexus to Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)

The EOP establishes the overarching framework for emergency management in the County. To remain functional and operational during a wide range of incidents, the EOP is supported by a series of annexes, including this Public Emergency Information Annex which is intended to provide additional detail and tactical depth of the responsibilities and processes associated with the public information function.

Consistent with the concepts in the EOP, this Annex and its procedures are designed to be scalable and adaptable to incidents of any size, complexity, or duration. This Annex provides a flexible framework that can be adjusted based on the scope of the incident.

1.4 Scope

For purposes of this Annex, “Emergency Public Communication” defines “crisis communication” as any messaging used to communicate information to the public during an emergency or disaster that significantly impacts the safety of the Marin County community. It refers to the broader public information function managed by the Marin OA Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC). It includes media relations, public messaging, rumor control, community engagement, social media, translation/interpretation, and dissemination of preparedness, response, and recovery information. Crisis communications ensure the public receives timely, accurate, and accessible information that supports safety, trust, and resilience during all phases of emergency management.

- Natural disasters such as earthquakes, wildfires, and floods
- Acts of terrorism or other human-caused incidents
- Any event significantly impacting community safety or operations.



Activation of this Annex may occur when the Marin OA faces an emergency situation that requires public information dissemination or during any disaster that warrants the activation of the EOC. It may also take effect when disasters strike outside of the Marin OA's geographic boundaries with potential or real impacts on the OA's operations. It serves as a framework for the Marin OA (including special districts, cities, and towns) to activate the general structure and operations of the Marin OA's Joint Information System (JIS).

1.4.1 Limitations

This Public Emergency Communications Annex is separate and distinct from the Marin County Alert and Warning Annex. Alert and Warning systems such as IPAWS, AlertMarin, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), the Emergency Alert System (EAS), and NOAA Weather Radio are classified as an emergency communications function that provides rapid, authoritative life-safety alerts on immediate actions such as evacuation orders, shelter-in-place instructions, and hazard-specific warnings.

Both annexes are components of the Marin County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The Alert and Warning Annex governs the technical systems, emergency messages, authorities, and protocols for issuing emergency alerts, while this Public Emergency Communications Annex governs broader crisis communications and public information strategies that follow and reinforce those alerts.

1.5 Planning Assumptions

This Annex was developed with the following assumptions and approaches. These are informed by best practices in crisis communications and the Marin OA's EOP.

- The Marin OA will utilize SEMS/NIMS as the framework for emergency response operations, inclusive of emergencies without an official declaration.
- The Marin OA can provide staffing support to align public messaging throughout the incident by activating existing internal staff, hiring communications professionals, or activating Mutual Aid.
- JIS members are responsible for following their local processes and agreements for Mutual Aid.
- All emergency public messaging will be inclusive of the all communities.
- Communications networks might be disrupted during a major emergency, such as cell towers rendered inoperable or power outages reducing public Internet access.
- Circumstances including disasters involving infectious disease outbreaks or transportation challenges might require communications staff to work remotely.
- Misinformation might be exacerbated during emergencies, especially those involving homeland security or disasters of political concern

1.6 Responsibilities

Key communication processes and procedures are outlined to support the Marin OA during the initial stages of an emergency up to and through the activation of a Joint Information Center (JIC). The jurisdiction or agency experiencing an incident is the primary lead for public information. If additional support is needed due to the size, scope or nature of the incident, the lead jurisdiction may request Marin OEM activate this Annex and establish a JIS or activate the JIC to coordinate countywide messaging.

During large scale emergencies or disasters, public messaging requires coordination and support with Marin OA JIS agencies or with a JIC activation as part of EOC. For smaller incidents that don't require activating the JIC, Marin OEM and other agencies maintain public messaging and preparedness activities to ensure timely, accurate information.

Key points:

- The Annex may be activated during any emergency requiring coordinated public information or when external events affect Marin OA operations.
- The Annex applies to local jurisdictions, cities, towns, and special districts within the Marin OA.
- Marin OEM provides leadership and support when a JIS/JIC is needed to manage crisis communications.
- Local jurisdictions remain the first point of contact for incident-specific messaging unless OEM assistance is requested and or until a JIC is activated and identifies the Lead PIO
- Public messaging may be developed and disseminated to communicate preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery information in the absence of a formally activated JIC.

Marin OA Public Information Roles and Responsibilities are detailed in Section 3 of this Annex. Activation is detailed in Section 5.

The jurisdiction or agency experiencing an incident is the primary lead for public information. If additional support is needed due to the size, scope or nature of the incident, the lead jurisdiction may request Marin OEM may activate this Annex and establish a JIS/JIC to coordinate countywide messaging.



1.7 Emergency Communication and the Whole Community

The Annex serves the Whole Community of the Marin OA, as defined by FEMA:

“Whole Community is a means by which community members, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand the assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets.”

The Marin OA understands that the needs of historically underserved populations are intersectional and must be considered within all aspects of planning and response. These populations include persons who speak English less than very well (pursuant to the requirements of AB 1638); people who are undocumented; unhoused; breastfeeding and infant/children; transportation-disadvantaged; those with disabilities and/or access and functional needs (AFN/DAFN); and require specific medications, supplies, services, and electricity for life-maintaining equipment. In accordance with best practices in crisis communications and legal requirements, this Annex considers equity throughout its concept of operations.

Disability considerations, language access, and diverse populations for Marin are laid out fully in the EOP. This Annex integrates those considerations in the processes, procedures, and expected outputs.

1.8 Users and Stakeholders

This Annex is a primary reference document for JIC members during an activation. It can also be used by Marin JIS members when issuing public messaging outside of large scale emergency..

It may also be used by secondary users as a reference tool for crisis communications guidance.

Primary users include:

- PIOs and communications team members from Marin OEM and other County of Marin organizations, special districts, cities, and towns who are responsible for supporting and/or developing crisis communications.
- External personnel that support communications operations or JIC/JIS operations during a large scale emergency or disaster. This may include staff brought in under Emergency Management Mutual Aid (EMMA) or other sources as described within the EOP.
- Marin OA partner agencies who are directly engaged in the development and dissemination of crisis communications within the Marin OA.

Secondary or non-primary stakeholders may also reference this Annex for situational awareness within the Marin OA's public emergency communications processes and standards, to support training and exercise within the Marin OA as well as members of the Bay Area UASI JIS.

1.9 Policies and Legal Requirements

This Annex adheres to the principles of NIMS/SEMS, as mandated by California Code, GOV § 8607 (Standardized Emergency Management System). Furthermore, it conforms to Title 19. Public Safety, Division 2. Office of Emergency Services, Chapter 1. Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). Additionally, this Annex aligns with and integrates the following California government codes related to emergency management and emergency public information:

- California Emergency Services Act (CESA) (Gov. Code §§ 8550-8669.7)
- AB 1638 (2023) (Language Accessibility)
- AB 2311 (2016) (AFN considerations)
- SB 160 (2019) (language access in emergency alerts)
- California Government Code § 8593.3 (accessible emergency notifications)
- California Public Utilities Code § 2872 (alert and warning systems).





Section 2 Concept of Operations

The Concept of Operations addresses the relationships, organizational structure, and emergency management phases relating to crisis communications within the Marin OA.

2.1 Annex Implementation

Crisis communications may be required for any incidents within the Marin OA with the potential to impact public safety including, but not limited to extreme weather conditions, wildfires, earthquakes, flooding events, power outages, hazardous materials spills and human-caused threats. This Annex may be followed by the communications lead of the local jurisdiction or agency that requires crisis communications and public messaging. This Annex may also be used as a reference before, during, or after a disaster to maintain aligned public messaging through all phases of the incident. Marin OA member agencies and jurisdictions are encouraged to recognize their resource and capability limitations, and to proactively engage with Marin OEM as early as possible to ensure effective support for emergency communications needs.

Both a Joint Information Center and Joint Information System can be implemented independently of an EOC activation, should the need for a large-scale public information campaign arise, or during an extended emergency recovery period. In the event of an EOC activation, the EOC Director has the authority to activate a JIC to support the EOC and to designate the Lead PIO to support public information messaging efforts.



2.2 Information Flow

Figure 2-1 captures the Marin OA's flow of information to support crisis communication to and from the public. Information flows from the EOC to the JIC to the public and trusted community partners, but it may also go in reverse order, from the public or trusted partners to the JIC to the EOC staff. The Marin OA is committed to ensuring a two-way flow of information between the JIC and the community it serves. While the JIC disseminates timely information, instructions, and updates related to the emergency, it also actively gathers and integrates incoming information from the public and community partners to enhance situational awareness, support response coordination and identify emerging public information needs.

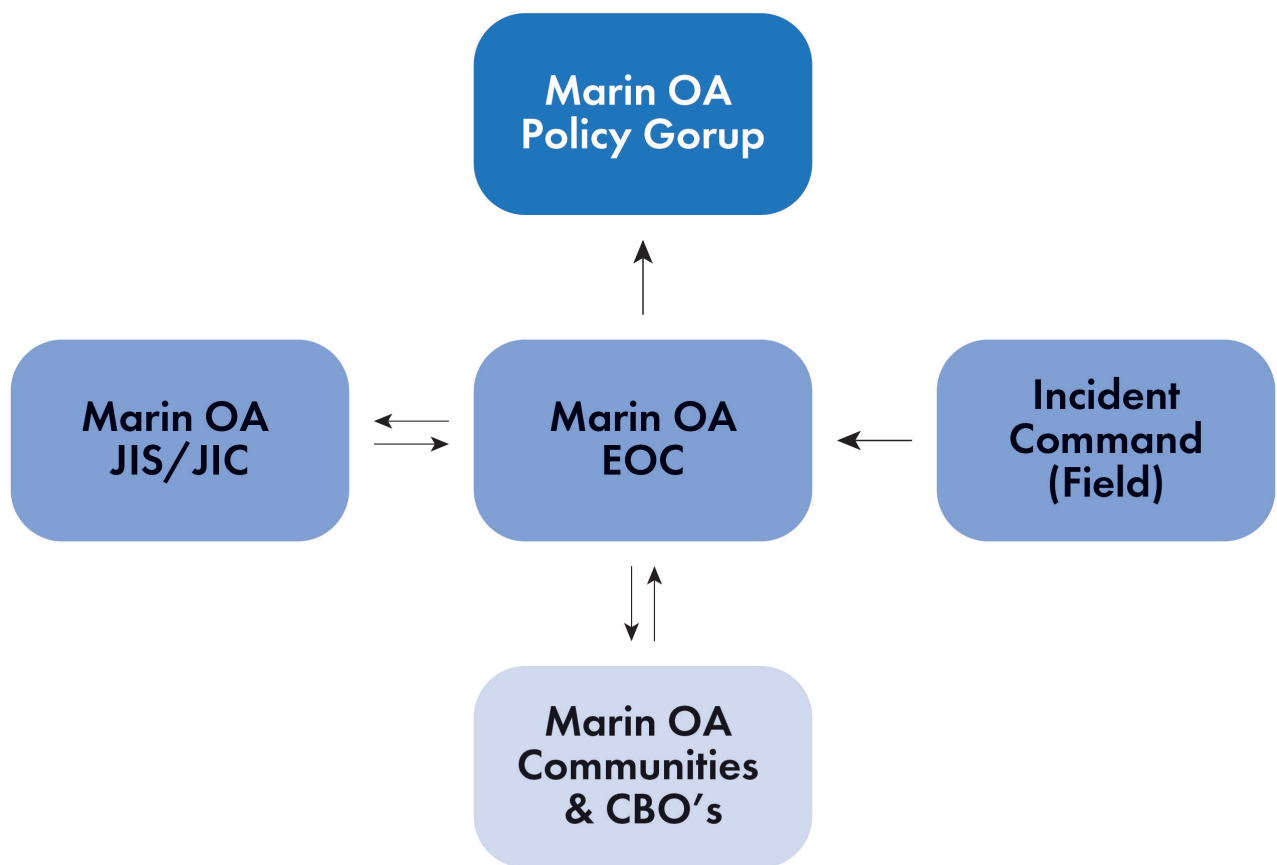


Figure 2-1: Marin OA Crisis Communications Flowchart



2.3 Joint Information System (JIS) Overview

Coordination for Non-Emergency Events

The Marin County Operational Area Joint Information System (JIS) refers to the network of Marin OA Public Information Officers who collaborate on a routine basis building capacity for crisis communications and maintaining consistent public information throughout the OA during incidents. The JIS is inclusive of public information officers and or communications staff from the 11 cities and towns in the Marin County Operational Area, special districts, education, transportation agencies, and utilities.

In general, member responsibilities include:

- Actively developing relationships and engaging with fellow Joint Information System members
- Hosting or participating in training and exercise opportunities to practice coordination
- Participating in Joint Information System conference calls when appropriate.
- Following and amplifying other Joint Information System members messaging social media accounts.
- Participating in after-action reporting efforts, as appropriate
- Identifying and reaching out to the Operational Area or Core City representative on the Bay Area Joint Information System Leadership Committee
- Engage with the Bay Area Joint Information System Framework and supporting tools

The JIS and JIC may exist concurrently. During a JIC activation, some or all, JIS members operate under the Joint Information Center (JIC) structure which serves as the coordination mechanism for the collection, coordination, verification and release of information to the public and media, during an active incident. It is here that members will share and coordinate information on behalf of their agency. JIS members may have dual roles in the JIC as both a PIO for the incident as well as a PIO/Subject Matter Expert (SME) for their agency and /or organization.

During a large scale emergency or disaster, Lead PIO or designee holds regular conference calls with the JIS to help establish and maintain situational awareness, a common operating picture, and identify resources and unmet needs among the jurisdictions. The JIS establishes the system and strategy for coordinated information sharing, ensuring that consistent and accurate public messaging is maintained before, during, and after emergencies. It is these JIS members who will be convened to form a JIC if, and when, needed. The JIS ensures that public messaging is accurate, timely, and coordinated. It promotes a unified approach to emergency communication through facilitating collaboration among cities, special districts, departments, and other agencies within the OA. During preparedness efforts, JIS partners work together to develop messaging strategies, templates, public education campaigns, and shared protocols. The Marin OA JIS works collaboratively to coordinate emergency public information across the Operational Area.

When an incident occurs that exceeds or is expected to exceed, routine public information requirements or response capacity, impacts multiple jurisdictions, or requires coordination between regional, state and/or federal levels, it is these JIS members that will operate under a JIC structure. The formal JIC activation allows for a centralized coordination of all public information activities and messaging across the OA, regardless of jurisdictional boundaries.

2.3.1 Joint Information Center (JIC)

When a large-scale emergency or disaster occurs, members of the Joint Information System (JIS) may come together to form a Joint Information Center (JIC). The JIS PIOs come together to work collaboratively to directly support an emergency incident. Its purpose is to collect, verify, and disseminate information to the public and media in a timely and coordinated manner, supporting the incident response and ensuring a unified message to all community members, across all jurisdictions and agencies within the OA.

The JIC may be physically co-located with the EOC or may operate virtually, depending on the nature of the incident. Regardless of location, the JIC's primary goal remains the same: to ensure consistent, accurate, and timely information is shared with the public, elected officials, stakeholders, and the media. While the structure, size, and participants of the JIC may vary depending on the scope of the emergency, the core functions of developing and disseminating public information remain consistent.



The Joint Information System and the Joint Information Center are mutually supportive in multiple ways, such as de-conflicting messages across jurisdictions, sharing the results of information analysis, key messages, content, communication materials, and supporting rumor control efforts, or providing mutual aid and shared resources.

Additional details regarding the JIC Organization and Roles and Responsibilities and the JIS Organization are included below in Section 3 of this Annex.

JOINT INFORMATION SYSTEM (JIS)

A standing network of all Marin OA PIOs that coordinate to ensure consistent and accurate public information before, during, and after emergencies.

vs.

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER (JIC)

The operational hub and an organizational structure formed primarily of JIS members during an incident to collect, verify, and release information to the public and media. The JIC may operate out of a physical location or remotely.

2.4 Phased Emergency Communications Priorities

This Annex establishes communications priorities, objectives, and coordination activities across four phases of an incident or emergency: (1) Preparedness, (2) Activation, (3) Response, and (4) Recovery. These phases provide a structured framework to guide decision-making, ensure consistent messaging, and align public information efforts with operational priorities. This phased approach also supports timely message development, efficient use of resources, and clear transitions as incidents evolve.

The Preparedness Phase develops and maintains communication protocols, message templates, and public education campaigns that promote readiness for local hazards. It is vital to collaborate with community partners, media outlets, and trusted messengers to ensure outreach materials are culturally relevant, multilingual, and disseminated in a way that is accessible to all Marin County community members.

The Activation Phase outlines the essential steps for conducting public information and outreach during the initial hours of a JIC activation. It described how the Marin OA PIO operates within the JIS and helps establish a JIC to prepare public messaging in alignment with the EOC Actions. Key activities in this Phase include identifying target audiences, disseminating information via inbound and outbound communications channels, and coordinating unified messaging across jurisdictions through the JIS.

The Response Phase outlines information management processes including gaining situational awareness and establishing message priorities. It also establishes strategies for streamlining content review and approval. PIOs will disseminate timely, accurate, and accessible information through multiple platforms to inform the public of protective actions, situational updates, and emergency resources. They will strive to ensure communication reaches all communities, including non-English speakers and people with access and functional needs.

The Recovery Phase specifies continuing communication processes and messages. It provides ongoing updates about incident recovery efforts, available services, and community resources to support public safety, mental health, and rebuilding. PIOs must foster transparency and rebuild trust by engaging the community through in person events, media briefings, and digital platforms to rebuild trust and support long-term resilience. This phase also includes specific actions for deactivation of the JIC.

The diagram below depicts examples of communications priorities for three core activity phases of an incident or emergency: Activation, Response, Recovery. (Please note that every incident or emergency has unique communications requirements that may or may not align with the examples depicted next.).

The figure captures the general nature of public information dissemination for each active phase of an emergency incident. This list is not inclusive of all public information tasks and duties. Specific and detailed procedures, roles, and actions associated with each phase are outlined in the subsequent sections of this Annex.



1. PREPAREDNESS

- Develop and maintain messaging templates
- Coordinate with subject matter experts to learn about potential risks and hazards to Marin County
- Identify and build relationships with community partners.
- Collaborate with local partners
- Internal coordination with OA jurisdictions
- Attend and organize training and exercises
- Mainstream accessibility standards into all public communications

2. ACTIVATION

- Gain situational awareness.
- Determine PIO staffing needs (and possible mutual aid requests).
- Establish JIC with JIS members and supporting agencies & departments.
- Engage Marin OA JIS Members.
- Maintain focus on most immediate public information needs.
- Establish media line.
- Update agency website and / or request updates to Emergency.MarinCounty.gov
- Monitor public emergency alert and warning feed

3. RESPONSE

- Maintain situational awareness.
- Determine target audiences and prioritize communities most significantly and disproportionately impacted.
- Develop communication strategy.
- Determine how to support staff thru multiple operation periods – See EOP
- Create messaging and talking points and other necessary materials.
Develop key messages such as:
 - Protective measures
 - Incident updates
 - Available resources
 - Transportation and utility information
- Disseminate via multiple channels:
 - News Conferences and news releases
 - Agency website and / or Emergency.MarinCounty.gov
 - Social media
 - Community Based Orgs and community partners
 - Signage, message boards, traplines and door to door canvassing
 - AlertMarin, at the approval of OEM staff

4. RECOVERY

- Maintain situational awareness.
- Transition messaging focus from active response to short and long-term recover needs.
- Maintain communication aimed at target audiences.
- Continue to develop and disseminate key message through multiple channels.
- Adjust appropriate staffing levels for the JIC.
- Deactivate EOC/PIO function and the JIC operations.
- Capture all JIC documentation and records.

Figure 2.2: Communication Priorities Through Each Emergency Phase





Section 3 Roles, Responsibilities, and Tools

This section describes the role and responsibilities of key individuals and organizations involved in the Marin OA's crisis communications and public messaging, as well as the communication channels used to support those functional areas. The responsibilities listed here do not include the full range of their activities in an emergency, they are primarily focused on their role in public information.

Marin County OEM is responsible for centralizing countywide coordination of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Its mission is to equitably serve the community, protecting life, property, environment, and critical services through localized solutions and support. In alignment, the OEM PIO will support public information and communication efforts across all phases of an emergency, reflecting the agency's core responsibilities.

The incident Lead PIO is responsible for maintaining clear, accurate, and accessible public messaging before an incident occurs. Each department within the County of Marin with a role in emergency response (e.g., Marin Health and Human Services, Marin Public Works) will participate in coordinated messaging efforts when the need arises during all emergency response phases.

It is best practice that Marin OA staff are cross trained to activate and operate a JIC when needed. The JIS includes a network of PIOs, communications protocols, relationships, and planning efforts that exist before an incident occurs. These PIOs work together during the Preparedness Phase to build trust, share messaging strategies, and develop procedures to ensure consistent communications.



3.1 Marin OA

The responsibilities of Marin OA agencies and leadership regarding crisis communications and public messaging are described below. Note that some roles may refer to multiple staff with similar responsibilities. Each city, town, and special district in Marin should designate a public information liaison to serve as the primary contact with the JIS/JIC, including jurisdictions with limited communications staff.

Jurisdictional Public Information Officers (PIOs) or Communications Liaisons

- Serves as the primary staffing resource for any activated JIC
- Acts as the main point of contact for ongoing JIS coordination
- Provides subject matter expertise on the jurisdiction and its departments

County of Marin – Department PIOs

- Serve as a staffing resource for the activated Joint Information Center (JIC), as needed
- Support the timely, organized, and strategic development of public messaging and crisis communications.
- Update communication strategies as appropriate for the evolving emergency.
- Develop and deliver tailored communications relevant to the incident or preparedness activity.
- Ensure public messaging is culturally respectful, inclusive, accessible and appropriate.
- Speak to their area of expertise as needed, with participation based on the nature of the situation and scope.
- Provide subject matter expertise and lead role as needed. For example:
 - Recognize the Department of Public Works (DPW) PIO as the subject matter expert for transportation and infrastructure-related incidents; the DPW PIO should take the lead on public information for these types of events.
 - Recognize Health and Human Services (HHS) PIOs as subject matter experts for large-scale public health emergencies or disasters impacting community well-being; the HHS PIO should take the lead on public information for these types of events.

Marin Office of County Executive Communications Division

- The County of Marin's Director of Communications (or designee) shares the authority to activate this Annex and associated crisis communication guidance.
- Division team members may serve as the Lead PIO on behalf of any incident, at the discretion of Marin Office of Emergency Management.
- Collaborates with PIOs and JIC/JIS staff to develop messaging strategies.
- Maintains standardized public messaging templates for consistent use across incidents by all jurisdictions.
- Shares responsibility for ensuring public messaging is culturally respectful, inclusive, accessible, and appropriate.

Marin County Fire Public Information Officer

- Holds the authority to activate this Annex and associated crisis communication protocols, or their designee.
- Serves as the Lead PIO for fire-related incidents affecting the County or multiple jurisdictions within the County.
- Ensures plans, messaging, and templates are accurately maintained during the Preparedness Phase.
- Leads the coordination of public messaging content and media strategies prior to release.
- Collaborates with PIOs and JIC/JIS staff to develop messaging strategies.
- Maintains standardized public messaging templates for consistent use across incidents by all jurisdictions.
- Shares responsibility for ensuring public messaging is culturally respectful, inclusive, accessible, and appropriate.

Marin Office of Emergency Management (OEM)

- Serves as the coordinating lead for all-hazard emergencies as needed, as a Division of Marin County Fire and manages the coordination of information and resources between the County and OA partners including public information
- OEM Director authority to activate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
- Oversees the County's Alert and Warning Program, serving as the program administrator for AlertMarin, the County's primary emergency notification system.
- Ensures that AlertMarin remains operational, accessible, and integrated with state and federal alerting systems.
- May serve as the Lead PIO on behalf of any incident.



- Provides subject matter expertise related to Emergency Response Systems and Frameworks.
- Collaborates with all members of the Joint Information System (JIS), both during and outside of JIC activations.
- Assists Marin OA communications staff and PIOs in identifying and filling staffing needs.
- Maintains and updates emergency plans, including the Emergency Public Communications Annex.
- Serves as the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Alert Administrator and employs IPAWS Alert Originators responsible for sending alerts and warnings via IPAWS.

Marin County Sheriff's Office

- Collaborates with Marin OEM and appropriate police and fire agencies in issuing evacuation orders and other public notifications.
- Staffs and operates the Marin OA's Public Safety Communications Center in San Rafael, which includes 911 public safety phone lines.
- Serves as the subject matter expert on law enforcement matters and release of law enforcement related information.
- Participates in the JIS and JIC as appropriate to the scope and nature of the incident.

3.2 State/Federal Partners

The roles outlined below represent the expectations that Marin County jurisdictions and agencies may hold when engaging with these partners to ensure efficient and appropriate coordination.

California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)

- Maintains and operates the California Warning Center, providing the primary point-of-contact for monitoring and coordinating statewide emergency alerts, warnings, and notifications.
 - Supports the Marin OA EOC and JIC through consistent information sharing to maintain situational awareness.
 - Identifies personnel from other areas within the State of California who have specific training, skills, and experience to support response and recovery efforts within the Marin OA.
 - Coordinates public information and warning-related information sharing, messaging, and resource requests via the State Public Information Officer.
- Note: This responsibility operates through the State Operations Center (SOC).

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Provides planning guidance and standards to assist State and local agencies coordinate effectively and align with Federal response protocols.

Delivers critical resources and technical assistance by deploying personnel, equipment, and logistical support through the Federal response system.

Additionally, during emergencies, several key partners provide critical information that supports public messaging and situational awareness. The Marin OA will work collaboratively to monitor these sources for situational awareness and to validate information and incorporate partner-approved alerts, maps, or graphics into public communications. Including these partners in JIS can help to ensure accurate information, talking points and unified messaging.

3.3 Subject Specific Partners

National Weather Service (NWS)

- Federal agency providing forecasts, warnings, and real-time weather data, issues official warnings, watches, forecasts, and other hazard information regarding severe weather events.
- Information provided includes weather events watches, warnings, and advisories, hazard impact statements and meteorological updates and models.
- Broadcasts some emergencies alerts through Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs) and NOAA Weather Radios Alerts.



Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E)

- Private utility providing electricity and gas service; key partner for infrastructure status and electricity grid information.
- Leads information dissemination to community related to Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) and resource based information for affected communities.
- Provides information regarding power outage locations and restoration timelines, gas line safety issues.

Other utility and infrastructure partners serving the Marin OA, include water, sanitation, transportation, and waste management districts. The critical services provided by these partners require public information to be shared during operational pauses or disruptions. The Marin OA JIC/JIS may support and amplify messaging, but the operator remains authority on the operation and subject matter.

3.4 Community Organizations

The Marin OA collaborates with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the pursuit of timely, consistent, accessible, and culturally appropriate communications to the public. The liaison for the Marin Voluntary Organization Active in Disasters (VOAD) engages with CBOs and provides information from these organizations to the JIC. The Community Resiliency Teams (CRTs) under Marin Health and Human Services (HHS) support emergency preparedness. They also act as a force multiplier for messaging.

3.5 Communications Channels

The Marin OA's communication channels include, alert and warning systems, email distribution lists, news releases, official websites, community meetings and town halls, canvassing, public service announcements (PSAs), and call centers. Table 8-1 below describes these channels and their use cases. Using multiple communications channels for the same campaign can ensure redundancy and increase the chance that communities will receive the message.

Several communications channels (e.g., social media accounts, WEAs, AlertMarin) have message character limits:

- AlertMarin: 360 characters for SMS/text messages, 2,500 characters email messages
- Facebook: 63,206 characters for posts (unlikely to change normal posting behaviors)
- Instagram: 2,200 characters for posts
- Twitter/X: 280 characters
- Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs): 90 characters for "short" messages, 360 characters for "long" messages



Table 8-1: Communications Channels within the Marin OA

Channel	Description
AlertMarin Emergency Alert System	AlertMarin provides emergency alerts and critical information to subscribers through calls, texts, or emails. This information may include incident descriptions, shelter locations, transportation options, and supplies availability. If appropriate for the incident, an AlertMarin “subscription group” may be set up for impacted people to sign up for so they can receive non-emergency messaging about the incident, e.g., recovery resources.
Social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, NextDoor)	Several County of Marin departments and partner agencies manage social media accounts where PIOs and/or the JIC may share relevant, timely information for the public. Keep in mind that each platform may limit post length. The Marin OA may also host live events on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, allowing the public to watch updates, comment, and ask questions in real time.
Email distribution lists	The Marin OA maintains various lists of subscribers, organizations, and emails in various capacities. Mass emails may be sent through these lists to distribute comprehensive information about an incident and its response. This is a particularly important channel for communicating with VOADs and CBOs.
News releases	The Marin OA may issue official news releases through the EOC or JIC to announce County actions, outline upcoming efforts, or provide public safety recommendations during an incident. These releases, typically issued on behalf of an agency or director, may be posted on the County’s official website, shared at press conferences, and/or distributed to news outlets.
Marin County Public Emergency Portal Emergency. MarinCounty.gov	All County jurisdictions have agreed to designate this website as the primary source of information during emergencies. This unified approach directs the public to one reliable source, reducing confusion and ensuring consistent messaging.
Community meetings and town hall events	The Marin OA may host public events, such as town halls, at government buildings to engage directly with the community – in-person, virtually, or hybrid. These events allow officials to hear public concerns, share updates, and communicate calls to action. Town halls are especially valuable during long-term emergencies (e.g., disease outbreaks) or high-profile incidents (e.g., hazardous materials events).
Canvassing	The Marin OA may design digital and print flyers, graphics, and brochures for distribution within public locations or placement of community boards.
Public Service Announcements (PSAs)	PSAs are pre-recorded statements often between 30 and 45 seconds long that are made for airing on television networks or radio stations. PSAs feature clear and concise calls-to-action regarding the emergency. PSAs can also be in written form for the purpose of being read live-on air by broadcast personnel.
Call Center	The Marin OA may establish a call center for the dual purposes of 1) fielding and answering inbound questions from the public, and 2) receiving tips or information from the public during an evolving incident. The call center is a fundamental component of the JIC and is supervised by the Call Center Manager.

Table 8.1 Communications Channels within the Marin OA

3.6 Transition from JIS to JIC Responsibilities

While each Operational Area (OA) partner organization continues to carry out its core responsibilities, these roles expand during an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activation and the subsequent activation of the Joint Information Center (JIC). Within the JIC, members of the Joint Information System (JIS) work collaboratively to develop coordinated communication strategies, verify and manage information, and contribute to shared situational awareness. This process ensures that operational knowledge from the field is captured, synthesized, and transformed into clear, consistent public messaging across the Marin OA. By aligning communications with the objectives and priorities outlined in the EOC Action Plan, the JIC helps deliver unified messaging that supports informed decision-making and strengthens public trust.



The detailed procedures for EOC activation, organizational structure, and lead agency designation are outlined in the Marin OA EOP. For JIC operations, the Lead PIO will align with the EOC structure and be designated by the lead agency or function. This approach maintains consistency, supports unity of command, and ensures that public messaging reflects the priorities established by the EOC.

3.7 Public Information within the EOC

The Management Section is responsible for the overall direction, control, and coordination of emergency response operations within the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). This section provides oversight of critical functions, including public information and interagency coordination, to ensure a unified and effective response. The Lead Public Information Officer (PIO) serves as a member of the Management Section and is responsible for shaping the emergency communications strategy.

The Lead Public Information Officer serves as a member of the Management Section and oversees JIC operations.

Additionally, the Lead PIO will oversee JIC operations to ensure the public information strategy is implemented by the JIC team. Dependent upon the situation, in addition to the Lead PIO, the Management Team may also include function specific PIOs such as Law, Fire/EMS, Health and Human Services Public Health. The Public Information function ensures that all messaging to the public, media, and stakeholders is timely, accurate, and coordinated. This includes the development and approval of communication strategies, verification of information, and alignment of messaging with EOC objectives. Through the integration of public information into EOC decision-making, the JIC - operating through the Management Section - supports unified communications, maintains public trust, minimizes misinformation, and enhances the overall effectiveness of incident response.

The JIC provides the framework within an EOC setting to coordinate public messaging across all responding agencies. PIOs share updates, coordinate approvals, and ensure alignment across platforms.

The Joint Information Center (JIC) organizes its core responsibilities into key functions to ensure timely, accurate, and coordinated communication during a crisis. Each function plays a critical role in how information is gathered, developed, and shared with the public and stakeholders.

Information Gathering and Analysis	Collects information from credible sources, verifies accuracy, and analyzes data to identify key issues, trends, and potential public concerns. Coordination of information with stakeholders and verification of information are key elements of this function.
Content Production	Develops clear, accurate, accessible, and timely messages, press releases, social posts, talking points and other communication products based on approved information. In addition to written products this also includes developing visual products such as graphics, maps, photos and videos. All content meets accessibility standards.
Information Dissemination	Delivers information to the public, media, and stakeholders through multiple channels, ensuring consistent and coordinated messaging.

3.8 Relationship to Alert and Warning

Alert and Warning messaging such as IPAWS, AlertMarin, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), the Emergency Alert System (EAS), and NOAA Weather Radio are classified as an emergency communications function which are separate and distinct from other public emergency messaging sent by the JIC. Alert and Warning is led only by authorized alert originators within Marin OEM and governed by the Marin County Alert and Warning Annex.

Alert and Warning operations are governed by the Alert and Warning Annex and coordination with the JIC is essential to ensure consistency of messaging. The JIC is responsible for amplifying alerts through additional communication channels (e.g., social media, press releases, community-based organizations), providing context for protective action instructions, and preparing to answer public and media inquiries.



3.9 Joint information Center (JIC) Organization

Upon EOC activation, selected members of the JIS formally transition, functioning under a JIC structure, where they operate with established protocols and reporting lines to ensure coordinated public information management. If a physical JIC is not feasible, a virtual JIC will be established using secure collaborative platforms.

The organizational structure of the JIC mirrors that of the EOC with functions within a hierarchical framework designed to support EOC objectives. Roles and responsibilities are determined by the incident's scope and requirements. This organizational structure is used to ensure the integration of public information into EOC decision-making and supports consistent, coordinated communications.

The Lead PIO holds the overall responsibility for implementing the public messaging strategy within the JIC. Staffing may include agency PIOs, Disaster Service Workers, and additional personnel from Marin OA or Mutual Aid. Those assigned to the JIC temporarily assume JIC duties, which take priority over their regular work, though they may still be required to perform essential tasks associated with their primary position.

While roles and responsibilities of each agency will ultimately be determined by the nature and needs of the incident, the JIC will take on a hierarchical structure, per ICS (incident command structure), and organize to support tasks in the EOC to gather, verify, produce, and disseminate public information.

The Joint Information Center (JIC) is organized by functional areas, with each position assigned a designated lead to maintain an efficient reporting hierarchy and span of control. Staffing levels may not always be sufficient to fill every position, but all functional areas necessary to respond to the unique public information needs of the incident must be addressed, and personnel may be required to assume multiple roles to ensure continuity of operations and effective management of public information.

The JIC organizational chart is depicted in Figure 3-1 below.

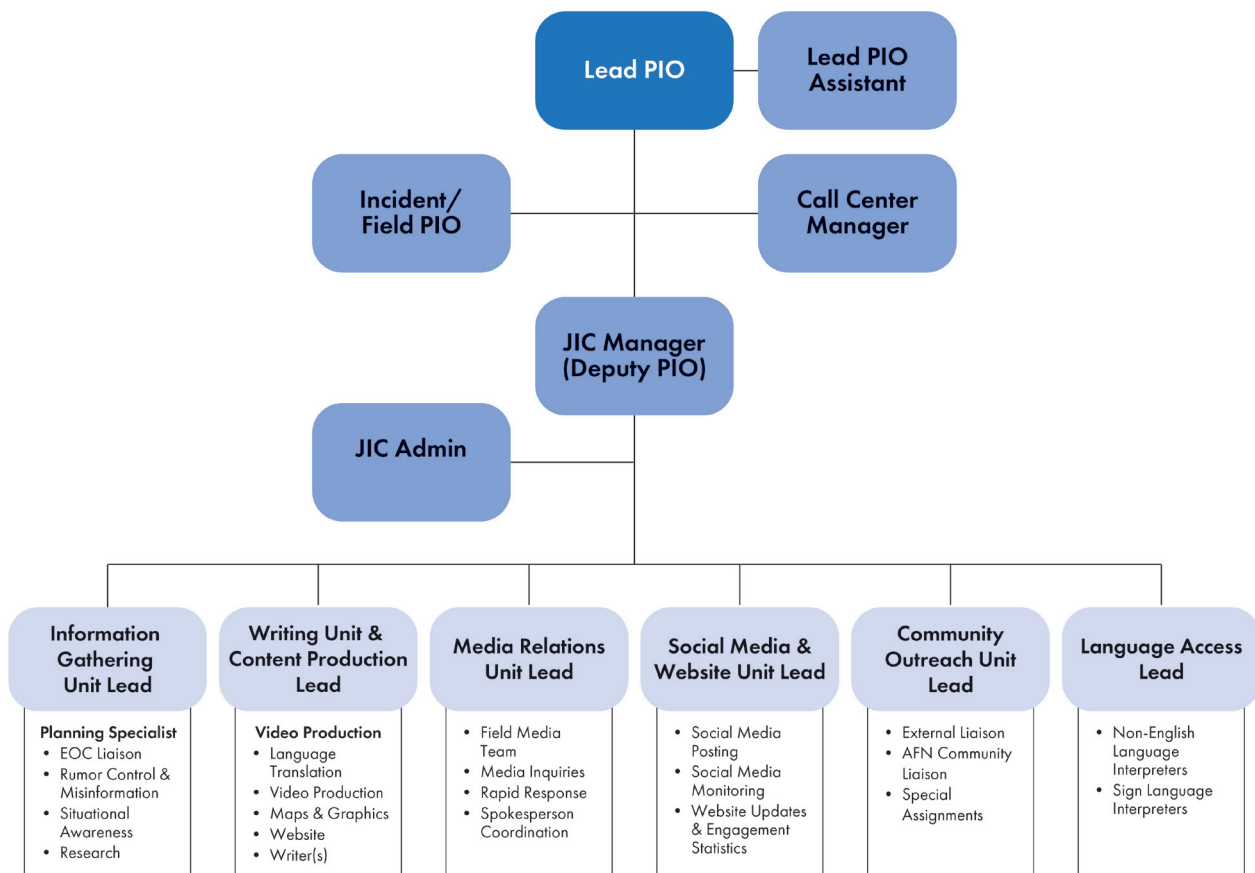


Figure 3-1: JIC Organizational Chart



3.10 Joint Information Center Position Roles and Responsibilities

The JIC provides staff and infrastructure to manage all functions of emergency communications including target audiences, messages, content strategy, translation and interpretation, rumor control, media relations, call center, research, writing, production, and dissemination of printed and digital materials.

Joint Information Center (JIC) – Roles and Responsibilities	
Lead PIO Reports to the EOC Director	Serve in the Management Section and maintain high level of situational awareness by attending EOC and Management Section. Leads the emergency communications and public information function in the PIO Section of the EOC or any activated JIC. Leads the formulation of communications strategy and shape key messages and content. When designated by the EOC Director, approves the release of public information messaging.
JIC Manager (Deputy PIO) Reports to Lead PIO	Supervises and coordinates the daily activities and operations of the JIC, ensuring they are aligned with the Lead PIO's goals (directed by the EOC goals). Enforces procedures and executes plans and policies. Provides direction to team leaders to ensure functions are well-organized and operating effectively. Evaluates metrics from social media and websites, then adjusts communications strategies as needed. At the direction of the Lead PIO, may convene or delegate designee to convene conference calls for the JIS to ensure coordination and consistency of public messages during EOC activations. Ensures proper workspace setup of the JIC, including equipment and supplies.
JIC Admin Assistant Reports to Lead PIO or JIC Manager	Acts as an executive assistant to support to the Lead PIO and or the JIC Manager. Attends meetings with the Lead PIO to capture notes and summarizes key information. Engages with the JIC Manager and other JIC roles in compiling information and summarizing current lines of effort for the Lead PIO. Assists the Lead PIO in coordinating assignments and collecting deliverables.
Field PIO (Incident PIO) Reports to Lead PIO	Deploys to and operates at the sites of major incidents in coordination with partner agencies, responders, and media outlets. Acts as a liaison between the JIC and the Incident Command post or field. Works closely with the Media Relations Unit to develop incident talking points and to ensure consistency in messaging to all media sources.
Call Center Manager Reports to Lead PIO	Manages the JIC call center when activated, and coordinates with other call center providers. Establishes the telephone hotline for large-scale emergencies to provide information to members of the public, as appropriate. Collaborates with the Language Access Lead to ensure the availability of appropriate translation services. Monitors inquiries and reports on relevant situational information to the Lead PIO.
Language Access Unit Lead Reports to JIC Manager	Acts as the final approving role for all materials translated into languages other than English. Assumes the responsibility for ensuring all public messaging templates are appropriate and accessible for limited-English proficiency persons and historically underserved populations. Supports EOC Logistics in maintaining contracts with language services appropriate to the population impacted by the incident. Collaborates with the Call Center Manager to ensure the availability of appropriate translation services. Collaborates with the Community Outreach Unit Lead in ensuring translation of public messaging into appropriate languages. Collaborates with the Social Media and Website Unit Lead in ensuring information is accessible and properly translated for all channels.
Information Gathering Unit Lead Reports to JIC Manager	Engages with the EOC Planning Section and the Lead PIO in developing messaging strategies that are consistent with the priorities of the EOC's mission. Summarizes incident information and promotes broader situational awareness among other PIOs and within the JIC. Promotes situational awareness within the JIC by monitoring breaking news and the perception of the incident by news media. Supports the Lead PIO in identifying long-term messaging strategies and planning needs.



Planning Specialist Reports to Information Gathering Unit Lead	Monitors and analyzes evolving incidents and potential future developments that could impact public information needs. Develops short-/mid-term communication strategies in coordination with JIC leadership. Coordinates with the EOC Operations and Planning Sections to identify upcoming milestones, risks, or events requiring proactive messaging. Supports development and maintenance of the JIC's Communication Plan and ensure alignment with the Incident or EOC Action Plan. Works with the Information Gathering Unit Lead in identifying rumor trends, signals, or other information gaps that may need to be addressed in upcoming communications.
Social Media & Website Unit Lead Reports to JIC Manager	Manages all digital platforms and the Public Emergency Portal to deliver timely, accurate, and accessible emergency information, counter misinformation in real time, and ensure content aligns with the Joint Information Center's messaging strategy. Responsible for assigning monitors to social media groups (e.g., County of Marin Facebook page), collaborates with the Information Gathering Unit on monitoring rumors and identifying sources of misinformation. Leverages the social media channels including Nextdoor.com, Facebook, X, and Instagram to post approved messaging. Develops graphics for social media posts. Ensures that the Public Emergency Portal's user interface is accessible by DAFN communities and those with limited access to technology (e.g., colors, image captions, etc.). Collaborates with the Language Access Lead in ensuring information is accessible and properly translated into appropriate languages on the Public Emergency Portal. Monitors the Public Emergency Portal for technological issues and escalates major problems to the JIC Manager.
Media Relations Unit Lead Reports to JIC Manager	Serves as the primary liaison for all media inquiries during an incident, ensuring timely, accurate, and coordinated communication with journalists. This role organizes and manages press briefings, conferences, and interviews in collaboration with the Logistics Section, while securing appropriate spokespeople and scheduling media availabilities. Working closely with the Writing Unit and Content Production Lead, the Media Relations Lead oversees the development of press releases, advisories, talking points, FAQs, fact sheets, graphics, and imagery to support consistent public messaging. The Lead also monitors breaking news and promptly shares relevant developments with Joint Information Center (JIC) staff and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) leadership to maintain situational awareness and alignment in external communications
Community Relations Unit Lead Reports to JIC Manager	Ensures critical information reaches populations that may not have access to traditional outlets or social media. This role partners with community-based and faith-based organizations to develop targeted communication strategies, disseminates emergency instructions through trusted outreach networks, including CRTs and VOAD, and works closely with the Language Access Lead, EOC Equity Officer and EOC AFN Officer. The Community Outreach Lead also collaborates with the Lead PIO and Media Relations Lead to secure American Sign Language interpreters for media briefings and assists the JIC Administrator with maintaining accurate outreach and distribution lists. By leveraging established community relationships, this position ensures timely, accessible, and culturally appropriate information delivery to all segments of the population.
Writing & Content Production Lead Reports to JIC Manager	Develops timely, accurate, and relevant materials -including press releases and talking points that support the Joint Information Center's messaging strategy. This role works closely with all JIC units to research and identify key audiences, ensuring content is targeted and effective. The Lead also assists in developing cohesive communications templates, collaborates with the Lead PIO to maintain message consistency, and partners with the Video Production Lead to create scripts that accurately reflect current situational awareness.
Video Production Lead Reports to Writing Unit & Content Production Lead	The Video Production Lead manages all video production and messaging within the JIC, ensuring content aligns with the Lead PIOs strategy. Responsibilities include scouting safe filming locations, coordinating with talent and vendors, documenting incidents with the Field PIO, and developing scripts that reflect current situational awareness





Section 4 Preparedness Phase

4.1 Preparedness Phase Overview

The Preparedness Phase creates the foundation for ensuring the Marin OEM and its partner jurisdictions can quickly disseminate emergency public information. This is done by building comprehensive plans, developing templates and tools, and engaging with the JIS and community prior to any incident occurring.

The Marin OA maintains a constant cycle of building capacity, coordinating stakeholders, and educating the public. Pre-incident planning, coordination, and preparation are important components of crisis communications. Marin County OEM provides community preparedness through ReadyMarin and other outreach campaigns, engaging residents, businesses, and community-based organizations in readiness initiatives.

Key activities for the Preparedness Phase include:

- Defining roles and responsibilities for Marin OA PIOs, communications staff, and partner agencies – including roles for JIS and JIC activation.
- Establishing internal communication workflows between departments/agencies and documenting procedures for developing, reviewing, and approving messages pre-event.
- Developing pre-scripted templates for various threats (e.g., wildfire, flood, chemical spill, cyberattack, etc.) while ensuring templates are plain language, ADA-compliant, and translated into the jurisdiction's primary languages.
- Maintaining Marin OA's Public Emergency Portal and social media accounts to ensure readiness for distributing both preparedness messaging and emergency communication.
- Maintain inventory of public information technology (e.g., Press Conference kit, interpretive headphones, etc.)
- Engaging in year-round public education and outreach to educate residents on emergency alerts and warning systems and personal preparedness plans.
- Proactively using social media, community events, and partnerships to disseminate materials and outreach to historically underserved populations including older adults, people with disabilities, and non-English speakers.



4.2 Public Information and Community Engagement

Proactive community engagement is a cornerstone of Marin OA's emergency preparedness strategy. OA members regularly host community meetings, preparedness fairs, and public forums. They collaborate with local jurisdictions, fire departments, and community-based organizations. Educational materials on emergency alerts, evacuation planning, defensible space, and personal preparedness are disseminated through schools, neighborhood groups, and social media.

Special attention is given to outreach in geographically isolated and high-risk areas such as West Marin and low-lying, flood-prone neighborhoods. The Marin OA also partners with organizations serving older adults, people with disabilities, and immigrant communities to ensure inclusive and culturally competent messaging reaches all residents.

4.3 Public Information and Prevention

Marin EOC activation may also be necessary to support prevention activities in situations that require heightened coordination. These may include:

- A credible or imminent threat that requires countywide coordination beyond routine operations.
- Risks to critical infrastructure, mass gatherings, or essential government facilities that demand additional protective measures.
- Intelligence indicating a potential act of terrorism or intentional hazard that could escalate into an emergency requiring response.

In such cases, the JIC may also be activated to manage public messaging and community awareness. This can include expanding on AlertMarin messaging by reiterating threats and or protective measures, ensuring communications are multilingual and accessible, sharing threat information with businesses, nonprofits, and schools, encouraging community suspicious activity reporting, and coordinating protective actions with utilities and partners.

All of these actions require carefully balancing transparency with operational security. When activated, the EOC integrates prevention efforts into the SEMS/NIMS structure, ensuring a seamless transition into response operations if a threat escalates.

4.4 Addressing Planning Challenges

Proactive planning for planning assumptions and counter strategies are considered for situational challenges in any disaster. Disruptions to communication systems, disproportional impacts on certain communities, and or staffing challenges are addressed in the planning phase to anticipate, plan for and have alternative plans.

For instance, In the event where an extended power outage (i.e. electromagnetic attack, cyberattack) disrupts access to computers and digital communication channels, the Joint Information Center may utilize traditional analog phone lines, radio and TV communication channels, and grassroots outreach mechanisms such as door-to-door canvassing and use of bulletin boards.





Section 5 Activation Phase

5.1 Activation Phase Overview

The Activation Phase begins when Marin OA agencies start their response to an incident.

Activation of the Public Emergency Communications Annex aligns with the activation of Marin County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The Marin County EOC will be activated when an emergency or disaster exceeds the routine capabilities of County departments or requires extraordinary coordination across agencies and jurisdictions. (page 101-102, 2026 Marin County Emergency Operations Plan) The County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) can be activated for incidents and occurrences affecting multiple jurisdictions to coordinate response efforts inclusive of activating the JIC. Activation occurs when an incident exceeds routine response capabilities, requires multi-agency coordination, or creates a significant need for public information. Planned activations of the Marin County EOC can occur for major or high-profile events or instances that require a prolonged operational response

The EOC may be activated under any of the following circumstances:

- **Local Response Capacity Exceeded:** When an emergency overwhelms the capabilities of field responders, local departments, or jurisdictions, necessitating coordinated resource management and policy-level support.
- **Mutual Aid Requests:** When mutual aid is requested or received, particularly through the statewide mutual aid system, and coordination among multiple agencies becomes essential.
- **Proclamation of Local Emergency:** Upon the issuance of a Local Emergency Proclamation by Marin County or any incorporated city or town, requiring EOC activation to manage response and facilitate state or federal support.
- **Regional/Multi-Jurisdictional Events:** When incidents span multiple jurisdictions or functional disciplines (e.g., transportation, public health, utilities), requiring unified command and interagency coordination through the EOC.

Activation of this Annex may occur when the Marin OA faces an emergency situation that requires public information to be distributed to the community or during any disaster that warrants the activation of the EOC.

¹ The activation of the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and the activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) are related but distinct actions. It is important to note that activation of the EOP does not automatically mean the EOC or the JIC will be activated. Conversely, activation of the Emergency Public Information Annex and work with the JIS does will not necessarily also require activation of the JIC. The decision to activate either or both depends on the nature of the incident, the level of coordination required, and the authorities that must be exercised.



5.2 Joint Information Center Activation

Consistent with the EOP activation of the Emergency Communication Annex may occur when the Marin OA faces an emergency situation that requires public information to be distributed to the community or during any disaster that warrants the activation of the EOC. It may also take effect when disasters strike outside of the Marin OA's geographic boundaries with potential or real impacts on the OA's operations. It serves as a framework for the Marin OA (including special districts, cities, and towns) to activate the general structure and operations of the Marin OA's Joint Information System (JIS).

When an EOC is activated, consideration should also be given to activate the JIC to support public information through the following activities:

- Issue news releases and media briefings.
- Coordinate information between the Field and the EOC regarding public information and media requests.
- Manage social media and public inquiries.
- Provide multilingual and accessible materials.
- Support the designated PIO in the Management Section to implement communication strategy through message creation and dissemination.
- Coordinate message approval and release through the EOC Management Section.

When the EOC is activated, the EOC Director will designate a Lead PIO as part of the Management Section and to oversee the activation of a Joint Information Center (JIC), to determine initial public messaging priorities and to work with members of the JIS to determine appropriate public messaging strategies for the incident.

As indicated in Figure 5.1, the Lead PIO is part of the EOC Management Section and coordinates closely with the EOC Director so that the public information effort aligns with the overall strategic goals for the incident. During a multi-jurisdictional incident, representatives from multiple agencies, special districts and utilities may have representative PIOs working in the

Activation

1. Upon EOC activation, designated members of the Joint Information System (JIS) transition to the JIC structure.
2. Members operate under established JIC protocols and reporting lines to ensure coordinated public information management.
3. When the EOC is activated, the EOC Director will designate a Lead PIO as part of the Management Section.

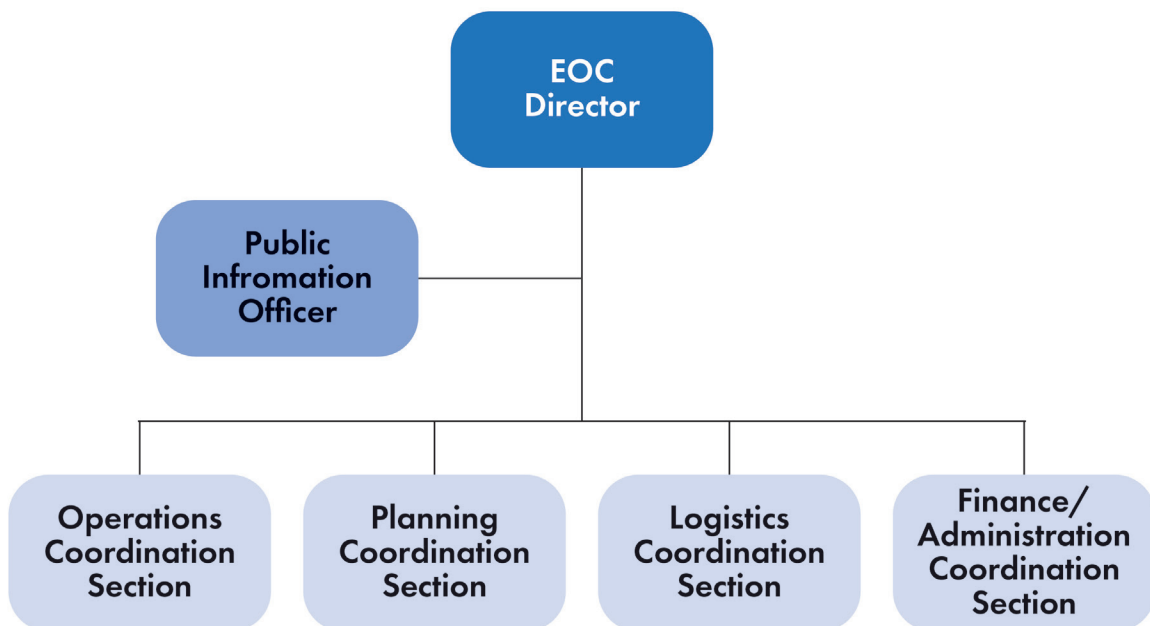


Figure 5.1: Public Information Under SEMS/NIMS ICS Structure



JIC to support the incident.

Key activities for the PIO and/or JIC Members during the Activation Phase include:

- Gaining situational awareness through communication with the EOC, and other Marin OA agencies.
- Ensuring that all communications staff share a common

The jurisdiction or agency experiencing an incident will be the primary jurisdictional lead for public information.

operating picture to reduce inconsistencies in public messaging throughout the Marin OA.

- Activating the appropriate level of the JIC/JIS, including identifying and filling specific JIC roles.
- Determining PIO staffing needs and notifying personnel according to the needs of the emergency.
- Establishing communications with news media and developing a reporting rhythm.
- Establishing primary communications channels for all incident updates and developing a communications cadence.
- Establishing and updating the Marin OA's Public Emergency Portal with incident information.
- Updating the lead agency's social media accounts with information on the emergency activation and what the public may expect.

The Lead PIO for the incident will be determined based upon the jurisdiction or agency most greatly impacted, or where the emergency begins, or based upon the nature of the incident. (see Marin County EOP Incident and Lead Support Agency Matrix, page XX). If additional support is needed due to the size, scope or nature of the incident, the lead jurisdiction may request assistance from the Marin County OEM and or JIS to support. The lead agency and/or Lead PIO may change due to the size, scope, nature and or duration of the emergency.

If local resources are depleted during the course of a large-scale activation or long-term emergency, Mutual Aid agreements may be activated and executed. Additional resources may be requested in accordance with SEMS/NIMS.

5.3 Notification Procedures

When the decision is made to activate the JIC in support of an emergency response, the Marin County OA will notify JIS team members considered subject matter experts or involved jurisdictions, through the EOC Logistics Section via text, email, or phone call. They will be asked to report their immediate availability to support the activation providing instructions as to when and where to report for JIC service. To ensure successful notification, the Marin OA JIS Roster will be maintained and verified on a regular basis by the County of Marin's County Executive Office Communication's Division and the Marin County Fire PIO.

The EOC Director and Lead PIO collaborate with the Office of the County Executive's Communications Office to determine whether it is appropriate to establish a JIC and at what level it should be staffed/activated. The Lead PIO will determine the JIC's location (physical location or virtual), its organization, location, and staffing needs and assignments.

5.4 JIC Location

Unless otherwise designated, upon activation, the Joint Information Center will typically be co-located with the Marin County EOC, although it can be established at another location or supported virtually if needed due to situational needs such as safety concerns or partner needs. Collaboration methods should be made clear and access to all required platforms, tools, and conference links to be used during the activation, should be communicated to all JIC staff.

Primary JIC Location:

1600 Los Gatos Drive, San Rafael
County of Marin OEM

Secondary JIC Location:

Civic Center Exhibit Hall, San Rafael

This facility is purpose-built for emergency operations and is the central hub for activation of the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). It contains dedicated workspace, secure access, and integrated communications systems to support full-scale activations.

If an alternative location is designated, or if the JIC will be run virtually, members of the JIS will be advised of the alternative location at the time of notification.



5.5 JIC Activation Initial Actions

When a JIC is activated to support an emergency, time is of the essence, especially if public safety is in immediate risk. When a JIC is activated (physically or virtually) to support an incident or emergency, the Lead PIO should immediately take the initial steps:

1. Establish situational awareness and determine the facts of what has happened or is happening: – The basic of Who, What, Where, When and How of the incident.
2. Determine the operating location of the JIC (whether physical or virtual or hybrid) based upon the incident scale, safety and partner needs and notify JIS members to report to JIC location.
3. Determine JIC staffing needs such as how many people and what organizations/responding organizations are needed to support the response. It is also important to establish the JIC organization and to assign roles early.
4. Issue initial public message and acknowledge the media. This may include publishing an initial holding statement across channels (social media, website, media email lists). Begin responding to the media with basic information or at least inform members of the media that you are seeking to gain additional information. Acknowledge media inquiries promptly: confirm receipt, provide holding statement, media contact details, and next briefing times, if established.
 - NOTE: If an initial Alert and Warning (AW) message was sent to due to an immediate threat to life safety, the Lead PIO, or designee, should review to determine if additional or follow-up messaging is needed and/or if information regarding protective actions or updated information is available.
 - TIP: Consider issuing statements such as holding statements and initial social media posts that can go out quickly.
5. Determine if there is a need for Field PIO presence to manage media at the scene (safety, staging area, access, escorts, etc.).
6. Start developing messaging strategy for the incident with members of the JIS.
 - TIP: Start by convening a short JIS meeting or summary email within the first–15 -30 mins) to consolidate the team, confirm objectives, key messages, target audiences, languages/access needs, rumor control plan, approval flow, and cadence for updates and to establish briefing battle rhythm (e.g., JIS calls every 30–60 min initially).

Further information about the Marin OA's JIC Organization and Roles & Responsibilities may be found within Sections 3.5 and 3.6 of this document.





Section 6 Response Phase

6.1 Response Phase Overview

The Response Phase includes all communication tasks associated with responding to the incident. The primary responsibility of crisis communications professionals is the timely development and dissemination of appropriate public messaging. This messaging must be consistent and unified for effectiveness, as outlined within the Section 7: Messaging Strategies” section of this Annex.

Key activities for the Response Phase include:

1. Maintaining situational awareness of the incident, the public's response to the incident, life safety and other public safety information, EOC's activities.
2. Coordinating information with other response functions and organizations.
3. Implementing the communications flowchart outlined in Figure 2-1 for reciprocal communication between Marin OA agencies/jurisdictions and the public.
4. Ensuring JIC activities and information is coordinated and documented within the EOC process.
5. Setting communication strategy for response with EOC Management and/or Policy groups.
6. Working with all EOC Sections (Management, Planning, Logistics, Finance and IC) to facilitate information sharing and a common operating picture of response operations and needs.
7. Clarifying and communicating important topics that are vital to the safety, security, and well-being of all persons impacted by the incident.
8. Ensuring accessibility of all emergency communications for the whole community
9. Engaging with CBOs/Nonprofits and trusted messengers to facilitate crisis communications within historically underserved populations.
10. Promoting community engagement to ensure mutual trust between the public and the responding agency or jurisdiction throughout all phases of the response.
11. Determining target audiences and historically underserved populations, such as those disproportionately impacted by the incident or with unique needs.
12. Monitoring communications channels and adapting messaging as required by the incident, such as updates on closures or evacuation procedures.
13. Modifying existing templates based on the needs of the emergency and document successful messaging campaigns.
14. Ensuring that the communications channels used are appropriate for the incident and target audience.
15. Produce Public Information and Media Monitoring SitRep which captures Social media, press reports, and rumor control efforts support awareness of emerging issues and community sentiment.



6.2 Situational Awareness

The JIC plays a critical role in both maintaining and enhancing situational awareness (knowing what is happening) during an incident to form a common operating picture among all EOC sections and the Incident Command. This requires continuous, two-way communication and information sharing among those working the field, Department Operations Centers (DOC), the EOC and the JIC.

“Situational awareness”, as defined by FEMA’s National Response Framework, is “the ability to identify, process, and comprehend the critical elements of information about an incident.” For communicators, this means understanding what is happening, validating information, determining information priorities and using that information to guide public messaging.

During an emergency or disaster, Lead PIO or designee holds regular conference calls with the JIS to help establish and maintain situational awareness, contribute to a common operating picture, and identify resources and unmet needs among the jurisdictions.

When working within the JIC, documentation is a key element during the activation for both information sharing and for cost recovery. The ICS forms required for use in the JIC will be determined by the EOC Director and the Lead PIO. All PIOs working in the JIC should familiarize themselves with the information required in these forms. Common ICS forms used in the JIC include:

1. ICS Form 202 (Organization Chart)
2. ICS Form 209 (Situation Report, tailored for Public Information activities.
3. ICS 214 Form (Activity Log)

The Marin OA JIC is committed to sharing validated and synthesized information with the public as quickly and accurately as possible to ensure the public and other external stakeholder also have a common understanding of the incident. The JIC communicates updates through coordinated press releases, media briefings, and community, to provide timely facts, clarify uncertainties, and answer questions. This transparent flow of information helps align internal and external stakeholder awareness with the reality of the response effort, reduces confusion, and counters misinformation.

6.3 Continuous Information Sharing

The JIC plays a critical role in contributing to situational awareness and ensuring a consistent flow of two-way information sharing both internally in the EOC and externally with the media and the members of the public.

Reciprocal communication among field personnel, EOC sections, other PIOs, content developers and the public ensures consistent, accessible, timely, and coordinated information.

The JIC establishes situational awareness by drawing on multiple sources including:

1. Direction and intelligence from the EOC Director and EOC Coordinator.
2. The situation status (Sit Stat) report Emergency and the Incident Action Plan for the operational period.
3. Management Section and other EOC briefings.
4. Information reported from responding organizations.
5. Other JIS members serving as subject matter experts (SMEs) in the JIC.
6. Community-based organizations, non-profits and other community sources.
7. Conference calls for the Operational Area and specifically for Public Information Officers who are part of the Joint Information System.
8. News media, including live feeds.
9. Social media accounts for fire, police, news media, allied agencies, utilities, and others.
10. Social media postings by the public.
11. Risk specific organizations such as the National Weather Services (NWS) and the California Earthquake Authority, and notifications from PG&E for Public Safety Power Shutoff.
12. Confirmation and verification of response operations.



The Joint Information Center provides situational awareness to the EOC including:

1. Information gathered from news media and social media monitoring (e.g., pictures of damage) posted by individuals in the affected areas).
2. Picture and photos posted to social media demonstrating the extent of the damage, location of damage, geolocation data.
3. Requests for assistance (e.g., requests for help or resources posted on social media).
4. Information of potential threats circulating on social media such as those calling for violent activities.
5. Identification of media reporting activity.
6. The current key messages developed to be shared with the media or public involving the incident.
7. Trends in concerns from the public regarding the perception of the emergency response.
8. Number and type of rumors dispelled during the operational period.
9. Number and type of public and media inquiries from the Call Center, when established.
10. Number and type of inquiries received from media outlets.
11. Effectiveness of communication strategy and messaging

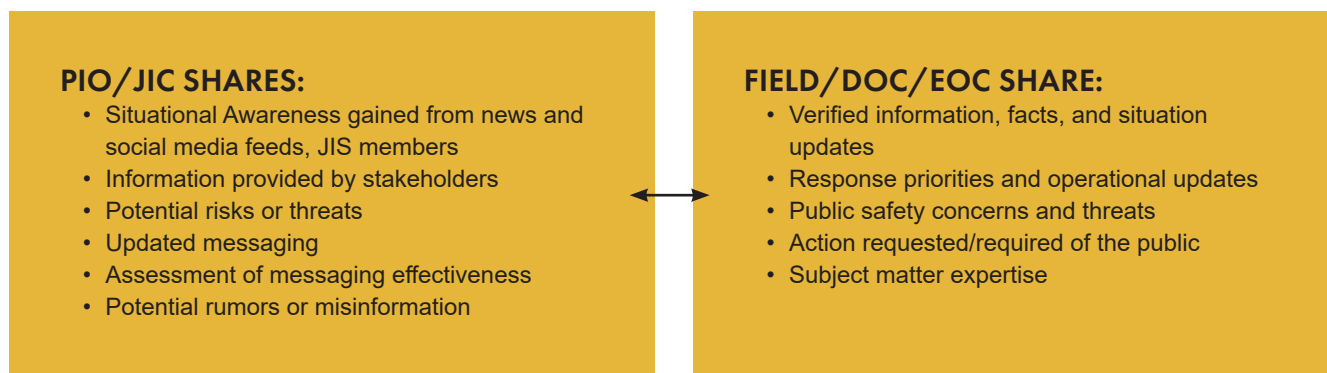


Figure 6.1: Information Sharing between the PIO/JIC and the Field/EOC

6.3.1 Ways to increase Situational Awareness

Situation Reports (SitReps) are a critical tool for maintaining a shared understanding of incident conditions, impacts, and priorities. They provide decision-makers, partner agencies, and stakeholders with timely and accurate information that supports coordinated response and recovery operations. During an incident the County of Marin will develop distinct versions of SitReps that are tailored to the needs of multiple stakeholders. While each report is customized to its audience, all versions are aligned to ensure consistency, accuracy, and a unified message across the Operational Area.

The JIC is responsible for producing Public Information and Media Monitoring SitRep which captures Social media, press reports, and rumor control efforts support awareness of emerging issues and community sentiment. However, the JIC should be contributing information as is needed and appropriate to all SitReps produced by the EOC, including Incident Command and Field Reports, Operational Area Partners, State and Federal Agencies and Community Assessments and Surveys.

6.4 JIC Operational Period Planning

Each operational period, the JIC will implement a messaging strategy through development of a communications plan.

This written communications strategy enables proactive, rather than reactive communications, establishes communications priorities, and helps establish a tempo for release of information to the media and the public through the establishment of clear, achievable communications objectives to support the incident. The communication plan should include the following:

1. Ensure that all key stakeholder groups are informed of critical, up-to-date information on all relevant aspects of the incident and its impacts on the Marin OA community.
2. Provide information, instructions and resources to all stakeholder groups and vulnerable groups and recommend actions they can take to protect themselves, families, students, employees, and dependents.
3. Communicate the actions that the Marin OA is taking to ensure the health and safety of all residents and protection of property and the environment.



The Lead PIO will work in conjunction with the EOC Director to establish the messaging priorities over each operational period and for the incident overall. The Lead PIO then works with the JIC (usually through the JIC Manager if one is assigned) to ensure the communications team in the JIC develops plans and tactics implement the strategy. Figure 6.2 below captures the process needed to successfully develop, validate and then disseminate messaging from the JIC.



Figure 6.2 Message Development and Release Process

6.5 Message Development

The JIC/JIS focuses on creating and disseminating several types of messages including public safety, recovery and status updates. The goal of the messaging strategy is to safeguard lives, property and the environment. Provided below are brief descriptions and examples of these message types. All messages developed should be verified to ensure they convey the proper tone and current messaging priorities.

The primary purpose of emergency response and messaging is to:

1. Issue urgent messages for rapid dissemination
2. Provide Instructions for the public (e.g., emergency protective actions and steps for recovery)
3. Promote public safety and well-being (e.g., help protect the environment and economy, and promote recovery).

6.5.1 Target Audiences

The primary focus of JIC is getting right information to the right audience, at the right time, so that community members can make informed decisions, and to take lifesaving actions for themselves and their families. To disseminate information multiple communications channels are utilized across Marin County and the Marin County OA to keep communities informed and to disseminate emergency instructions, updates, and critical information.

Within the Marin OA, efforts are ongoing to build and strengthen an emergency communications network that can quickly and effectively reach all sectors of the community during an emergency or disaster. Working groups are used to develop additional strategies and partnerships for public information and outreach before, during, and after emergencies for these high priority groups. During an activation, the JIC works closely with County agencies, community non-profits, faith-based organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs) to reach out to vulnerable populations and ensure effective communication with these groups. All content dissemination efforts follow the guidelines for AFN accessibility and ADA requirements.

There will likely be multiple target audiences for every emergency so it will most likely be required to identify the primary. And secondary target audience for each message or group of messaging being distributed. Questions for consideration in determining target audiences include:

1. Who does the issue or problem affect the most?
2. Are there communities or members of the community that may be disproportionately affected?
3. Are vulnerable groups included in the target audiences?
4. Are internal and external groups included in your target audiences?
5. How can the messaging be released to ensure comprehension for all AFN and equity populations?

THE GOAL OF EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

- Getting the Right Information,
- To the Right People, at
- The Right Time,
- So That They Can Make Informed Decisions.



6.5.2 Core Message Focus Areas

When developing public information during an emergency, PIOs should ensure all messages are anchored to a few core themes. These focus areas keep communications consistent, efficient, and easy for the public to understand. (Note: This framework does not apply to detailed technical guidance produced or all details which may need to be conveyed). By framing information updates around these areas, the Marin OA JIC is better able to provide relevant, consistent, and reassuring information that answers the public's key questions related to:

- Am I safe?
- What should I do?
- Who is helping?

Key messages based on the core themes focus areas should include:

1. Critical information, instructions, and a call-to-action and what to do, when appropriate.
2. Use credible sources as guides to model messaging and content development.
3. Include links to resources including phone, websites, social media hashtags, URLs, and other links as appropriate.

Example of Core Theme Focus Areas:

Protecting life, safety and well-being	• How to protect life, maintain safety and well-being • Address immediate risks to health and safety so that people can stay safety right now. • Explain clearly what actions people need to take to protect themselves and/or their families
Actions to take and available resources	• Give specific recommendations for people exactly what to do or where to go. • Give specific recommendations or actions the public should take, where to go and how to get help or more information. • Be clear on what you are asking people to do • Provide resources they may need (e.g. shelters, hotlines, key services) or where to get help. • Tell people where they can get more information.
Government actions and response	• Describe how local, state and federal agencies are responding to the situation, to manage the incident and correct the problem. • Demonstrate progress, coordination, assistance being provided. • Timeline of expected resolution.

Figure 6.2: Core Themes for Emergency Messaging

Once messaging is developed, and before releasing information the JIC should verify and validate the messaging by (internally) reflecting on the following questions

1. Does this message explain how people can stay safe or protect their families?
2. Does it provide clear, actionable steps or resources for those affected?
3. Does it describe what the response agencies are doing to resolve the incident or assist the community?
4. Is the information verified, consistent with the EOC/JIC, and free of speculation?
5. Does it align with previously issued messages and avoid conflicting guidance?
6. Is the message clear, concise, and free from technical jargon (in plain language) for all audiences?
7. Will the audience(s) understand the message and what it is telling them to do?
8. Is the message accessible for people with disabilities and access and functional needs?

6.6 Messaging Strategies

This section describes Marin OA's strategies for developing public messaging. It discusses the operational framework by which messaging is to be created, identifying target audiences, and managing misinformation.

To enhance readiness, Marin OEM maintains a library of pre-approved alert templates that cover common hazards including wildfire, flooding, and critical infrastructure emergencies. These messages are written in plain language, regularly updated, and translated into Spanish to support accessibility.



6.6.1 CMIST Framework

The Marin OA utilizes FEMA's CMIST Framework (Communication, Maintaining Health, Independence, Support & Safety, Transportation) as its paradigm for crisis communications. CMIST was developed as a tool to assist responding PIOs in ensuring response resources are accessible for community members. The foundation of CMIST is that serving the needs of AFN and historically underserved populations naturally fulfills the needs of other populations.

CMIST is an acronym for the five categories that form its operational model, as depicted in Figure 7-1 below from the Administration for Strategic Preparedness & Response.



Figure 7-1: CMIST Framework

The Marin OA's PIOs and JIC use CMIST to identify target audiences and craft effective, appropriate, and responsible messaging. Each of the components of CMIST and its applicability to the Marin OA's communications and public messaging activities are described below.

Communication

- Ensuring that web design and social media posts are accessible by screen-readers and that images contain captions for those with vision impairment, compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines requirements.
- Ensuring that font colors and sizes are appropriate for those with vision loss when designing handouts, social media graphics, and webpages.
- Operationalizing multiple and redundant channels of communication for the same message, thereby ensuring as much of the population as possible receives the message through their preferred platform.
- Providing interpreters for impacted populations.
- Developing messaging templates that are multilingual as a baseline for all templates and Marin OA communications.
- Ensuring American Sign Language interpreters are present at press conferences.
- Maintaining Health
- Ensuring that crisis communications during public health emergencies are vetted by the Marin OA's Public Health Officer or assigned representative.
- Developing messaging that provides information on Personal Protective Equipment use and access during a public health emergency, such as how people may acquire masks.
- Providing public information on hospitals and healthcare facilities, such as available services and visiting hours.
- Developing content on taking care of one's physical and mental health.
- Providing information on how to protect respiratory health during periods of heavy pollution due to wildfire smoke.
- Providing information on drinking water safety during flooding events, hazardous materials spills, and water main ruptures.
- Collaborating with the Marin County Healthcare Preparedness Coalition and Healthcare Preparedness Program on developing content on what healthcare systems are doing to prepare for or respond to incidents.
- Independence
- Providing real-time captioning on broadcast announcements and news conferences.
- Providing vision and communication aids at news conferences and town halls.
- Ensuring assistive technology for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons is available at news conferences and town halls.
- Providing information on available assistance, including Family Assistance Centers.
- Explaining service animal rules at shelters.



Support & Safety

- Developing social media content on how to take care of one's mental health and well-being during highly stressful incidents, such as major wildfires, infectious disease outbreaks, and terrorist attacks.
- Providing information on how pregnant women, nursing mothers, and infants may protect themselves and receive care.
- Developing public messaging templates with a trauma-informed approach to reduce mental stress on populations impacted, especially historically underserved populations.
- Transportation
- Developing content on available public transport options for traveling to shelters.
- Providing information on how the disaster has impacted transportation routes.
- Providing information on accessible transportation options, including available paratransit services.

At the State government level, the Cal OES Office of Access and Functional Needs coordinates with Federal, State, and local partners to ensure communication needs are identified and addressed during disasters. This Office maintains a comprehensive library of resources, including guidance documents and sample plans.

6.6.2 Access and Functional Needs (AFN) & Whole Community

Ensure compliance with accessibility requirements for all emergency communications for the whole community, including, but not limited to:

- Compliance with Section 508 standards and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (or most recent)
- Alternative text on all digital images to aid vision-impaired persons
- Color-blind and e-reader accessibility on webpages and social media
- Translated materials for all press releases, social media posts, and webpages
- Outreach to community members who do not have access or infrequently use technology
- Language interpretation in primary languages is made available for all in-person and virtual community conversations.
- American Sign Language interpretation at news conferences and other public speaking engagements
- Access to in-house or contracted translator services

6.7 Information Management and Verification

Information management involves the collection, verification and synthesis of information from multiple sources for the purpose of producing accurate and timely public messaging. Verification of information regardless of the source is critical to ensure accurate situational awareness and managing rumors. All JIC staff must ensure that information received from any source - field reports, partner updates, public surveys, social media or media monitoring - is verified for accuracy before being incorporated into EOC products or is approved for public information release and dissemination.

Verification for unofficial sources, the public, or third parties

INFORMATION VERIFICATION

All JIC staff must ensure that information received from any source—field reports, partner updates, public surveys, social media or media monitoring—is verified for accuracy before being incorporated into EOC products or is approved for public information release and dissemination.

should include cross-checking with multiple sources, confirming with the originating agency when possible, and documenting the reliability of the information. This prevents the spread of misinformation and ensures decision-making is based on accurate and validated data.

It is critical that the JIC develop systems for tracking incoming information, for verifying that information for accuracy and for address and correcting any rumors of misinformation.

6.7.1 Managing Misinformation

Marin OA PIOs and JIC members play a vital role in ensuring that the public receives accurate, timely, and consistent information during emergencies. A critical function of the JIC is identifying and responding to misinformation and rumors. These may circulate through social media, online forums, traditional media, and/or community word-of-mouth. Left unaddressed, misinformation can jeopardize public safety, diminish trust in official sources, and complicate response efforts.



To mitigate these risks, the Marin OA JIC will proactively monitor public communication channels to identify emerging rumors or false narratives. A designated team or individual within the JIC will be responsible for verifying the accuracy of flagged information and coordinating with subject matter experts. When necessary, corrections or clarifications will be quickly issued through trusted platforms including AlertMarin, Marin OA social media accounts, the Public Emergency Portal, and news briefings.

Key considerations for managing and correcting misinformation within the JIC include:

1. Designate a lead for rumor control. Assign a JIC staff member or team to monitor social media, local news, and public inquiries for misinformation or emerging rumors. This may be the Social Media Lead or Community Outreach Lead.
2. Implement a verification and response protocol. Establish a standard process for reviewing and validating rumors, determining response actions, and coordinating with relevant agencies for consistent messaging.
3. Leverage local partner and trusted messengers. Work with local jurisdictions, CBOs, and outreach teams to disseminate accurate information and reinforce public trust.
4. Address rumors in official briefings. Incorporate misinformation updates in public briefings and EOC SitReps to ensure aligned messaging and rapid correction of inaccuracies.

6.8 Message Approval

The EOC Director has the authority to approve all message approvals being released by the JIC. Once a message has been drafted by the JIC and reviewed by appropriate subject matter experts and other EOC staff the Lead PIO will either approve the message under delegation of authority or provide the message to the EOC Director for approval. Once the message has been approved by the EOC Director, the JIC team will disseminate to the media, public, and other internal and external stakeholders.

To streamline critical public information releases, the EOC Director is encouraged to delegate message approval authority to the Lead PIO whenever possible - particularly for time-sensitive releases such as social media posts. At the start of the emergency, the EOC Director and Lead PIO should establish guidelines identifying which messages the Lead PIO/JIC Manager can approve independently and which require EOC Director review before release.

Messages Requiring Approval by EOC Director/Executive Leadership Messages Which May be Delegated for Approval to Lead PIO

- Incident status updates (or portions).
- Information about casualties/fatalities associated with an incident.
- Messages disseminated in response to negative public sentiment or particularly divisive rumors (e.g., messages dispelling rumors about martial law or curfews).
- Information requiring extensive operational validation (e.g. changing evacuation zones)
- Politically sensitive topics (e.g., FEMA denial of federal assistance requests).
- General public safety advisories and protective actions (e.g., boil water orders, evacuation warnings and orders, aftershock warnings, etc.).
- Recovery messages (e.g., fraud prevention, messages for volunteers, mold clean up, etc.).
- General information about the incident and response efforts (e.g., 200 sandbags distributed by members are deployed to assist with debris clean up).
- Availability of resources to individuals affected by the incident (e.g., sandbags are available at X locations; the following Shelter location accept pets).

Messages Requiring Approval by EOC Director/ Executive Leadership	Messages Which May be Delegated for Approval to Lead PIO
• Incident status updates (or portions). • Information about casualties/fatalities associated with an incident. • Messages disseminated in response to negative public sentiment or particularly divisive rumors (e.g., messages dispelling rumors about martial law or curfews). • Information requiring extensive operational validation (e.g. changing evacuation zones) • Politically sensitive topics (e.g., FEMA denial of federal assistance requests).	• General public safety advisories and protective actions (e.g., boil water orders, evacuation warnings and orders, aftershock warnings, etc.). • Recovery messages (e.g., fraud prevention, messages for volunteers, mold clean up, etc.). • General information about the incident and response efforts (e.g., 200 sandbags distributed by members are deployed to assist with debris clean up). • Availability of resources to individuals affected by the incident (e.g., sandbags are available at X locations; the following Shelter location accept pets).

Figure 6.3: Examples of Delegated Authority for Message Approval





Section 7 Recovery Phase

7.1 Recovery Phase Overview

During the Recovery Phase, public communication shifts from urgent life and safety information to sustained messaging focused on community healing, access to services, and long-term resilience. As immediate threats subside, the public's information needs become more diverse and complex. These range from financial assistance and rebuilding resources to mental health support and timelines for restoring normalcy.

Key considerations for the Response Phase messaging include:

1. Augmenting messaging strategies, such as developing a dedicated recovery website (MarinRecovers.org) and including information on reunification, public assistance, and expectations for future operations.
2. Continuing to disseminate key messages using the appropriate communications channels for the incident and target audience.
3. Updating the jurisdictional website with information about the incident's end and expectations for future operations.
4. Transitioning messaging with empathy and clarity.
5. Shifting tone to acknowledge community losses and trauma while providing hopeful and empowering information about available resources and next steps in the recovery process.
6. Promoting community engagement and resilience by highlighting stories of recovery, local leadership, and volunteer efforts.
7. Encouraging public participation in recovery planning and sharing resources to build individual and community preparedness for future emergencies.



7.2 Recovery Messaging

As the emergency transitions from an active response to recover (and long-term recovery) messaging must adapt based on changing community needs, evolving recovery timelines, and stakeholder input. PIOs must continue to disseminate key messages using the appropriate communications channels for the incident and target audience. Messaging channels may need to change and may include town halls, digital platforms, posters, and local media partnerships to ensure broad reach and inclusivity. This is especially important for communities that are historically underserved or disproportionately impacted by the incident.

The tone of the messaging may need to evolve as well. Messaging in the Recovery Phase can include both on-going public safety messaging (although it transitions from immediate life safety protection) as well as long-term recovery messaging regarding clean-up efforts, rebuilding, and economic recovery.

Examples of Recovery Messages	
• Evacuation or shelter-in-place orders lifted • Purifying contaminated water before drinking • Coping with a utility outage (e.g., use flashlights, no open flames, etc.) • Safety after an earthquake (e.g., preparing for aftershocks) • Food safety with no refrigeration • Preventing mosquitoes after flooding • Managing mold • Tetanus shot information • Curfews • Social distancing protocols • Public Health Officer Orders	• Reunification with family and or loved ones • Re-entry and re-population • Health and safety; environmental health • Financial Assistance • Fraud prevention • Debris removal • Volunteer information • Information for missing pets • Protecting identity • Protect yourself from fraud and scams • Resources to recover documentation • Local Assistance Center information and services related to recovery • Community and economic resilience programs

Figure 7.1 Examples of Recovery Messaging

7.3 JIC Deactivation

At the direction of the Emergency Operations Center Director, the EOC will be deactivated and the PIO function and or Joint Information Center operations will be demobilized, as well. Below is a process of actions for demobilizing the Joint Information Center.

Upon determination that the Recovery Phase and broader incident management are ending, demobilization of human and technical resources may begin. The Lead PIO will be responsible for identifying key outstanding issues that need to be resolved. This includes what (if any) post-incident media activity that the EOC needs to anticipate, and the formalization of any Incident Command System (ICS) documentation needed to close the event. Public information functions will be transferred back to agencies and jurisdictions.

The JIC may or may not remain activated during the Recovery Phase. Continued activation of the JIC will be determined in coordination from the Marin OA and the Lead PIO based on the needs of the incident.

The decision to formally demobilize the JIC and transition to routine communications operations (JIS) will be made by the Lead Public Information Officer (PIO) in consultation with the EOC Director. This decision should be based on clear indicators that the incident is moving into the Recovery Phase, and broader operations are winding down.



To prepare, the Lead PIO must notify the community, media, and local officials about JIC deactivation via a news release that includes contact information for any ongoing inquiries. Additionally, the Public Emergency Portal and any relevant jurisdictional/agency webpages should be updated with information about demobilization and expectations for future operations.

Demobilization of the JIC should be guided by clear procedures to ensure accountability, continuity, and documentation. The Lead PIO will oversee this process and ensure that any remaining public information responsibilities are appropriately transitioned.

The core JIC deactivation tasks include, as assigned by the Lead PIO:

Finalize internal assessment of JIC planning and outstanding issues - Identify and resolve any outstanding public information issues. - Determine whether any post-incident media activity (e.g., follow-up interviews, press conferences, briefings) will be required - Identify if any ICS documentation, media archives, or official communications need to be finalized or submitted to close the event.	Update public facing communication - Update the Public Emergency Portal, agency websites, and social media platforms to indicate the JIC has been demobilized. - Provide guidance on how the public can access post-incident updates, recovery resources, or community assistance programs.
Manage documentation and records - Organize and archive all JIC products (press releases, talking points, briefings, media logs, social media posts, etc.). - Submit public information documentation required by the Planning Section or Documentation Unit. - Secure and organize recordings or transcripts of media briefings for future training or reference. - Submit public information documentation required by the Planning Section or Documentation Unit. - Compile data on reach, engagement, and audience feedback for inclusion in the After-Action Report (AAR) including the capture of social media metrics and analytics.	Transition public information responsibilities - Ensure public information functions are transferred back to individual agency or jurisdictional PIOs. - Hold a final coordination call or meeting with agency/jurisdictional representatives to confirm role transitions and provide key contact updates. - Update account access if needed.
Coordinate the deactivation announcement - Draft and circulate a deactivation news release for review and approval by the lead agency, JIC leadership, and the EOC Director. - Distribute the approved release to the community, media outlets, and partner jurisdictions. - Include updated contact information for public inquiries going forward (e.g., transitioning to a lead agency's PIO).	Ensure resource accountability and replenishment - In coordination with the Demobilization and Documentation Unit, ensure all staff have completed check out procedures and submitted required forms, including Activity Logs. - Inventory and secure all communications equipment, supplies and documentation. - Replenish JIC go kits, field PIO kits and technology assets (e.g. radios, phones, chargers, computers, iPad).
	Conduct after-action activities - Conduct a short debriefing session with JIC staff to review key takeaways and ensure well-being. - Participate in the EOC's review and hotwash process. - Contribute to the AAR and Improvement Plan (IP), noting successes, challenges, and specific JIC-related recommendations. - Gather lessons learned specific to JIC operations, staffing, coordination, and technology use.





Section 8 Annex Continuity

8.1 Training and Exercise

Marin OEM prioritizes regular trainings and exercises to ensure communications staff and partner agencies are prepared to respond effectively during incidents. Annual training sessions exist for PIOs, department liaisons, and support staff involved in crisis communications. These trainings include risk communication, social media management, working within a JIS, and activating a JIC.

The County of Marin also conducts tabletop and functional exercises each year that integrate crisis communications objectives. These allow staff to practice message development, workflows, and multi-platform dissemination in a simulated scenario. Participation from local jurisdictions, special districts, CBOs, and media partners help strengthen coordination and consistency within the Marin OA.

8.2 Annex Maintenance

Marin OEM is responsible for reviewing and updating this Annex on an annual basis or following any significant incident, exercise, or organizational change. Updates incorporate feedback from communications staff, partner agencies, and community stakeholders. They may also reflect changes in technology, policy, and local hazard vulnerabilities. Any revisions will be distributed to key stakeholders and accompanied by briefing sessions or refresher trainings to ensure awareness and understanding.



Annex References

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Alert and Warning

Alerts are communications intended to attract public attention to unusual situations and motivate individual awareness. Warnings are communications intended to persuade members of the public to take one or more protective actions to reduce losses or harm.

Access and Functional Needs

Access and functional needs (AFN) refers to individuals who are or have:

- Physical, developmental, or intellectual disabilities
- Chronic conditions or injuries
- Limited English proficiency
- Older adults
- Children
- Low income, homeless, and/or transportation disadvantaged (i.e., dependent on public transit)
- Pregnancy

Communication, Maintaining Health, Independence, Support & Safety, Transportation (CMIST) Framework

A message development framework developed by FEMA as a tool for PIOs to create actionable and accessible public messaging.

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

Organizations within the Marin OA that support local communities and may be a source of outreach and trusted messengers. They are non-profit entities that address local needs and improve the well-being of community members.

Community Resilience Teams (CRTs)

Local groups under Marin HHS that support emergency Preparedness.

Crisis Communications

Any messaging used to communicate information to the public during an emergency. This includes but is not limited to alerts and warnings, hazard-specific information, evacuations, emergency declarations, and public safety information.

Emergency Management Mutual Aid (EMMA)

The State of California's framework for activating Mutual Aid in support of emergencies, incidents, and crises.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

A designated facility of virtual location that serves as a central hub for coordinating emergency response, disaster recovery, and crisis communications. Representatives from various agencies and jurisdictions work within the EOC to centralize planning, operations, and logistics.



Historically Underserved Communities

Populations that have been historically underserved, at-risk, and/or marginalized. This also includes populations that may have unique needs for response resources or outreach during emergencies.

Incident Command System (ICS)

A standardized emergency management paradigm through which command and control during an emergency is flexed to coordinate response and recovery efforts. ICS is defined by Cal OES and FEMA, respectively, under SEMS/NIMS.

Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)

An alert and warning architecture that brings several different warning systems and agencies under its umbrella to send out messages to persons. IPAWS messages are authenticated.

Joint Information Center (JIC)

A physical or virtual location through which public message, crisis communications, media inquiries, and call centers are activated, centralized, and operationalized during an emergency.

Joint Information System (JIS)

An Operational Area-wide framework through which public messaging is coordinated and disseminated. The JIS integrates the JIC, jurisdictional/agency PIOs, private sector members, and the public.

Operational Area (OA)

The geographic location or political entity in which emergency operations are conducted. For the County of Marin, the “Marin OA” refers to the Operational Area subsumed by the County’s geographic boundaries.

Public Emergency Portal

The website portal operated by Marin OEM that is dedicated to preparedness, response, and recovery operations.

Public Information Officer (PIO)

An individual responsible for managing communications between their organization/agency/jurisdiction and the public.

Situational Awareness

The comprehensive understanding of the emergency, incident, or disaster; response operations; and the public’s needs.

Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs)

Organizations that support responses to emergencies, crises, and incidents. An example is the American Red Cross.

Whole Community

A FEMA-developed paradigm by which community members, emergency management practitioners, CBOs, and local leaders are a part of the emergency planning, preparedness, response, and recovery process.



ACRONYMS

AAS	Marin County Aging and Adult Services
ARES/RACES	Amateur Radio Emergency Services/Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services
Cal OES	California Governor's Office of Emergency Services
CBO	Community-based organization
CDPH	California Department of Public Health
CMIST	Communication, Maintaining Health, Independence, Support & Safety, Transportation
DAFN	Disabilities, Access, and Functional Needs
DOC	Department Operations Center
EAS	Emergency Alert System
EMMA	Emergency Management Mutual Aid
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HAZMAT	Hazardous Materials
ICS	Incident Command System
IHSS	Marin County In-Home Supportive Services
IPAWS	Integrated Public Alert and Warning System
JIC/JIS	Joint Information Center/Joint Information System
Marin HHS	Marin County Health and Human Services
Marin OA	Marin County Operational Area
Marin OEM	Marin County Office of Emergency Management
NWS	National Weather Service
PHO	Public Health Officer
PIO	Public Information Officer
PSA	Public Service Announcement
PSPS	Public Safety Power Shut-off
SEMS/NIMS	Standardized Emergency Management System/National Incident Management System
VOAD(s)	Voluntary Organization(s) Active in Disaster
WEA	Wireless Emergency Alert



