



Jefferson County - City of Port Townsend  
COMPREHENSIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN



## Part 3: Emergency Operations Guide

### EOG 3.2.02 – Emergency Public Information Attachment A – EOC MEDIA POLICY

(December 2009)

**GENERAL MEDIA POLICY** – The purpose of this policy is to ensure information from the Department of Emergency Management is timely and accurate, and that inquiries from the media are responded to appropriately, and in compliance with state and federal laws.

**THE NEWS MEDIA AS ALLY** – The news media is an important ally in dissemination of important information to the citizens we serve. In all cases media representatives will be treated with courtesy and respect as partners in our public safety mission.

**APPLICABILITY** – The EOC Media Policy applies to contact with the news media by the Emergency Management staff or the EOC Incident Management Team about the business of the Department of Emergency Management or activities associated with the Emergency Operations Center or any incident facility under our purview.

**DIRECTOR IS OFFICIAL DEPARTMENT SPOKESPERSON** – The Director (Program Manager) is the official spokesperson (approving authority) for the Department of Emergency Management and the Emergency Operations Center. The Director may, as conditions require, delegate duties as appropriate, including appointment of a Public Information Officer (PIO).

**COMMAND APPROVAL REQUIRED** – All news releases/media contact will be approved by the Director (or EOC Manager/unified command when EOC is activated). See “**Exceptions**” below.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEDIA POLICY** – When the EOC is activated, the PIO is delegated the responsibility for administering this media policy. During normal operations the PIO may be used to coordinate public information relating to the activities of this department.

**MEDIA REQUESTS** – All media requests should be referred to approving authority if any are available. Requests from the news media may include interviews with key personnel, photographs, video, film footage, and audio recordings. The PIO will coordinate this activity. Media inquiries received at any station in an activated EOC will be referred to the PIO or the EOC Manager/unified command if no PIO is available. If no approving authority is available the team member will follow the “exceptions” protocols (see below).

**CONTACT AUTHORIZED BY THE PIO** – The PIO may refer media representatives to a team member for comment on a specific area of expertise or information. The team member will use the “exceptions” protocols.

**EOC SENSITIVE INFORMATION POLICY APPLIES** – All DEM Staff and EOC Team members will observe the EOC Information Security and Sensitive Information Handling Policy (EOG 3.3.11).

*Any information marked FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY (FOUO), and/or pertaining to criminal investigation, identification of disaster victims, related medical information<sup>1</sup>, their addresses, internal planning, draft plans or documents, un-cleared bulletins or news releases, the content of in-house briefings, overheard conversations or radio traffic, or*

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<sup>1</sup> Members will be familiar with HIPPA guidelines.

***unconfirmed speculation will not be released to the public unless cleared in advance by the EOC Manager/unified command.<sup>2</sup>***

**JOINT INFORMATION CENTER (JIC)** – Information from this department will be coordinated with a JIC if one is established for the incident. (See EOC 2.3.02 – Emergency Public Information).

**MEDIA LOG** – When the EOC is activated, a media log of all public and media inquiries will be kept by the PIO (or designee) as a part of the official incident record.

**ESCORT** – The Public Information Officer (or designee) will accompany news media representatives at any time they are in the Emergency Operations Center or any incident facility.

**ACCESS TO PLANNING MEETINGS** – Media access to planning meetings must be cleared in advance with the meeting coordinator. Planning meetings are preliminary and may include speculation, assumptions, and candid observations, or executive discussions not authorized for general distribution.

**ANNOUNCEMENT REQUIRED** – The PIO will advise EOC team members when there are representatives of the news media present in the EOC or incident facility.

**EXCEPTIONS** – Staff and EOC team members will occasionally have incidental contact with the news media when there is no designated PIO or other approving authority available or when they are recommended by the PIO for their particular expertise. They will use the following guidelines and limitations:

- Responding to media inquiries by EOC team members is authorized when timely reply is necessary. Return media calls ASAP.
- Observe sensitive information handling policies at all times.
- Do not speculate or assume, and do not comment on what you “think”.
- Restrict comments to known facts (first-hand knowledge associated with your team assignment and expertise).
- Refer to officially prepared statements or releases if any.
- Decline any discussion of policy matters; refer to command.
- Make no “off the record” comments. Never.
- Respectfully decline comment on any requests beyond your knowledge or expertise. Refer the inquiry to the EOC Manager.
- Keep a detailed log of all contact with the media.
- Advise the Public Information Officer or EOC Manager as soon as practicable.

**MONITORING THE MEDIA** – The PIO (or designee) will monitor media outlets (including broadcast outlets, print media, web sites, etc. – including Editorials and Letters to the Editor) to make certain that information being disseminated is correct and where additional information may be needed.

**EMERGENCY CONDITIONS MAY REQUIRE CHANGES** – Portions of this policy may need to be suspended or modified in the interest of public safety.

**APPROVED**



R. W. Hamlin, Program Manager  
December 15, 2009

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<sup>2</sup> Emergency Operations Guide 3.3.11 – Overall Information Security Statement