Annex A
Joint Information Center Manual

Communicating during Environmental Emergencies

Northwest Area:
Washington, Oregon, and Idaho

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Joint Information Center Manual

1 Introduction

This guide is designed to help communicators during response to environmental emergencies that occur or may occur in the northwestern United States—Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. This Joint Information Center (JIC) Guide is based on and draws heavily from the National Response Team JIC model and serves as Annex A of the Northwest Regional Contingency Plan (NWRCP).

To ensure accurate and coordinated information dissemination during emergency responses, it is highly recommended that the Joint Information Center, whose roles and responsibilities are outlined in this manual, work closely with the Liaison Office, whose roles and responsibilities are outlined in the Liaison Manual. While the two units work with different audiences, they deliver the same messages about the response.

To facilitate this coordination, it is recommended that the JIC and Liaison Office be integrated as much as possible. This can be accomplished by locating the units in adjacent spaces and by working from the same communication documents such as press releases, talking points, FAQs, the response website, and social media. The two units should also collaborate on planning and implementing community events, conducting VIP tours, and preparing specialized communications for specific involved or interested parties like elected officials and community leaders. It is also recommended that once each day, the Public Information Officer and Liaison Officer jointly brief the JIC and Liaison Office staff to ensure they have current information and to enable a coordinated approach to their work. This briefing would be especially useful following the Command and General Staff meeting. Ensuring that this coordination is implemented is the responsibility of the JIC Manager and the Assistant Liaison Officer.

2 Incident Management System

2.1 Functional Units

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

2.2 Command

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

2.3 Operations

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

2.4 Planning

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

2.5 Finance/Administration

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

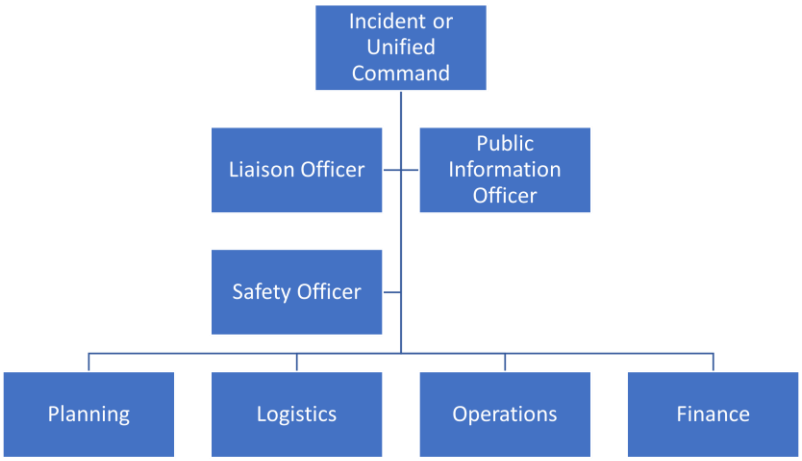


Figure 1 Incident Command Structure

2.6 Mandates

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

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

- National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan;
- Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund);
- Oil Pollution Act (OPA 90);
- Clean Water Act; and
- Occupational Safety and Health Act.

2.7 Unified Command

When multiple organizations are involved in a response, a Unified Command is established and may be composed of representatives from federal, state, tribal, and local jurisdictions, and the responsible party (RP), when known. A Joint Information Center (JIC) is activated when the Unified Command model is used.

2.8 Joint Information System

In response to most routine or minor environmental incidents, public information activities are carried out by the lead response agency in coordination with other organizations. In these cases, the lead PIO usually conducts activities from their office or another remote location, as directed by the Incident Commander, via phone, virtual meetings, and email with agency counterparts. Early notification and coordination include timely review of draft news releases, social media, and other materials, and collaboration to determine other information needs. Major or complex incidents often require coordinating agencies to stand up a physical Joint Information Center for communications staff to coordinate together more efficiently and effectively.

2.9 Public Records

Most information collected, generated, or distributed during incident response is part of the public record and may be potentially released to the media and public if requested. This includes all emails, text messages, virtual chats, and virtual meeting transcripts. There are some legal exceptions that may prevent the release of information about active enforcement, investigations, and security-sensitive matters. All response personnel should adhere to public trust responsibilities and ensure that copies of all official documents, such as news releases, communication plans, and ICS forms, are maintained

and submitted daily to the Documentation Unit. Emails, text messages, virtual chats, and virtual meeting transcripts don't need to be submitted daily but may need to be provided upon request.

3 Initial Public Information Officer: Pre-Joint Information Center

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

When a state environmental or emergency management agency, the USCG, or the EPA first learn about a spill, the respective PIOs should quickly contact one another to share information in an effort to release a joint media statement. The goal should be to get this first release and/or social media post approved and issued within the first two hours after notification is received.

If a Responsible Party is named, PIOs should include the RP's lead response communicator in information sharing. The RP's response communicator should be identified in the RP's applicable Emergency Response Plan. The RP's response communicator will have access to detailed information regarding the RP's preparation and response that could be valuable in clearly describing the incident and response activities.

Until a JIC is established, communication with the media and other key audiences is carried out by a lead agency's public information office (which can also be called a communications or public affairs office), either remotely or on-site. The initial PIO carries out activities with or without assistance. The initial PIO should work virtually with assisting PIOs to create the initial joint media statement. Travel to the Command Post and physical setup of the JIC should not interfere with creation of the initial joint media statement. Respective agency PIOs should coordinate the transfer to a physical JIC or establish working protocols for supporting a hybrid JIC with both physical and virtual coverage and support.

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

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

4 Activities of Initial Public Information Officer

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

- Share latest information immediately with other lead agencies. (Call the state environmental agency, the USCG and/or EPA, the city and/or county, and the RP);

- Sign in and receive necessary identification or clearance if operating on scene (consider having the federal Transportation Worker Identification Credential card see: https://www.tsa.gov/for-industry/twic);
- Contact the Incident Commander or Unified Command;
- Obtain objectives for the response;
- Establish a dedicated phone line, email address, and website, if possible, for inquiries from the media;
- Gather basic facts about the incident: who, what, when, where, and how;
- Contact the Situation Unit Leader and Environmental Unit Leader for incident information;
- Provide an initial incident communication assessment to the Incident Commander or Unified Command;
- Draft, spell-check, and proofread an initial news release and information released to a website;
- Obtain review and approval of initial news release by Incident Commander or Unified Command. (If significant changes are made, the release must be re-approved by the Incident Commander or Unified Command);
- Distribute initial news release to media, affected agencies, and other audiences;
- Establish an approval process that ensures rapid creation and posting of accurate response information;
- Attach or post factsheets, photographs, video footage, or other information if relevant to the incident;
- Contact other local agency communicators for assistance or information about their community;
- Respond to media calls and other requests for information;
- Conduct media interviews;
- Begin to develop a media plan, setting the next time and place for updates, briefings, news conference, etc. This should be closely coordinated with the Liaison Officer, the Incident Commander or Unified Command, and the Planning Section Chief;
- File copies or create a log of callers, time of calls, questions, and responses;
- Find answers to questions by the media or key audiences;
- Brief the next shift of PIOs; and
- Assess the need for community relations personnel and work with the Liaison Officer to ensure community outreach is well coordinated within the response team.

Resource Tools

- Incident Status Summary – ICS Form 209
- JIC Supplies Checklist
- News Release Sample – Initial

5 Joint Information Center (JIC)

A JIC is created under Unified Command to effectively manage communication resources and public messages when multiple organizations are involved in incident response. The need to form a JIC is determined by the Incident Commander or Unified Command as advised by the incident PIO. Ideally, a JIC should be located in or near the Incident Command Post and staffed by personnel from the participating organizations. If the JIC is located in the Command Post, it is imperative that any news media representatives be provided with a media staging area that is physically separated from working Command and General Staff personnel. This is to ensure that members of the media do not interfere with active response work or create a safety hazard for themselves or responders. Satellite or virtual JICs may be needed for response to major incidents involving large geographic areas, or due to COVID-related protocols. Virtual JICs should be accessible to all members, including those working in other sections throughout the Command Post.

5.1 Primary Joint Information Center Objectives

- Gather, package, and release up-to-date information consistently over the course of the incident.
- Inform the public, primarily through the news media, social media channels, and a dedicated website.
- Analyze public perception and community expectations and make recommendations to UC managing messaging.
- Evaluate communications.

5.2 Overall Joint Information Center Objectives

- Gather, analyze, produce, and distribute information about the incident.
- Ensure timely release of accurate information to media and other audiences.
- Establish and maintain the official incident website.
- Establish and maintain a social media presence and coordinate social media with other responding agencies.
- Review, for approval or revisions, any public information developed in response to the incident by other agencies.
- Capture digital images in video and photos for use by response organizations and media.
- Develop, recommend, and execute public information products, plans, and strategies.
- Coordinate closely with the incident Liaison Officer.
- Monitor and measure media content and public perception of the incident.
- Inform the Incident Commander or Unified Command regarding public reaction, attitudes, and needs.
- Prepare appropriate response personnel for news conferences and interviews.

- Identify and correct rumors and misinformation.
- Evaluate response communications when the JIC is deactivated.
- Produce a log and organize all JIC materials for distribution to the Documentation Unit each day.

5.3 Joint Information Center Set-up and Logistics

A Logistics Section staff member, in consultation with local community leaders or a state emergency management agency, may help select a location for and set up the JIC. For virtual JICs, choose a platform that is accessible to all parties. A dedicated Information Technology Specialist may also be recruited. JIC space should:

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

Two things needed immediately are:

- A phone – this can be a dedicated landline or cell phone, depending on location, cellular signal strength, etc.; and
- A computer. Electronic distribution of news releases can be handled by the JIC or by an office of a participating agency.

Resource Tools

- JIC Supplies Checklist

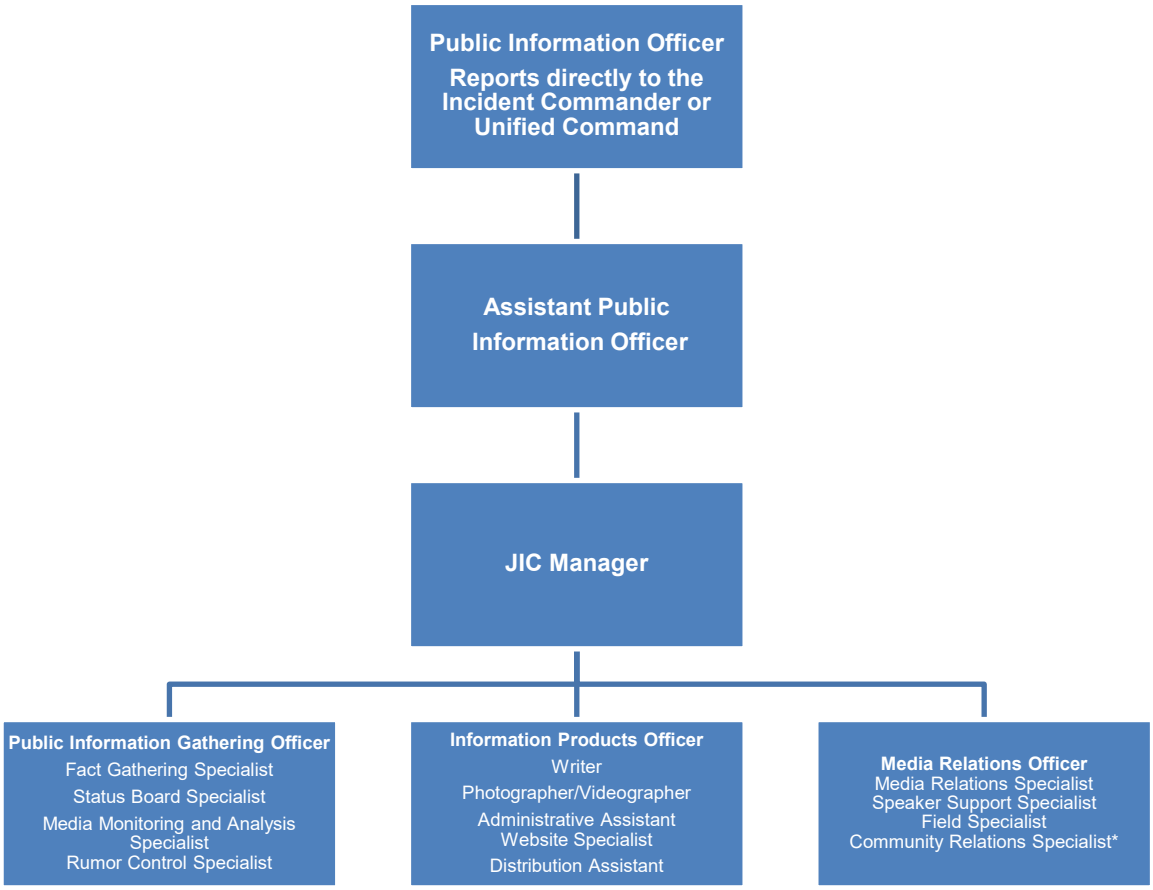
5.4 Joint Information Center Deactivation

The Incident Commander or Unified Command, with advice from the PIO, determines when to deactivate the JIC. When deactivating a JIC:

- Notify community and local officials about the closing and provide regional contact information;
- Notify media and agency communication managers about the closing and provide regional contact information;
- Prepare a deactivation news release and/or webpage or social media update for lead agency approval and distribution;
- Complete an after-action report and participate in evaluation discussions;
- Return equipment and supplies;
- Update list of equipment and supplies; and

- Inventory and replenish "go-kits."

6 Joint Information Center Organization, Positions, and Responsibilities



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

Figure 2 Joint Information Center Organization

6.1 Joint Information Center Organization

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

Early response communication activity often occurs with only a limited number of response communicators. During this stage of a response, available communicators will likely have to assume responsibilities for more than one of the recommended key functional units within the JIC structure until additional individuals become available.

Initial communicators will assume responsibility for all JIC functional units outlined in Plan Section 6 until additional people become available to assume responsibility for assigned units. Until communicators are available for every position, more than one functional unit will be assigned to each individual until additional individuals arrive at which time function responsibilities will be reassigned to the newly available communicators.

The following Functional Unit job descriptions (6.3 – 6.8.4) define specific responsibilities for each Unit when sufficient personnel are available.

When a staff member changes roles, the organization chart should be updated to reflect that.

6.2 Incident Information Sources

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

Examples of displays include:

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

6.3 Public Information Officer

The Regional Response Team (RRT) and the Northwest Area Committee (NWAC) prefer that the responsible party not fill the PIO position. This applies to both government agencies and private industry RPs. The PIO role is typically filled by a staff member from the lead state or federal environmental agency. However, the RRT and NWACs recognize that Unified Command holds the discretion to fill the position with whomever they choose. Unified Command should consider credibility with the media and public, as well as previous experience in drills or spills, familiarity with the Northwest Area plan tools and policies, and with Emergency Management Support Functions.

The NWAC encourages RPs to designate an Assistant PIO (see below) to participate in the JIC.

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

The PIO will:

- Oversee JIC operations in accordance with this JIC Manual, ensuring adequate space, equipment, and available personnel;
- Ensure JIC activities are coordinated with recommended benchmarks in the 96 Hour Plan Supplemental Toolkit
- Appoint personnel to key positions based on skill level and previous training;
- Coordinate with the Liaison Officer to assign responsibility for community outreach. See 3.4 in the Liaison Manual for an outline of responsibilities related to community relations;
- Participate in Unified Command meetings and provide advice for handling public affairs issues;
- Develop public information plans, goals, and strategies for specific operational periods;
- Analyze public perceptions and make necessary strategic adjustments;
- Provide direction for handling controversial and sensitive issues;
- Establish daily schedules for news conferences, briefings, tours, and public meetings. These should be closely coordinated with the Planning Section Chief and Liaison Officer. This ensures that the PIO has the latest information available and that all scheduled public meetings and appearances are coordinated;
- Prepare Unified Command and other subject matter experts for news conferences;
- Moderate news conferences and assist with public meetings. The news conference moderator should be someone other than the RP's JIC member;
- Conduct media briefings;

- Develop plans for media tours and assist the Liaison Officer with very important person (VIP) tours and visits;
- Obtain approval from Unified Command to disseminate public information products;
- Seek general approval from Unified Command to post simple, factual updates to the incident website and social media without Unified Command review;
- Monitor traditional, electronic, and social media; correct misinformation and identify trends and issues;
- Coordinate exchange of information among other sections and participating agencies; and
- Resolve disputes among JIC personnel or organizations involved with public information.

Resource Tools

- JIC Supplies Checklist
- Daily Briefing Checklist (for IO or Designee)
- News Release Sample – Initial
- News Conference/Public Meeting Worksheet
- Moderator Script Outline
- Daily Unit Log – ICS Form 214
- Individual Log – ICS Form 214a

6.4 Assistant Public Information Officer

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

6.5 Joint Information Center Manager

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

The JIC Manager:

- Ensures that JIC operations and personnel are functioning well and promptly addressing emerging needs;
- Assigns JIC positions, work, and deadlines;
- Notifies agency communication managers when the JIC has been activated;
- Reviews and revises, when necessary, public information materials developed by government agencies prior to web posting or distribution;
- Sets staff work hours and the daily JIC operations schedule;
- Establishes internal communication processes within the JIC;
- Ensures that approved, spell-checked news releases adhere to Associated Press style and that other materials are distributed internally and externally;
- Requests information technology support from the Logistics Section to install and provide expertise in computers and telephone equipment or programs (JIC information technology support typically is most needed in the first days of incident response and for ongoing periodic troubleshooting thereafter);
- Completes daily unit log (ICS form 214);
- Ensures that all JIC costs are accounted for, including travel and other reimbursement vouchers, and provided to the Finance/Administration Section;
- Briefs JIC personnel at the beginning of each shift, in coordination with PIO; and
- Meets regularly with the Assistant Liaison Officer to ensure effective coordination and use of joint resources and tools. The JIC will be consulted during the development of the Liaison Communication Plan to ensure that planned activities described in the document are coordinated before seeking UC plan approval.

Resource Tools

- Agency Communication Managers E-List
- Daily Unit Log – ICS Form 214
- Individual Log – ICS Form 214a
- JIC Supplies Checklist
- LNO/PIO/JIC Discussion Checklist

6.6 Information Gathering Unit

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

Information Gathering personnel:

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

6.6.1 Fact Gathering Specialist

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

The Fact Gathering Specialist:

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

6.6.2 Status Board Specialist

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

The Status Board Specialist:

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

Resource Tools

- Incident Status Summary – ICS Form 209

6.6.3 Media Monitoring and Analysis Specialist

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

The Media Monitoring and Analysis Specialist:

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

6.6.4 Rumor Control Specialist

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

The Rumor Control Specialist:

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

6.7 Information Products Unit

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

6.7.1 Writer

Writers produce news releases and nearly all other written materials. At least one, and often more, news releases are produced each day. Other products include fact sheets, talking points, website content, social media posts, and presentation materials. Depending on staffing levels and skills, writers may collaborate with Media Relations

Specialists to produce radio feeds and visual material for media and others. They may also work closely with the Website Specialist (see below), who formats material for posting on the official incident website and provides that material to other organizations for posting.

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

The Writer:

- Develops communication and outreach products (e.g., news releases, talking points, briefings, fliers, fact sheets, public service announcements, etc.) based on the 96-hour plan and related templates;
- Uses publication-quality digital photographs in news releases and other products; and
- Develops briefing packets and handouts for news conferences, VIP tours, public meetings, and other venues.

Resource Tools

- News Release Sample – Initial

6.7.2 Photographer/Videographer

The Photographer/Videographer shoots high-quality digital photos and video for release to the public and media. Personnel in this position should possess advanced skills and experience in digital photography, digital videography, and digital editing. In addition, it is possible that the Safety Officer may require Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response **(**HAZWOPER) certification for the Photographer/Videographer to capture images from the hazard site. It's best practice to store the photos/videos in a central repository (shared-drive, online Dropbox, SharePoint site, etc.).

The Photographer/Videographer:

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

6.7.3 Website Specialist

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

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

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

6.8 Media Relations Unit

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

Media Relations personnel:

- Provide support for and assist in organizing news conferences, briefings, public meetings, tours, and other activities;
- Support development and modification of communications and outreach strategies;
- Support development of materials and logistics for VIP tours;
- Respond to inquiries from reporters. (Stay on message. Stick with facts approved by Unified Command);
- Manage query tracker – a chart to keep track of inquiries from the media - includes who to contact, their question/inquiry, which member of the JIC is assigned, resolution/answer, and status (open or closed);
- Serve as incident spokespersons in print, online, radio, and TV media;
- Coordinate with the Liaison Officer;
- Analyze news coverage and community feedback to determine the effectiveness of communication efforts;
- Recommend and develop strategies for providing information to news media;
- Escort reporters and others during tours;
- Identify and correct rumors or misinformation;
- Maintain records of media calls;
- Maintain contact lists of media; and
- Promote story and feature ideas to target media.

6.8.1 Media Relations Specialist

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

The Media Relations Specialist:

- Serves as the incident spokesperson;
- Staffs the media phone bank and responds quickly to information requests, using talking points, news releases, and fact sheets as resources;
- Conducts media interviews;
- Prepares speakers prior to interviews;
- Provides other Media Relations and JIC support as assigned; and
- As needed, plans and escorts members of the media on tours of the incident scene; coordinates with the Safety Officer to make sure that it is safe to escort people to the incident scene.

Resource Tools

- Media Content Analysis Worksheet

6.8.2 Social Media Specialist

The Social Media Specialist works with other members of the JIC to post approved messages to incident social media pages, monitor social media platforms for incident-related information, and identify and address misinformation or rumors.

6.8.3 Community Relations Specialist

Community Relations Specialists may be located in the JIC or Liaison Unit. A discussion between the PIO and LNO should determine where this position resides. In either case, this position coordinates between both teams. The Community Relations Specialist should possess skills in public involvement, community outreach, public speaking, listening, and strategy development.

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

- Community and public meetings;
- Community bulletin boards;
- Community websites;
- Community web calendar(s);
- Walk-in or walk-up information centers;

- Central community phone hotline (part of the JIC; use "dispatchers" to take all initial calls from both media and public; information about wildlife or where spilled oil is located must be reported to the Operations Section);
- Recorded message information;
- Door-to-door canvassing;
- Use of volunteers to disseminate community information;
- Contacts with schools, churches, and community centers; and
- Contacts with nonprofit and service organizations, including neighborhood groups.

The Community Relations Specialist:

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

Resource Tools

- Field Escort Equipment and Communications Checklist

7 Joint Information Center Protocols and Procedures

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

7.1 Unified Command Approves News Releases

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

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

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

7.2 Unified Command Approves Web Content, Publications, and Other Materials

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

7.3 Coordination of Public Information Among Other Agencies

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

Resource Tools

- Agency Communication Manager E-List

7.4 Coordination with the Liaison Officer

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

7.5 JIC Communication Plans

Communication plans for the JIC provide the context and tactics for achieving communication objectives. These plans should not be confused with the communication plan developed by the communications unit of the Logistics Section for the operational and tactical response. Plans are developed by the PIO for a specific operational period to

help the JIC "get ahead of a story" or anticipate issues, pitfalls, problems, and opportunities. Personnel from various parts of Incident Command may be responsible for certain plan deliverables. Any response personnel affected by a communication plan should be included as early as possible.

In the early hours of the response, it is best practice to initiate an early release of information for social media. This is critical to establish an online presence for information. This initial plan will be incorporated into the larger JIC Communications Plan. See section 7.6.2 for guidance.

Resource Tools

- JIC Communication Plan Outline
- Initial Request for Release of Information (Initial Comms Plan) and Social Media Policy for All Response Personnel

7.6 Incident Website and Social Media Accounts

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

The incident website should include news releases, fact sheets, photographs, video clips, maps, links to relevant social media accounts, media feed embeds, and other approved documents that are available. The Website Specialist works closely with the JIC Manager to ensure that all information posted is accurate, updated, and approved.

A website becomes a useful tool when there are large amounts of information being released. It serves as a home base for all outward-facing visual, contextual, and written information regarding the incident and should work in conjunction with other forms of sharing. If a website is established, all single pieces of media released should reference the website as a resource to refer to. If an incident poses the possibility of needing a website the process should begin as soon as possible.

7.6.1 Best Practices for Use of Websites

- The website should be the "flagship" for all official information on the response, and agency social media should drive people to this website.
- The name and URL for the website should have a neutral, recognizable brand that relates to the incident. How the public is referring to the response online should guide the website name as well as the name of the incident. The name and URL should be short enough for the public to remember and locate but long enough for them to recognize. This will vary depending on the incident and the reach of it.
- If it is decided that the incident will be large enough to require a website it ideally should be stood up within the first 24 hours.

- All press releases, social media posts, interviews, and other external-facing information should reference the website as a place to find further information. With that, it should have all of those pieces of external material on it or access to them.

7.6.2 Timely Request for Unified Command to Approve Release of Information

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

PIO should work with PSC to conduct an initial meeting with UC. Use the Initial Request for Release of Information (Initial Comms Plan) and Social Media Policy for All Response Personnel template. It is recommended that the PIO outline the documents they wish to pull information from throughout the response without approval, such as the 201, 202, 209, 232, etc., and emphasize the importance of this preapproval for efficiency and success. These policies should be signed off as soon as possible by the UC but no later than the Command and General Staff Meeting.

This request should also include guidance for responders and Command Post staff on the use of personal social media accounts. Personnel should not post any information regarding the response to their personal social media accounts. If they want to help share information about the response it should be reposts of what the JIC is releasing not original content.

Resource Tools

- Initial Request for Release of Information (Initial Comms Plan) and Social Media Policy for All Response Personnel

7.6.3 Determining the Use of Social Media

Approval for the use of social media should be proposed by the PIO to the UC and granted as soon as possible. Use of social media will provide quick, efficient, and sharable information about the response directly from the UC to the public. Recommended social media channels include Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) with possible inclusion of Instagram if photos of the response are collected.

7.6.4 Best Practices for Social Media

- The use of social media should support the IC/UC communication goals. As the PIO considers the affected communities who need information about the response,

sometimes social media is a great way to communicate, but not always. The PIO should consider the affected communities who need information about the response and decide on the appropriate social media channels for use accordingly. Facebook reaches a large range of age groups and audiences. X is a dominating platform for the sharing of news both publicly and by media outlets. Both of these platforms should be considered. Instagram is used by a younger audience and requires photos/videos. The use of it should be decided upon by the PIO if it seems relevant for the response.

- Social media is a dialogue with the public and an information dissemination and engagement tool. It should be used as a two-way communication tool as well as another way to further push information out to a greater audience. Be prepared with sufficient staffing to track engage and address concerns in a timely manner. Direct engagement with comments is not always appropriate though sometimes applicable. This should be outlined by the PIO but it is recommended that if reoccurring concerns begin to trend, responding to each inquiry may not be sustainable. For trending concerns pushing out a general update focused on them may be the best course of action. Comments seeking resources and/or the website are such that a direct response could be useful.
- Establish unique #hashtags for the incident to help with information identity and tracking as information is posted. This should also take into account what the public is already using to identify the incident. If they are using an appropriate hashtag widely, consider using it as well.
- Search out, amplify, cross-post, and tag incident partners to gain wider coverage and reach. Utilize agency platforms that have a large following and consider the spans of reach through the incident.
- Social media efforts should closely align with JIC operations so that information is being released online in concert with public and media interests. Therefore, the Social Media Specialist should be located in the JIC and work under the Assistant PIO for Community Relations.
- Use social media to drive audiences to an up-to-date incident website if applicable.
- Social media should be monitored regularly for incident-related posts, comments, and information to keep aware of public interest, public information needs, and any need for fact-checking or rumor control.

7.6.5 Privacy Settings and Policy

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

7.6.6 Records Management

Each agency will need to determine its requirements for the management of social media and website content including photos, video, etc. The need for resource allocation and clear procedures for record retention should be communicated to JIC staff.

7.6.7 Accessibility and the Website

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that federal websites be accessible to people with disabilities. The JIC's Webmaster should ensure that accessibility requirements are followed:

- Sites should have text equivalent for every non-text element.
- Each photo/graphic should be coded with Alternative Text.
- Video and multimedia need captions or transcripts.

7.6.8 Correction Policy

Mistakes will happen. Consider the following procedure for correction:

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

Resource Tools

- Social Media Account Checklist

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

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

Consider the following:

- How frequently will you post and what is the minimum number of posts per day/operations period?
- Posts should be real-time and timely, as much as possible.
- Is UC aware and approving of this?
- What effect are you trying to achieve by putting information out?
- What content can be posted?

- What content cannot be posted?
- Will you be considered as a source for breaking news?
- What content will be consistently and readily available?
- Generally, the JIC should not post other news media content on the incident's social media.
- When will you be including visuals and how will you be collecting them?
- Keep an open mind and seek other content to post online.
- Are you avoiding response jargon when communicating with the public (i.e., using gallons instead of barrels for spill measurements, spelling out acronyms, and further explaining complex response activities)?

7.6.10 Review and Approval Process

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

7.6.11 Evaluating and Analyzing Social Media Use

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

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

7.6.12 Comment Moderation

The PIO should provide recommendations to Unified Command on comment moderation during the response. This refers to how the JIC should engage with comments posted on social media channels and website. To ensure public engagement and to set expectations for how comments are reviewed, moderated, and responded to, consider the following:

- Develop a comment policy, such as no profanity, no pornography, no threatening, and no offensive content. This policy should be posted as a disclaimer on the social media account or website.
- If comments violate the comment policy, they should not be deleted or hidden at the discretion of the Unified Command or their designee.

If needed, the JIC should explore technology that could be utilized to assist in moderating content.

7.7 Documents to the Documentation Unit

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

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

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

Resource Tools

- Daily Briefing checklist (for PIO or Designee)
- Incident Status Summary – ICS Form 209

7.8 News Releases

A news release is a written document distributed to media via email within 2 hours of response activation and thereafter as needed. This refers to the first unified press release once a JIC has been formed. The JIC should strive to meet news cycles (10:30 to 11 a.m. and 3:30 to 4 p.m.) and provide up-to-date information as much as possible throughout each operational period. The process can be streamlined by following the following guidelines:

- Limit length to 250 to 300 words—about one printed page;
- Use 12-point Times New Roman or 11-point Arial fonts (universal for all computers);
- Use quotes judiciously, if at all. Deciding who is quoted and what they say can take considerable time, but quotes can be important statements of empathy. Early narrative news releases represent the best place opportunities for quotes—ongoing releases are largely quantitative in content and don’t need quotes;
- Avoid logos or other layout flourishes that can keep press releases from getting past newsroom spam-blocking programs and complicate electronic transmittal;

- Summarize quantitative information; and
- Use an asterisk to indicate new information when updating frequently.

7.9 Procedures for News Releases

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

The news release process should roughly follow this process:

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

7.10 News Release Distribution

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

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

- Special publications;
- Environmental and other advocacy organizations;
- Social Media; and
- The response website.

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

7.11 Handling Media Calls

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

Media position in the JIC – How to Communicate Guide

- Getting inquiries copied down and responding:
  - ☐ Use the prescribed platform for the response (MS Teams, Jetty, etc.).
  - ☐ Enter who is calling and the time.
  - ☐ Paraphrase the question.
  - ☐ Make a few notes about how you responded. There will likely be similar questions and doing this will help maintain consistent responses.
- Standard responses:
  - ☐ "We want to be sure we are getting the best information; I can call or email you the facts when we have them."
  - ☐ "We are gathering the facts right now. As soon we have facts on "how we are responding" and/or "how the response is going" we will release the information to you"
  - ☐ "I am not going to speculate" if there's pressure to answer.
- Okay to say:
  - ☐ Something has happened. "There's been a release of diesel fuel from (Source) from the (Company Name) property; we've reported it to responders and the National Response Center. (Talking points for the initial conversations - use the ICS-201 Objectives).
  - ☐ Follow up with "We want to have the best information".
  - ☐ "The UC are the ambassadors to get information to the public and as soon as we have 2the best information we will share it."
- Remember:
  - ☐ Agreement for release of information from **ICS-201** and **ICS-232** is the basis for key messages.

- Utilize the Info Gatherer for fielding questions: "Please go to EU and find out: _____or "Please go to Logistics and ask them if: _____.

- If a conversation is controversial, have a conversation with the PIO.
- It is a good idea to explain what is happening and how it works: "I just want to take a minute to explain how this works. We've come together and have a command post at the (Location) and in that command post we have a command of example: (FOSC from USCG, SOSC from WA DOE, LOSC from King Co EMD TOSC and Fish and Wildlife). They are all working together to develop a plan to carry out strategies to bring in the right equipment, and protect the public, responders, and environment.

7.12 News Conferences

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

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

- Select the appropriate time – typically about two hours before news deadlines (10 a.m. or 3 p.m.), or as soon as possible after a major development;
- Whenever possible, select and schedule a location that is easily accessible, has power and plenty of parking, minimal background noise, and a good backdrop;
- Set up space (audio-visual, chairs, public address system, etc.);
- Notify media about time, location for the news conference, including a map or driving directions;
- Produce briefing packets with news releases, fact sheets, FAQs, maps, etc.;
- Identify speakers' order of presentation;
- Schedule and conduct speaker preparation in advance of the news conference. Speaker preparation is essential. Time spent will depend on incident circumstances. Each speaker should have one to three main messages that contribute to a good overall picture;
- Develop or rehearse questions and answers (Q&A) for each speaker – not for distribution but to help each member of Unified Command think ahead about answers to questions that may be asked;
- Appoint a news conference moderator – usually the PIO – who will:
  - Greet the assembly,

- ☐ Explain the purpose of the news conference,
- ☐ Set the agenda,
- ☐ Introduce the speakers,
- ☐ Discuss format,
- ☐ Call on reporters,
- ☐ Provide sources for additional information,
- ☐ Control the amount of time spent on any given subject, and
- ☐ End the news conference on time.

- Sign in attendees;
- Call on local reporters first or early in the Q&A session;
- Assign a JIC staff person to record the event with a digital recorder or camera;
- Assign a JIC staff person to take written notes of each question asked (and by whom) and answers given;
- Assign a JIC staff person to livestream or Tweet the event if appropriate
- Arrange for language interpreters, if needed; and
- Assist reporters with any additional needs immediately following the news conference.

Resource Tools

- News Conference / Public Meeting Worksheet
- Audience Sign-in Sheet

7.13 Moderators

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

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

Resource Tools

- Moderator Script Outline

7.14 Media Briefings

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

briefings should be scheduled on the daily meeting schedule, ICS Form 230, so that no conflicts occur.

Resource Tools

- Daily Meeting Schedule – ICS Form 230

7.15 Tours for Media and VIPs

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

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

Resource Tools

- Field Escort Equipment and Communication Checklist

7.16 Media Pools

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

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

8 Community Relations Protocols and Procedures

8.1 Public Meetings

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

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

- Injuries or deaths as a result of the incident;
- Potential health risks;
- Degree of community outrage, fear, or grief;
- Damage to the natural environment or potential harm to wildlife;
- Proximity of incident, command center, or staging areas to neighborhoods, schools, and other key community resources;
- Lack of local news and information sources or disproportionate media attention;
- Need for road detours and other emergency measures;
- Damage to or restriction from community resources like parks or public buildings;
- Damage to cultural resources;
- Response efforts continuing for several days or more;
- Widespread rumors and other unconfirmed or inaccurate information; and
- A community's or RP's history with a disaster or emergency response.

To prepare for a public meeting:

- Select a time and a location that is easily accessible and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant, with plenty of parking, power, and minimal background noise. It is always best to conduct a meeting at the end of the workday to ensure adequate time for community members to arrive after getting off work;
- Determine meeting format (open house, audio/visual presentation, panel discussion, web conference);
- Ensure adequate set-up (tables, chairs, easels, displays, sound system, etc.);
- Identify speakers with technical expertise (health, wildlife, fish/shellfish, tribal interests, economic impacts, etc.);
- Schedule and conduct speaker preparation;

- Arrange for language interpreters, if needed;
- Develop talking points and internal Q&A for speakers;
- Develop and package handouts and presentation materials;
- Appoint a meeting moderator;
- Staff a sign-in table and information posts; and
- Handle inquiries from media and public.

Resource Tools

- News Conference/Public Meeting Worksheet
- Moderator Script Outline
- Audience Sign-in Form

8.2 Community Bulletin Boards

Community bulletin boards can be placed at frequently visited locations in communities such as grocery stores, libraries, schools, churches, Chamber of Commerce offices, fire stations, ferry terminals, bus stops, park-and-rides, tourist information centers, public boat launches/marinas, coffee shops, community centers, and fishing license outlets.

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

8.3 Community Websites

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

8.4 Information Centers

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

8.5 Telephone Hotlines

Telephone hotlines or recorded message lines can be a useful tool to provide residents with a phone number dedicated to community calls. This helps ensure that public calls are not preempted by other priorities and keeps the main JIC line reserved for media. Recorded messages may be appropriate to inform residents about rapidly changing conditions such as road closures, potentially harmful exposure to pollution, and progress in incident

response. Recorded messages should be updated frequently to provide information to callers who might otherwise swamp incoming telephone lines. If a hotline is established, the Community Relations Unit needs to be adequately staffed to handle the volume of calls.

8.6 Door-to-Door Canvassing

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

8.7 Elevating Information

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

8.8 Interpretation and Translation

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

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

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

8.9 Using Volunteers

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

management departments in many counties. The Liaison Unit leads the process for the use of volunteers. The JIC should notify the Volunteer Coordinator if there is a request to use volunteers for JIC related activities.

8.10 School Districts

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

8.11 Local Churches, Nonprofits, and Service Organizations

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

9 Analyzing Public Perception and Content

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

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

9.1 Content Analysis

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

- Overall themes or key messages in media reports and quotes by local citizens;
- Statements about confusion, fear, or anger;
- Visual images used by media or described by citizens, including metaphors, analogies, or stories;

- Information sources quoted by media reports or community members; and
- Accuracy of "factual" statements.

9.2 Media Content Analysis

Media content analysis considers:

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

Resource Tools

- Media Content Analysis Worksheet

9.3 Community Feedback

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

9.4 Telephone Surveys

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

9.5 Focus Groups

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

Sometimes, specific concerns point to the need to target a distinct group, such as Indian Tribes or workers or residents directly affected by the incident. In other cases, a broad

assessment is desired, with people representing different organizations, points of view, ethnic backgrounds, neighborhoods, incomes, professions, or other variables. The goal is to get as complete a picture as possible of the different perceptions regarding incident response.

Resource Tools

- Sample Questions for Focus Group of Interview
- Focus Group Preparation
- Audience Sign-in Form

10 References and Resource Tools

10.1 References

JIC Resource Tools (downloadable and fillable forms)
https://oilspills101.wa.gov/northwest-area-contingency-plan/incident-command-system-toolkit/joint-information-center-resources/
Aerial Photos of Washington's Shorelines
https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/shorephotoviewer/Map/ShorelinePhotoViewer
Assessing Oil Spill Damage
https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/0208004.html
Emergency Spill Response in Washington State
https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/971165cp.html
EPA Emergency Response Program https://www.epa.gov/emergency-response
EPA Oil Program http://www.epa.gov/oilspill/
Exxon Valdez: Then and Now 2009 https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/ppr/response-resources/publications-conferences/exxon-valdez/
FAQ: Oil Pollution Act https://www.uscg.mil/Mariners/National-Pollution-Funds-Center/About_NPFC/OPA/
Geographic Response Plans http://www.oilspills101.wa.gov/northwest-area-contingency-plan/geographic-response-plans-grps/list-of-geographic-response-plans/
NOAA Office of Response and Restoration http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/
Oil Spills in Washington State: A Historical Analysis
https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/97252.html
The Pacific States - British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force www.oilspilltaskforce.org/
RRT/NWAC www.rrt10nwac.com

10.2 JIC Resource Tools, Templates, and Examples

The following pages are templates to aid in the development of JIC products. You can also find downloadable and fillable templates at https://oilspills101.wa.gov/northwest-area-contingency-plan/incident-command-system-toolkit/joint-information-center-resources/

JIC Organization

Daily Briefing Checklist (for Public Information Officer or designee)

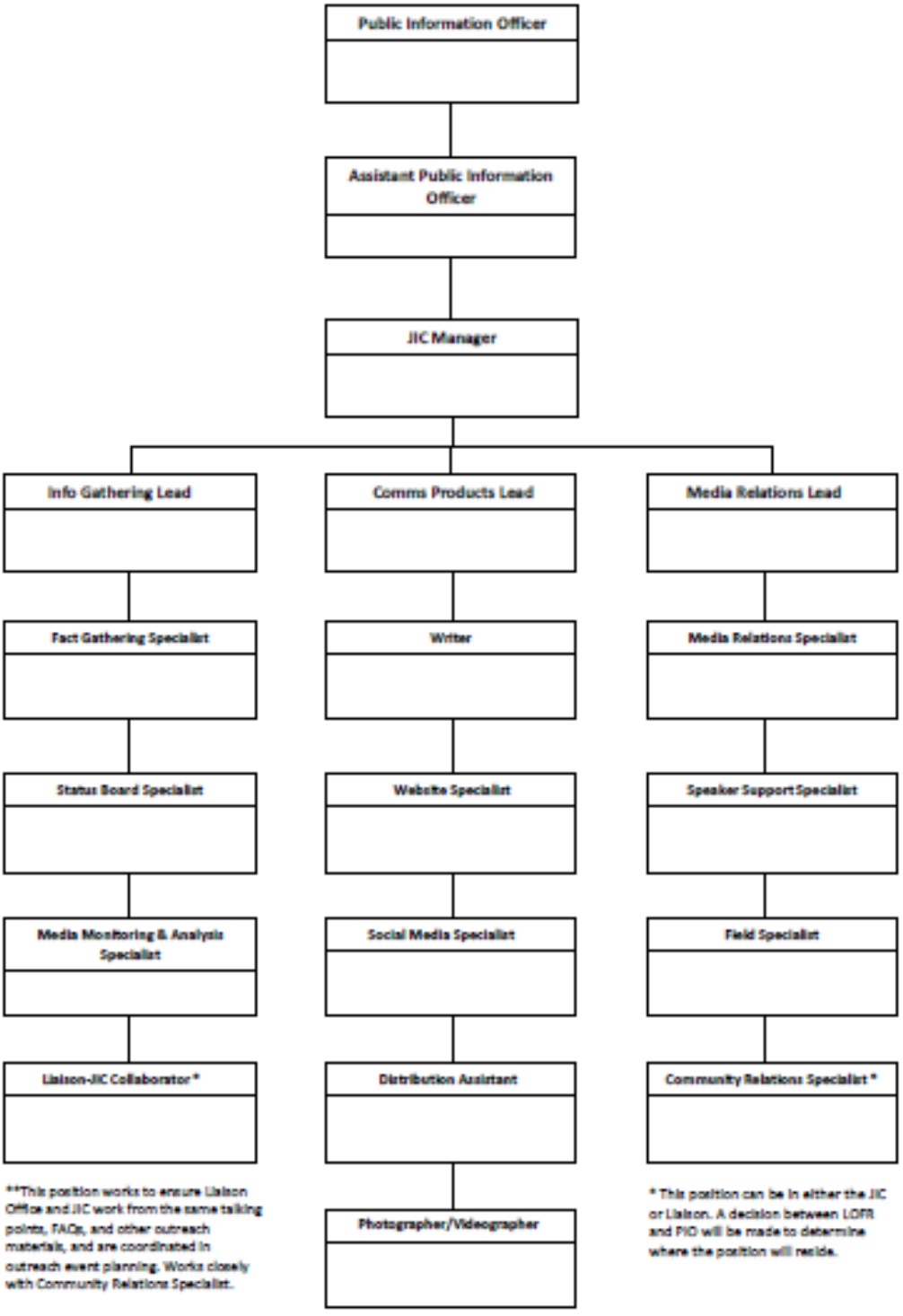
Purpose: Use this checklist to conduct team meetings

Date and Time:	
Name of lead Public Information Officer:	
Name of Joint Information Center Manager:	

Topics to discuss during check-in with the JIC team:

- Date/time of press conference
- Media Inquiries
- Name of field escorts
- Media analysis
- Speaker prep
- Community outreach
- Public meetings
- Community feedback
- Volunteer inquiries/organizations
- Protocol
- Tour support
- Escorting
- News releases
- Fact sheets
- Photo/video
- Audio/visual support

Example JIC Organization Chart



Situation Status – At a Glance

Incident/Drill Name: _____

Communication Information	Last updated:
JIC phone #	
Media relations phone #	
Liaison phone #	
Elected officials briefing phone #	
Claims phone #	
Wildlife reporting #	
Website	
Social media/hashtag	
Agencies/Organizations involved	
Closures	

Incident/Drill Name: _____

Response Information	Last updated:
Volume capacity (amount in boat, railcar, etc. that has potential to spill)	
Volume of oiled spilled (gallons)	
Oily water recovered (gallons)	
Number of personnel on scene (include field and command post personnel)	
Number of response vessels	
Number of oiled wildlife impacted (birds, fish, mammals, etc.)	
Reported personnel injuries	
Miles of impacted shoreline	
Boom deployed (# and location)	

Issue Tracker

Incident/Drill Name: _____

Issue/Hot Topics/Trends	Actions

Joint Information Center Supplies Checklist

[ ] Landline phone:
- ___Joint Information Center Hotline
- ___ Media Inquiry Hotline
- ___ Volunteer Hotline (as needed)

[ ] Cell phones:
- ___Public Information Officer
- ___ Assistant Public Information Officer
- ___ Joint Information Center Manager

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

Supplies

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

Initial Holding Statement

The following template is an example of an initial statement that can be used in the pre-JIC phase of a response, before Unified Command and a JIC have formed, and can be used after the JIC has been formed as the response effort is coming together. The template is designed to highlight initial coordination and participation among responding public and private entities, while providing some information that an incident has occurred during a time when details are still emerging.

A message like this can be used for social media and responding to inquiries. This is not to be confused with the initial press release.

Media contacts:

- Agency: contact name, media relations, phone number, email
- Other Agency: contact name, media relations, phone number, email

Agencies are responding to a [PRODUCT] spill from a [TYPE OF VESSEL/FACILITY] [AT/NEAR LOCATION] in [COUNTY/CITY]. [LEAD RESPONSE AGENCIES] are on scene with [RESPONSIBLE PARTY] and its spill response contractors. Their primary focus is to protect public health and minimize impacts to the environment.

This is a developing incident. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

Initial Request for Release of Information (Initial Comms Plan) and Social Media Policy for All Response Personnel

Incident name:	
Date:	
FOSC	
SOSC	
LOSC	
TOSC	
RPIC	

Release of information for timely communication: Finalized briefing forms may be used for public information

The Joint Information Center (JIC) requests permission from the Unified Command to release information from the following forms without seeking approval each time:

- 201 Briefing form
- 202 Incident Objectives
- 209 Incident Status Summary
- 232 Resources at Risk

The information will be used to answer questions and fulfill requests from the public, reporters, elected officials, and other interested parties, and to post online through a JIC-managed website and social media.

NOTE: Unified Command will still review and approve all press/news releases.

Approval process for press/news release

To ensure timely communication occurs, the JIC is requesting an expedited process for approval of press/news releases by UC.

Gallons, not barrels

When reporting volumes, the JIC will communicate in gallons, not barrels. This unit of measurement is easier to understand by the media, public and other interested parties. There are 42 gallons in a barrel.

Web presence and social media

The JIC will establish an incident website a maintain a presence on social media platforms. These will be primary sources of information about the response. The JIC will actively monitor social media related to the incident and will work to correct inaccurate information that may emerge over social media channels. Engagement on social media will be general messaging in response to identified trends, and not on a one-on-one basis with individuals.

Social media policy for all response personnel

The JIC asks approval from the Unified Command to establish the following social policy for all response personnel:
All public information about this response should flow from the Joint Information Center.

- Response staff may not post information about the incident on their personal social media accounts.
- Information, photos, and videos about the response will only be posted by the JIC using the JIC-managed social media and web accounts.

TEMPLATE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY ANNOUNCEMENT (General message ICS 213 form): https://response-jtti.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/08/24140741/GeneralMessageSocialMediaPolicy.pdf

Joint Information Center - External Communication Plan

Name of incident:
Date:

Signature Approval:

Unified Command	Name	Signature
FOSC		
SOSC		
RPIC		
LOSC		
TOSC		

Purpose and Goals of JIC External Communications Plan:
The JIC External Communication Plan is an outline of the activities that the JIC will conduct to ensure communications to the public, media, and other interested parties are accurate, timely, and well-coordinated. The JIC External Communication Plan is intended to work in conjunction with liaison outreach by the Liaison Officer. The plan covers key issues of the response, strategies for effectively communicating, and the tools that will be used. The goals of this plan are to increase the public's knowledge and understanding of the incident and the response, and to build public confidence in the Unified Command's operations. This plan is a living document intended to be changed as the incident evolves and new needs arise.

Unified Command Pre-Approvals for Information Release
The Unified Command has approved a social media policy stating that all information flows from the JIC and the use of information from the following forms does not need approval: 201, 202, 209, 232.

- Content created from Unified Command approved documents (FAQs, social media posts, photos) will be approved by the PIO before publication.
- Public information available from other sources will be approved by the PIO prior to posting on the JIC website or social media.

Objectives
Accurate, timely well-coordinated release of information about the incident:

- Keep members of the public, media, and other interested parties informed
- Emphasize safety information and closures
- Communicate major response activities, impacts to wildlife and the environment, and protection and prevention efforts
- Demonstrate partnership and coordination

Important information to share:

- Response information, milestones, impacts.
- Community air monitoring efforts and results.
- Road, waterway, public access closures and flight restrictions.
- Key phone numbers, including claims, wildlife reporting, and volunteer hotlines.
- Photos/videos from the scene.
- Wildlife information.

Audiences

- Media
- Local area residents (determine primary languages spoken and if translation is necessary)
- General public
- Local, state, and federal elected officials
- Tribal governments
- Community groups

Tools

- **Social media**: Use social media platforms to provide high-level information and direct reporters and the public to the website. Post photos, update daily or as new information is received from responders and/or UC.
- **Website**: Establish a unified command website to help distribute information. This page can be hosted on the state agency website or be its own entity. Actively update the site once established. Aim for a continuous flow of information or updates at a regular time.
- **Photos/video**: Obtain images and video of the incident at least once daily. Share these images on social media and post on the website. All photos/video should have captions and alt text to facilitate accessibility. Images should be available for the public to access and for media to distribute with their stories.
- **News releases, press conferences, media tours, and interviews:** The JIC will issue regular news releases, conduct press conferences, and provide opportunities for members of the media to gather imagery and interview subject matter experts.
- **Media response**: Respond to media inquires before deadline, provide accurate information about response operations, clarify difficult concepts, explain roles, correct misinformation.
- **Talking points**: Develop daily for JIC and Liaison to use in response to questions from media, elected officials, general public, and other interested parties. Develop as necessary for press conferences.
- **Frequently asked questions (FAQs)**: Develop to create consistent messaging between JIC and Liaison units. Other branches and individual agencies can also use FAQs.
- **Fact sheets**: Use for information about a specific topic. Develop as necessary for website, media and other audiences.
- **Media monitoring:** Track information published about incident on traditional media and social media.

- **Community information meetings/open houses** – in collaboration with the Liaison, which generally leads organization of these events.
- **Liaison conference calls and tours** for elected officials, Tribal governments, and other interested parties – Liaison leads, JIC supports with talking point/FAQ development.
- **Signage/flyers**: Develop signage for public places to keep public informed of closures, safety information, open houses, and other essential information. Consider if language translation is necessary.

Schedule

All media products are produced on schedule, or on an "as necessary" basis.

- Talking points: daily or as needed
- Social media posts: monitor throughout the day and post updates regularly as available.
- News releases and website updates to correspond with major operational updates.
- Press availability: daily until no longer needed.

Contacts

PIO:
JIC Manager:
Media relations lead:

Media Content Analysis Worksheet

Date of news:

Media outlet name:

Broadcast times:

Coverage synopses:

Issues:

Inaccuracies:

Viewpoints:

Fixes:

Who replied to:

Handling Media Inquiries

This information should be captured when media contacts the JIC. One method would be through a basic spreadsheet, or use of software like Jetty:

Person Calling:	
Date/Time of Call:	
Media outlet:	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
Inquiry:	
Response Time/Due Date:	
Person Taking the Call:	
Reply Made By:	
Reply:	
Date/Time of Reply:	

Website Checklist – How to Create a Website

Choose the right website builder - Using a website builder is the best option, as a website can be created quickly and easily without any technical knowledge. Hosting costs are included, website builders provide step-by-step instructions and are mobile friendly. Additionally, websites using a builder can be easily maintained by those with little to no experience. Common website builders:

- Squarespace
- Wix
- GoDaddy

Sign up for a website builder plan - Website builders offer multiple plans so you should consider your needs and the length of time you expect the website will need to be active.

- Be sure the selected website builder has high hosting capability. The response website will end up with lots of content including video, extensive traffic, multiple users. Hosting costs can end up higher than subscription costs.
- Response websites may need to be archived as a production log for the JIC. A response website in a major incident will likely have to be live for at least one year, possibly longer, to accommodate legal discovery, investigation and hearings, anniversaries and completion of recovery activities.
- When possible, disposition of website and content has to be considered: Can the provider capture or archive content and share it with multiple response partners.

Consider a proven and industry-standard response website tool such as Jetty or other crisis communication platforms.

- Jetty (https://www.responsegroupinc.com/jetty) provides all website creation and management needs, offered by trained and 24/7 available staff.
- Jetty services allow a resource-constrained JIC to use available people to manage content needs and inquiries while the website is prepared.

Choose and register a domain name - A domain name is the portion of the URL (the site address in a browser's search bar) that identifies a web page — in this case your website. You can register your domain name separately; however, website builders usually offer to do it for you when you sign up with them. This is something to consider when choosing a builder. A domain name is one of the main ways a site presents itself to the internet, so choosing a name is important. Things to consider:

- The ACP includes incident naming conventions.
- Make it relevant. Ensure the domain name is intuitive, something that can be easily searched for by users. The URL for the site should have a neutral, recognizable brand.
- Keep it short and specific. When choosing a domain name, keep it brief. Longer names are harder to remember and hinder searchability. Recommendation: a domain name no more than 14 characters in length.

- Avoid numbers, hyphens, double letters and words that are difficult to spell or easily misspelled. All of these elements are hurdles for users attempting to access the website.
- Focus on keywords.
- Use a .com extension.
- Using the name of the spill may seem the logical choice, however, keep in mind the above before making that decision. The name of the spill may not be intuitive and easily searched for by the user. Keep in mind what names and phrases the public is already using to reference the response even though it may not be any piece of the official name.

Once you're sure about a domain, register it as part of the signup process with your chosen website builder. Alternatively, you can register the domain using another system, such as Domain.com. If you use Domain.com you must ensure the domain gets pointed to your website and builder. Typically, you will receive pieces of information to copy from the domain host into the website builder under the "domain" section. This tells the domain where to go once it is clicked because just since you have the domain does not mean it is attached to a website. This pointing step can also take up to 24 hours to process and is something to keep in mind.

Choose a design template - Website builders offer a choice of various design templates so it's important to choose the correct one to meet your needs. Things to consider:

- Do you want to include a social media feed.
- Do you want to offer the option for users (such as the media) to download photos and video.
- Will you be augmenting content with visuals.
- Will you be uploading documents.
- Accessibility – see section 7.6.7

Customize your template - Once you've chosen your template you will need to customize your layout and name your pages. Things to consider:

- Menu items and navigation.
  - ☐ What information will go on the homepage
  - ☐ Will there be a separate news section
  - ☐ What contact information be included
- Will photos and video be available for download
- Color pallet
- Inclusion of logos
- Usability, accessibility and the ability for users to quickly locate the information they are logging on to find.

What should be included:

- Unified Command Agencies list
- Links to Social Media accounts, links to relevant accounts, or feed embeds
- Any distributed news releases,

- Relevant phone lines for reporting oil, birds, claims, etc.
- Approved photos, maps, fact sheets, video clips if obtained
- Basic information about the response
- Safety announcements

Upload and format content - The Website Specialist works with the JIC manager to ensure that all information posted on the incident website is, timely, accurate, continuously updated and approved by Unified Command. Refer to section 6.7.4 for the job description of the Website Specialist. Refer to section 7.2 for the protocols and procedures for the approval of web content.

Preview and test website - Always preview the website before publishing and be sure everything is working, including links and downloads. Also be sure to test on both desktop and mobile. Also, the website should be tested and reviewed by more than one person to ensure as many mistakes as possible are caught. Some things to look out for:

- Check all spelling and grammar.
- Test that all the menu buttons are working.
- Check for consistent formatting.
- Does the navigation make sense?
- Are you using heavy response jargon?

Publish and share - Once the website has been published it should be shared with all relevant parties within Unified Command. The website should also be shared on social media and the URL should be included on all information and media products moving forward.

Keep it updated - The website should be continually updated with new information as it becomes available and approved.

News Conference/Public Meeting Worksheet

Event:

Date:

Time:

Location:

Methods for notifying media or public:

Translation/Interpretation Needs:

Length of conference or meeting:

Audio/visual materials:

Moderator:

1. Presenter/Handout:
2. Presenter/Handout:
3. Presenter/Handout:
4. Presenter/Handout:
5. Presenter/Handout:

Refreshments:

Special needs arrangements:

Notes:

Initial Press Conference in the Event of an Oil Spill

PRESS CONFERENCE RUN OF SHOW EXAMPLE:

2:00p.m.	Introduction / format announcement by PIO
2:02p.m.	Explanation of spill and status update
2:05p.m.	Remarks from FOSC: Name
2:08p.m.	Remarks from SOSC: Name
2:11p.m.	Remarks from TOSC: Name
2:14p.m.	Remarks from LOSC: Name
2:17p.m.	Remarks from RPIC: Name
2:18p.m.	PIO moderates Q&A
2:28p.m.	PIO announces / takes last question
2:30p.m.	PIO concludes press conference
2:31p.m.	Subject matter experts available for further questions as needed

Talking points:

PIO-

- Welcome to the press conference for the (Name and Type of spill) Spill.
- My name is _____. I'm from [agency name] and I'm serving as lead public information officer for this incident.
- Federal, state, Tribal, and local government agencies are on-scene responding to the spill, along with representatives from the responsible party: [name of company]. These organizations have established a Unified Command to coordinate the response and cleanup to this [type of oil] release. The Unified Command members here with me today are:
  - ☐ the Federal State On-Scene Coordinator, [name] from [U.S. Coast Guard or U.S. EPA];
  - ☐ the State On-Scene Coordinator, [name] from [state agency];
  - ☐ the Tribal On-Scene Coordinator, [Name] from of [official name of Tribe];
  - ☐ the Local On-Scene Coordinator, [Name] from [local agency]; and
  - ☐ the Responsible Party, [Name], representing name of company or RP].
- Each member of this Unified Command will provide brief remarks. Following those remarks, we will take and respond to questions.
- I want to acknowledge that this is an active incident and each of our Unified Command members have a big job to do. So our goal here today is to get you all the information you need and then send our leaders back to their command post to continue moving this response forward.
- I will serve as the moderator of the Q&A session. We will conclude the Q&A no later than (time).

**** UC gives remarks then PIO moderates Q&A and gives closing remarks****

PIO - Q&A moderation and closing remarks

Format for our Q&A is as follows:

- Please raise your hand and I will call upon you.
- State your name and the media outlet you represent.
- To allow everyone a chance to ask a question, please limit yourself to one question at a time.
- We will conclude the Q&A no later than (time).
- We do have subject matter experts available to answer further questions as well.

CLOSING REMARKS

- Thank you all for joining us today, you're a really important partner in delivering important information to the public.
- Please continue to check [webpage/social media account] for the latest updates.
- Media: Please reach out to me/the Joint Information Center at [number] for follow-up questions.
- For general public inquiries: call the hotline at [number]. To make an insurance claim, call [number].
- Thank you again, take care.

Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) --
Talking points – press conference

Theme: federal resources being deployed, current operations, for effective, efficient operation. Waterway closures (if relevant). Any no-fly zones.

- The [EPA/USCG] was notified shortly after (time notified) of the (type of spill) from the (area of spill) and began response efforts immediately with our state, local, Tribal partners, and [the name of RP].
- Containment efforts are underway, with (briefly describe containment efforts, such as responders placing boom around the spill source and along shorelines)
- The source of the spill has been controlled, and no further leaking is occurring. We currently estimate that about [# gallons] of [product type] have been released. – OR – The estimated potential spill volume is [# gallons] of [product type]. Not all of this product has spilled – this is the maximum potential based on the amount the tanks/boat/railcars were carrying. We will provide updates on spill volume as we learn more and refine these estimates.
- Responders are working with urgency to contain and clean up this spill.
- [USCG/EPA] investigation teams are working to determine the cause of the [spill/collision/etc.]
- [If on boat]: We are planning to offload the remaining fuel to another vessel to contain further release.
- River miles [X to X] are closed as part of a safety zone for this response. The public should avoid this portion of the river to allow the cleanup to move forward safely.
- The response is working with the Federal Aviation Administration, or FAA, to create an exclusion zone for aircraft (including drones) to keep the response site safe.
- The combined effort is resulting in an effective, efficient operation that is focused on protecting public health and sensitive environmental areas.

State On-Scene Coordinator (SOSC) –
Talking points press conference

Theme: Environmental impact, prioritizing protection of public health and environment, air quality monitoring, fishing closures, proper notifications.

- [Agency] began response activities immediately after being notified of the spill.
- Oil spill response personnel from [agency] are on scene working collaboratively with other responding agencies to minimize impacts of this spill.
- Our responders are prioritizing the protection of environmentally and culturally sensitive areas. Oil containment and recovery operations are ongoing.
- Our goal is to protect the river/lake/bay and all the people and wildlife that rely on and cherish it.
- Professional oiled wildlife responders are on site to assess the risk to wildlife and recover any oil-impacted wildlife. Members of the public who observe oiled wildlife are asked to report the sighting using the wildlife reporting hotline number (insert number*) and leave a detailed message and contact number.
- [If air monitoring]: Community air monitoring is being conducted to ensure the safety of the community during the response.
- We do not have a need for volunteers at this moment. If you have an interest in volunteering, we request that you register at www.oilspills101.wa.gov. If there is a call for volunteers, we will use registered volunteers from this site.
- I would like to hand it over to our Tribal On-Scene Coordinator, [name, tribe]

*Note: if using the 800-22-BIRDS (this number only works in WA).

Tribal On-Scene Coordinator (TOSC)-
Talking points - press conference

Theme: Protection of environmentally and culturally sensitive areas.

- The (name of Tribe) have been participating in the response since [when, early this morning, etc.].
- Tribal environmental specialists have identified environmentally and culturally sensitive areas.
- These areas have been prioritized, and responders are working to deploy containment boom to protect these sensitive areas.
- [optional, for digging]: We do not expect any digging to occur in those areas, but if digging is necessary, we will have a qualified Tribal archeologist on site to observe these activities.
- We ask that all Tribal communities suspend fishing and boating activities in the area until further notice.
- Now I'll pass the microphone to the Local On-Scene Coordinator, [name, agency].

Local On-Scene Coordinator (LOSC)-
Talking points - press conference

Theme: Maximizing public safety and minimizing economic impact, locally closed areas, specific messages to local residents.

- The (name of local agency) is engaged in response efforts to oversee public safety and represent local interests.
- We ask that members of the public avoid visiting the area to ensure your own safety and that of the responders.
- [Include any road closures or other public access closures]
- River access and air space are closed in the affected area, including to drones.
- We'd like to thank our community for your support. Please know we're doing everything we can to protect our community and this town/river/etc. We won't stop working until this spill is cleaned up and people can go safely back to their daily lives.
- I will now pass the mic to [name] from [company].

Responsible Party Incident Commander (RPIC) –
Talking points - press conference

Theme: Demonstrate empathy and concern, commitment to accountability, seeing the response to the end, resources committed, claims number

- [Company] began responding to the release from [what] immediately after it occurred.
- We immediately notified emergency responders and agencies and established a Unified Command shortly thereafter.
- [Acknowledge injuries if they exist] -OR - There have been no reported injuries.
- The Unified Command priorities are to protect the safety of local residents and response personnel while protecting culturally and environmentally sensitive areas.
- If you have been impacted economically due to this incident, please call our claims hotline at [number].
- [Company] is committed to working with our agency partners to put all the right resources in place to address this spill.
- I'd like to thank our federal, state, Tribal, and local government personnel, as well as our spill response contractors for so quickly mobilizing to respond to this incident. Thank you.

Press conference logistics:

Visual Aids

- Maps
- XXX

Room Setup: (Place)

- Lectern for speakers
- Space for media mics and TV cameras
- Participants enter /exit through at back of room
- Security will be present to check media credentials

POTENTIAL QUESTION TOPICS

Incident
What caused this event?
How much has spilled?
How much has been recovered?
River reopening?
Timing for response?
How long was the tank leaking?
How soon did we discover it?

Environment
River- water for agriculture, fishing, recreation
Wildlife impacts
Air quality
Will there be lasting groundwater impacts?

Commercial impacts
Expected impact to local businesses?
Marine/roadway impacts
Expected impact to gasoline and diesel prices?
Fishing season?
Agricultural impacts?
Tourism?

(Name of Company) as an operator
Why was the source not secured during maintenance to prevent the spill?
What are you doing to prevent this from happening again?
How could this happen?
Is (Name of Company) an irresponsible operator?

Prevention

What safeguards were in place?
How did they fail?

Public safety / general / health
What should local residents do if they are impacted by the spill?
What health effects should local residents expect?

Press Conference Sign In

Please Sign In

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL/PHONE

10.3 News Release Templates
Recommended Flow of Information for News Releases

1st News Releases (within 24 hours)

- Facts about the incident as known. List of responding agencies.
- Information on closures and evacuations.
- Initial estimated maximum potential spill volumes and methodology for determining an actual volume spilled.
- Air monitoring information. Public safety message. (Coordinated with local Emergency Managers)
- Public information sources, i.e. Social media, response website, etc.
- Equipment/resources deployed. Number of personnel responding.
- Wildlife message/hotline number and resources deployed.
- Claims line (if established).
- Status of public services, i.e. drinking water supply, medical services, etc.
- Any expected impacts to oil availability or gas prices (if applicable).
- Contact phone numbers for media.

Subsequent News Releases (24 +)

- Cause of the spill and status of investigation.
- Vessel/Facility/Pipeline/Railroad/Etc. information.
- Amount of product recovered.
- Injuries or casualties.
- Trajectory of the oil.
- Environmental and wildlife impacts.
- Beach closures.
- Fishery closures.
- Cleanup contractors and additional agencies responding.
- Actions taken, actions planned.
- Resources applied and numbers (equipment and people).
- Volunteer Registration Information (if applicable).
- Cost of the spill.

News Release Templates

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

Unified Command	Approvals
FOSC	
SOSC	
LOSC	
TOSC	
RPIC	

FIRST UNIFIED COMMAND PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release – XXX. XX, 202X
Contact: Joint Information Center (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Agencies respond to oil spill to [LOCATION]

(LOCATOR) -- (FEDERAL AGENCY), (STATE AGENCY), and XXX agencies are responding to an oil spill in (BODY OF WATER, near (LOCATION). Spill response teams are deploying protective booms to contain the spill and protect sensitive habitat. Crews are checking shorelines to determine the extent of the spill.

The spill occurred when a (INITIAL EXPLANATION). Crews from [RESPONDING AGENCY] immediately took action to (MITIGATION MEASURES) and report the spill to authorities.

(FEDERAL), (STATE), (LOCAL), and (RESPONSIBLE PARTY), have established a unified command to address this spill. Other responding agencies include (OTHER RESPONDING AGENCIES).

The cause of the spill is under investigation.

A joint information center has been established to for this incident. Further information on this incident will be released as available.

SECOND UNIFIED COMMAND PRESS RELEASE

Unified Command	Approvals
FOSC	
SOSC	
LOSC	
TOSC	
RPIC	

Incident update #2
For immediate release – XXX. XX, 202X
Contact: Joint Information Center (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Response continues to [NAME/LOCATION] spill

(LOCATOR) – Federal, state, local and industry partners continue to respond to the XXX spill near (LOCATION). Crews continue to (MITIGATION MEASURES). In addition (ADDITIONAL MITIGATION MEASURES) to protect sensitive habitat.

The spill occurred when a (INITIAL EXPLANATION). The cause of the spill is under investigation.

A safety zone has been established from [PARAMETERS]. Only responders are allowed to enter this area. The safety zone protects the public and responders. A flight restriction is in place for [PARAMETERS] around the response area. This includes drones.

Professional wildlife response crews are assessing impacts to wildlife. Wildlife professionals ask that the public **do not** attempt to capture any wildlife themselves. Please report any affected wildlife to 1-800-22-BIRDS, or 1-800-222-4737.

The unified command responding to the spill is composed of the [FEDERAL], [STATE], [LOCAL], and [RESPONSIBLE PARTY]. Other responding agencies include (OTHER RESPONDING AGENCIES).

A claims number has been established to assist those who may have incurred damage to their property or who are in need of temporary relocation. The hotline number is [XXX-XXXX].

Further information on this incident will be released as available.

WILDLIFE SPECIFIC UNIFIED COMMAND PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release – XXX. XX, 202X
Contact: Joint Information Center (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Wildlife crews responding to [NAME/LOCATION] spill
Professional oiled wildlife response contractors are on site and assessing the risk to wildlife. Wildlife is being closely monitored for effects from the (incident name). Wildlife response teams are active both on water and on land. (spill dependent). The following areas are being surveyed:

(List the areas)

Wildlife reconnaissance teams further afield (if correct and provide more generalized areas) are also looking for affected animals that may have left the immediate area of the spill.

XXX oiled animals have been recovered and are being stabilized at the oiled wildlife center in XXX. (Provide species if available and a generalized health update if available; if no animals have been recovered to date, state that information)

To reduce stress and minimize further injury to affected wildlife, wildlife professionals ask that the public **do not** attempt to capture any oiled wildlife themselves. This is not safe for the animals or for people. Instead, immediately report any affected wildlife to the oiled wildlife reporting hotline at XXXX. Please leave a detailed message with the following information:

- Your name and contact information
- Types and numbers of animals observed
- Time and location animals were last seen
- Whether the animals appeared to be obviously oiled and/or injured

Please give our trained teams space to allow them to do their work so that they can collect affected wildlife quickly and get them into care.

At this time, volunteer assistance is not requested. Any persons interested in potentially participating in wildlife volunteer efforts should register on [WA Dept of Ecology (http://www.oilspills101.wa.gov).]

10.4 Media Advisory Templates

Media advisories do not need to be approved by Unified Command and can be sent out as soon as they are developed.

MEDIA ADVISORY

XXX. XX, 202X
Contact: Joint Information Center (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Press conference for incident name [date, time]

Members of the news media are invited to join leaders of the [incident name] spill response today for an update on cleanup and response activities.

WHEN: time, day

WHERE: building name, room number, exact location, street address, city, state – OR – virtual conferencing platform link and dial-in number.

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

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

For the latest spill response updates, visit www.incidentwebsite.com, X, other social media platforms.

10.5 Fact Sheet Templates

These templates can be used as informational handouts for public or media at press conferences or public meetings. These factsheets only need to be approved by Unified Command if they contain new information.

INCIDENT INFORMATION FACTSHEET TEMPLATE

(Unified Command logos/names here)

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

FACT SHEET: Incident name spill response near location, State

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

Incident summary

- Date, time, location
- Typically can be the lead paragraph from previous release.
- Cleanup operations for product released from the vessel name will continue and are being closely monitored until long term salvage or oil pollution mitigation plans can be finalized.

Unified Command:

- Members of Unified Command
- Other agencies contributing to the response.

Current activity:

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

Quantities:

- Vessel name had a max capacity of ------ gallons aboard at the time of the incident.
- ------ gallons of oil/water mixture recovered to date.

Equipment and personnel on scene:

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

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

Safety:

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

Wildlife:

- X number of oiled birds/oiled mammals have been captured at this time and are being cared for by professional oiled wildlife responders. An oiled wildlife facility has been established in (city). Anyone seeing oiled wildlife should report it to XXX-XX-XXXX.
- Efforts to deter wildlife away from oil are being conducted at X site and X site. Search and capture crews are actively searching for wildlife on shore and on water. Anyone seeing oiled wildlife should report it to XXX-XX-XXXX. Members of the public should not attempt to capture or handle oiled wildlife.

Fishery Closure:

- Location

Ship Facts:

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

Unified Command

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

FACT SHEET

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

FACT SHEET: Unified Command

Depending on the incident, a Unified Command (UC) may be formed to manage the response efforts. As a team effort, the UC is made up of Incident Commanders (IC) from agencies with jurisdictional authority and/or functional responsibility for the incident. For environmental incidents, the UC is often composed of:

- A federal agency – Often the U.S. Coast Guard or Environmental Protection Agency.
- A state agency – Typically the environmental agency for the state, but may also be an emergency management agency.
- A local agency – Such as a sheriff's office, or fire department.
- The Tribe in whose area the incident is affecting.
- The responsible party (RP) – The company or person who is assuming responsibility for the incident. The actual RP may change as the incident progresses.

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

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

The need for UC arises when incidents:

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

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

UC representatives must be able to:

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

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

Boom

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

FACT SHEET

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

FACT SHEET: Boom

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

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

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

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

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

- Encirclement – laying one or more barriers of boom around the source of the spill to keep it from spreading or around a section of slick to hold it in place for recovery. Tankers transferring cargo may be encircled by boom as a precaution, even though there is no spill.

- Diversion – setting one or more lines of boom at angles into or across a moving slick's path to guide it toward an area where it can be confined and recovered, or to let it safely pass a sensitive area. Diversion is primarily used near shore on rivers. It is most effective where currents are weak and there is little wave action.
- Collection – towing boom in a "V," "U," "J," or teardrop configuration through or around a slick to gather oil together for recovery or burning.
- Recovery – placing sorbent boom where it will contact floating oil and absorb or adsorb some of it for later recovery, or similarly using weir boom to catch oil and transport it to a skimmer.
- Exclusion – stringing boom around un-oiled areas to keep oil out. The exclusion booming may also divert moving oil away from a sensitive area.

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

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

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

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

Sorbent boom made of absorbent or adsorbent material to collect and hold oil within the boom itself. It is most effective with thin layers of pollutants and light winds or currents. Once soaked to capacity, the boom can be recovered and the collected oil squeezed out. Sorbent boom requires strong supporting lines, chains or cables because of its tendency to break under pressure of wind or current. Once soaked, it is heavier than simple barrier boom and therefore requires extra effort to remove it from the water.

Recovery boom, such as three-weir boom, has four sections. An air-filled tube extending above the water for buoyancy and to keep oil from passing over the boom. A water-filled

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

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

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

Oil Types

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

FACT SHEET

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

FACT SHEET: Oil Types

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

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

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

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

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

Other important factors in a spill are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Group V oils, mostly very heavy oils, can float, sink, or hang in the water. These oils can become oil drops and mix in the water, or accumulate on the bottom, or mix with sand and then sink. As a rule, these oils are less toxic than lighter oils, however they pose significant problems to responders because they are extremely difficult to track or predict.
Spill response teams of federal, state and local agencies, organizations and industry representatives have prepared contingency plans for oil spill emergencies.

Oiled Wildlife

Joint Information Center

(Unified Command logos/names here)

FACT SHEET

Date: Contact:
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

FACT SHEET: Oiled Wildlife

Oil and Wildlife

One of the most important components in a spill response in regards to wildlife is the initial assessment. An efficient and thorough wildlife impact assessment will help to determine the scope and scale of the response and the resources required. A timely wildlife impact assessment sets the stage for a successful wildlife response.

The goal of oiled wildlife response is to provide the best achievable care to affected animals and to return normal, healthy animals to their native environment. Released wildlife should be indistinguishable from their native counterparts that were unaffected by a spill. Wildlife affected by an oil spill may be debilitated to varying degrees depending on several factors: species vulnerability, the type of product released into the environment, weather, time of contact, weathering of the oil, the degree to which the animal has been oiled, whether the animal has ingested oil, the length of time between the release of product to the time the affected animals were captured and stabilized and, the overall health of the animal at the time of the oil spill. Oil has numerous effects on the anatomical and biological systems of all species, including the disruption of the normal interlocking mechanism of feathers, disruption of the normal insulative properties of fur, damage and toxic effects to the lining of the gastrointestinal tract, liver and pancreas and, disruption in the normal behavior and reproductive ability of wildlife. The following will focus on the effects of oil on aquatic and pelagic bird species and their care during rehabilitation.

The Effect of Oil on Birds

Birds most commonly affected by oil spills are diving birds such as loons and grebes, those that spend a large portion of their lives on water (ducks, geese and gulls) and those that feed in or near water (herons and shorebirds). Environmental effects of oil are frequently the broadest and most difficult to quantify. Environmental effects may include long or short-term contamination of food sources, contamination of breeding and foraging habitat, and potential reduction in reproductive success due to oil contamination of adults and eggs. Colonial species with low reproductive rates are particularly susceptible to these effects.

External Effects

The external effects of oil are generally the most noticeable and have the most immediately debilitating effects on waterproofing and normal behavior patterns. Birds may be minimally, partially or completely oiled depending on the extent of contact and the type of contaminant. Even small areas of oil on a bird's feathers can disrupt normal behavior patterns, particularly for obligate aquatic birds. The oil produced by the birds' uropygial (oil) gland and spread over the feathers during preening functions similar to a conditioner, keeping the feathers supple and in good condition. However, it is the architecture of the feather that gives the bird its waterproofing. Small spots of oil can temporarily damage the normal interlocking mechanisms of feather barbs and barbules leading to decreased waterproofing, decreased thermoregulatory ability leading to hypothermia and a decreased ability to hunt and dive. Birds that are completely oiled rapidly lose waterproofing and insulative properties, may become unable to dive, float or fly, and frequently succumb to hypothermia and starvation. Birds risk drowning when oiled or otherwise contaminated and will attempt to haul out of the water onto land. Those reaching shore are often unable to find food, because of the individual's inability to return to water to hunt or feed. On land, birds become dehydrated and hypoglycemic and are prone to predation. Abrasions to the feet, hocks and keel are commonly seen with diving birds such as loons and grebes that are physically adapted for diving and are unable to stand on land. Chemical burns from caustic petrochemicals, abrasions and irritation of the conjuctiva and corneal surfaces of the eyes, as well as the moist surfaces inside the mouth are also common. Trauma caused by scavenging/predation or rough weather washing birds ashore may also be seen.

Internal Effects

The internal effects of oil come mainly from ingestion through preening, feeding on oiled prey or vegetation, or drinking contaminated water. These effects can be from the physical presence of oil in the gastrointestinal tract, as well as the absorption of poisonous components of the petroleum product such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). Ingested oil can cause ulceration and hemorrhage in the gastrointestinal tract, destruction of the microstructure of the actual tract, and have toxic effects on the pancreas and liver. This damage can prevent normal absorption of water and slow normal intestinal motility and processing of nutrients, leading to severe dehydration and hypoglycemia and further weakening an already debilitated bird. Dehydration may also result from decreased food consumption, increased metabolic demand due to hypothermia or hyperthermia, and fluid loss through diarrhea. Anemia, decreased production of avian blood cells and suppressed immune system function is common. Aspiration of oil can also occur as birds preen, leading to aspiration pneumonia. Inhalation of volatile fumes can damage lungs and cause inhalant pneumonias, as well as neurological impairment such as ataxia.

Rehabilitation of Oiled Birds

The rehabilitation of oiled wildlife begins with search and collection efforts. Both live and dead animals are collected and transported or labeled and preserved as evidence. Live oiled birds frequently require field stabilization prior to transport to an oiled wildlife facility. Upon arrival at the rehabilitation center, wildlife goes through a **processing** procedure.

Processing is the means by which evidence is collected from each wild animal, dead or alive.

Following processing, the wildlife proceeds to **intake**, where they have a thorough medical examination, initial bloodwork is taken and a treatment plan is laid out for each animal. Triage also takes place at this point in the process whereby the medical condition of the animal will indicate (according to medical standards) that the individual will not be able to recover from its current condition to a degree that it will be able to survive the rehabilitation process and ultimately survive in the wild. At this point, the individual would be humanely euthanized.

After intake, the animal then moves onto **medical stabilization**, where it is appropriately housed, provided with medical, nutritional and husbandry support to address its condition, until it is deemed medically stable to proceed to wash. This stage of the rehabilitation process is crucial to the birds' overall survival. If a bird is moved through the cleaning process prior to it being medically cleared to do so, it may die during the cleaning process or it will not have the strength following the cleaning process to recondition for release to the wild.

During the **medical stabilization** phase of the rehabilitation process, wildlife is medically monitored on a regular basis including bloodwork, to determine its progress according to its treatment plan. Species-specific husbandry techniques are applied to the wildlife to extend the period of time (aka 'window of opportunity') they can remain in captivity before succumbing to secondary complications. Secondary complications can include, but are not limited to: aspergillosis (fungal respiratory disease, exacerbated by stress and ventilation of a captive environment); keel, hock and foot lesions caused by being off water-based environments (i.e. pressure lesions); feather damage; feather ball impactions for species that regularly ingest feathers. These secondary complications are often fatal to waterbirds. Thus, extremely specialized care, husbandry, caging and facility development are mandatory components of oiled wildlife rehabilitation. Humane euthanasia is a necessary component of this phase of the rehabilitation process for wildlife that is not medically able to meet criteria for ongoing rehabilitation.

All wildlife receives a "wash evaluation" prior to proceeding to the **cleaning** process. Only if wildlife meets strict medical criteria will they be approved for decontamination. The **cleaning** process may include pre-treatment to ready the contaminant for removal. The wildlife is then put through a series of specialized washes at specific temperature, specific detergent dilution and with specific technique to remove the contaminant. Once the contaminant is thoroughly removed, wildlife then receives a high pressure rinse treatment to ensure that all detergent residue (also considered a contaminant to bird feathers) is completely removed. Facility water volume, pressure and hardness requirements must be appropriate to the needs of the cleaning process. Then the wildlife moves to the drying area where they are fully dried and carefully monitored for overheating, shock and other complications.

Once fully dried, wildlife then moves into the **conditioning** phase of the rehabilitation process. During this phase wildlife is returned to water-based environments appropriate to their species requirements to allow them to regain their waterproofing, endurance, acclimation, nutritional status and medical status. Water volume, pressure and hardness requirements are mandatory for this stage of the rehabilitation process to ensure adequate conditioning. Each bird must enter the conditioning phase with a great deal of strength and health in order to reach potential for release. Due to the microscopic architecture of their feathers, they must preen each feather's microscopic barbs and barbules back into waterproof alignment during this time. They continue to be provided with veterinary medical and nutritional support as required by each individual. All wildlife is medically monitored on a regular basis to determine progress.

Each animal will receive a release evaluation prior to release to the wild, which includes a full medical examination, bloodwork and waterproofing assessment. Waterproofing assessment generally takes place up to 72 hours of conditioning pool access, species-dependent. Strict criteria must be met for wildlife to be considered for **release** to the wild. To ensure survivability, only wildlife that meets these criteria will be released. Wildlife is released in a location appropriate to its species, time of year and migration status, and into a location that has minimal risk of re-oiling. Birds are federally banded and monitored by band return or radio telemetry post-release.

10.6 Example Messaging During Spills

Initial Key Messages for Oil Spills

- In response to the _____ oil spill, a unified command has been established to oversee and direct cleanup activities. Representatives from the (*insert governing federal agency: United States Coast Guard, EPA, DOT, etc*), the state of (*insert state Washington, Oregon, and/or Idaho*), (*insert local community and/or tribe*) and (*insert Responsible Party*) will be working together in this effort.
- The unified command's top priorities are to protect public health and safety, limit environmental impacts, and contain and clean up the spill as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- The oil is a hazardous material and can present significant health hazards. The public is asked to stay away from area beaches and to not attempt to rescue wildlife.
- We are currently evaluating the situation and determining how much oil/material has been released. Initial estimates of the amount of oil/chemical spilled are almost always inaccurate. But, to be safe, we are prepared to respond to the maximum potential that could be released.
- We ask the public not to attempt to rescue oiled birds or other wildlife on their own. They should instead report any sighting of oiled wildlife to ------.
- The public is further advised to avoid contact with the oil and to keep pets on leashes and away from areas where the product has accumulated.
- The cause of the incident is under investigation.

Initial Key Messages for Public Safety

- The safety of the public and incident responders is our number one priority.
- The public is advised to avoid contact with the oil and to keep pets away from areas where the product has accumulated.
- Professional oiled wildlife responders are on site assessing the risk to wildlife and developing capture strategies for impacted animals. People should not attempt to rescue oiled wildlife. Untrained individuals who attempt to rescue wildlife may cause more harm than good and may injure themselves in the process. If oiled animals are scared back into the water by pets or people, their chances of survival decrease dramatically.
- If someone comes in contact with the oil, he/she should wash it off with warm water and soap. For any serious injury or illness, seek medical attention.
- The safety officer in the Unified Command will set up air monitoring equipment, as needed, to identify atmospheric hazards. Unified Command and the local public health department will evaluate the conditions and determine whether the human population is at risk of exposure. The community will immediately be informed of any subsequent recommended or required evacuation or sheltering actions.
- The oil is not expected to pose any threat to the public. Air monitoring has determined that the air quality is currently below OSHA occupational exposure limits.

- The local public health department is responsible for alerting the public if there is a health hazard. People may smell spilled petroleum product, even when there is no threat to public health. Some may experience headaches and/or nausea. If discomfort, such as headaches, develops, the affected person should consult his/her personal physician.
- The local Office of Emergency Services (OSE) will manage the evacuation of communities threatened during a spill. If the OES decides there is a risk to public health, they will tell local radio and television stations to notify the public via the Emergency Broadcast System.
- Local law enforcement personnel would direct the evacuation, and possibly make public address announcements from vehicles being driven through the affected area.

Key Messages (Cleanup Methods and Considerations)

- It is important that only trained personnel conduct oil spill cleanup. Oil is a hazardous substance and highly toxic if handled improperly. It is important to stay off oiled beaches and keep children and dogs at a safe distance from a spill site. If someone comes in contact with the oil, he/she should wash it off with warm water and soap. For any serious injury or illness, seek medical attention.
- Initial spill response will generally focus on stopping the oil leak first, conducting on-water containment and recovery, and then shoreline protection. Efforts will be made to get oil off the water first so that continued re-oiling of shorelines is minimized.
- The main tools used to contain and recover spilled oil are booms and skimmers. Boom is a plastic barrier that floats on top of the water helping to keep oil contained. Boom is most effective in calm waters. If seas are too rough or currents are too fast, the oil will escape containment. Absorbent materials are also used to collect oil.
- Oil that is not recovered on water is likely to wash up on the shoreline causing further damage to wildlife and the environment. As a preventative measure, responders may place boom around sensitive areas to keep the oil at bay.
- Regional or local oil spill emergency plans have maps that identify environmentally sensitive sites. During an incident, a decision will be made, using spill movement data and local expert observations, about which of the sites are in imminent danger and will, therefore, receive the earliest efforts at protection.
- Once shorelines become oiled, cleanup crews must determine the best methods to remove the oil from the environment. Much research has gone into developing these strategies. Different sites require different approaches. For instance, for sandy beaches, using shovels and small excavation equipment may be the most effective approach. These decisions are best left up to the oil spill experts. The public should not attempt to employ their own strategies.
- Trained crews are instructed in how to dispose of the oil and oily materials. The recovered oil must be carefully quantified to determine how much was removed from the environment. Then it is transported to a hazardous materials landfill or

recycled. When oil is disposed of improperly, such as in household or public receptacles, this may lead to contamination of municipal water supplies.
- Local beaches may remain closed during these cleanup activities. The local health department and/or the governing response agency have the authority to close beaches for public safety reasons.

Key Messages (Volunteers)

- An aggressive cleanup operation is underway to secure the source, recover spilled oil, and protect environmentally sensitive sites and respond to impacted wildlife.
- There has been a tremendous outpouring of support and offers to help from the community. We appreciate the public's desire to volunteer and understand their concern.
- The Unified Command will make the decision on whether or not to use affiliated and/or unaffiliated volunteers. It will depend on a variety of factors including the type of oil spilled, the location and size of the spill, and most importantly the safety of volunteers.
- In order to keep the public informed about the status of the cleanup and to provide information on possible volunteer opportunities, a Volunteer Hotline has been established at ---------.
- At this time, a decision has not been made to use volunteers, and the public is asked to stay off beaches where oil has accumulated and to not attempt to rescue oiled wildlife. The need for volunteers will be reassessed throughout the response.
- A volunteer can either be pre-trained or come forward during a spill event with no prior oil spill volunteer experience. Each spill response is unique, and the skills needed may be somewhat different each time.
- Volunteers must first register before participating in a spill response. They must be at least 18 years, in good health, capable of lifting 25-35 pounds and able to follow both written and oral directions. They must also be willing to attend any necessary training.
- Volunteering does not necessarily mean cleaning up oil. Oil is a toxic substance and dangerous if handled or disposed of improperly. Only trained personnel are authorized to conduct oil spill cleanup.
- The best way to become a volunteer is to contact your local community volunteer center, nonprofit environmental group, local humane society, service organization, faith-based organization, or government agency volunteer program. Some of these organizations train volunteers to be long-term environmental monitors or to work in various types of disaster management.

10.7 Examples of Question & Answer During Spills

Q&A (Spill Response)

Q: How many gallons of oil are in a barrel?
A: 42

Q: How big is this spill compared to the 1989 Exxon Valdez, Alaska spill?
A: The Exxon Valdez spilled nearly 11 million gallons of crude oil. It carried 42 million gallons. No two responses are alike and caution should be taken when trying to compare them solely by the amount of product released.

Q: What is the Unified Command System? Who has authority?
A: When a significant event takes place the state, federal and local agencies establish a unified command to oversee the response. The unified command consists of the U.S. Coast Guard (the lead federal agency for marine spills) or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (lead federal agency for inland spills), State, and the responsible party. The incident commanders work together to plan and direct the response, using the best available technology. Experts from all of the entities involved work together in the planning, operations, logistics and finance sections, and fill command staff positions at the incident command post.

Q: Who investigates the spill?
A: The EPA/Coast Guard/DOT is investigating this incident and may assess fines and penalties according to state and federal laws and regulations. These investigations may lead to administrative penalties, or to civil and/or criminal charges.

Q: How do local government agencies fit in?
A: The state liaison officer, who is part of the unified command, establishes a multi-agency committee made up of local and tribal governments. Through the liaison officer, local government concerns and offers of assistance are reported to the incident commanders. If necessary, a local representative may serve in the unified command as the local incident commander.

Q: How do you know where the oil came from if nobody confesses to spilling it?
A: The Coast Guard Marine Safety Laboratory in Groton, Connecticut, as well as private analytical laboratories, use gas chromatography and mass spectrometry to produce a “fingerprint” of oil taken from wildlife or oiled habitat. Oil samples are also taken from vessels, pipelines or facilities that were in the area at the time of the spill. Matching or chemically consistent fingerprints between spill and source samples allow us to identify the responsible party.

Q: What is boom?
A: Boom is a floating physical barrier used to contain oil spills. Boom floats on the surface of the water, but parts may extend above and below it. Because oil floats on water, the

boom needs only to prevent surface movement at the top of the water to be effective. Boom is not a perfect containment device. Waves can carry oil over a boom and a current may force oil under it. Boom is more effective directing oil which moves at a slight angle to the line of boom than as a barrier blocking the slick's movement.

Q: How is boom allocated?
A: Boom is allocated based on priorities established by the Unified Command (UC). The UC is guided by protection strategies pre-identified in the Geographical Response Plans (GRPs) contained in the Northwest Regional Contingency Plan (NWRCP) and by spill trajectory modeling using real-time tide, wind, and current data . One main aspect of spill response contingency planning is to identify sensitive and important environmental, cultural, and economic sites and to develop response tactics to protect them in the event of a spill.. Containment and exclusion booming are the primary strategies included in the NWRCP for protection of sensitive areas. The strategies are designed to: 1) protect human health and safety, 2) protect identified environmental and cultural resources of concern, and 3) protect economic resources of concern.

Q: What is in-situ burning?
A: “In-situ” is Latin for “in-place,” so in-situ burning means burning something in place — where it is. In some cases, this may be the most effective way to remove oil from the environment and protect sensitive ecosystems, but, like all response methods, it has drawbacks. Burning oil creates a noxious plume of smoke and airborne particulate matter, so this method of removing oil from water would only be considered in an area and under weather conditions in which the smoke would not affect human populations, for example, offshore with only offshore winds.

For a burn to work, the oil must be a certain thickness on the water to ignite, and it must be ignited within a few hours of being spilled, before the high-end, volatile chemicals evaporate. Not all oil is burnable. Specialized equipment must be readily available, and weather and oceanographic conditions must be favorable.

Q: Can you use biological agents? What are they, and how do they work?
A: Biological agents, approved by the EPA and the State, can be used during spill response. Biological agents (i.e. bioremediation) are used primarily as a final or “polishing” process to remove the remaining oil following initial cleanup activities or in areas where the more commonly used cleanup procedures are not applicable. Biological cleanup agents are typically chemical fertilizers that are applied to an oiled area to stimulate the growth of existing oil degrading bacteria. These bacteria will in turn breakdown the oil into carbon and oxygen. The efficacy of this process will depend on the type of oil spilled and environmental conditions.

Q: What should the public do if they see oil in a place where it shouldn’t be (a spill)?
A: Report it, by telephoning (toll-free) 800-OILS-911. This is a good reporting number for the entire U.S. Pacific coast. Spills in marine waters should also be reported to the U.S. Coast Guard, by calling 800-424-8802.

Q&A (Habitat and Wildlife)

Q: How does oil affect fish and wildlife?
A: Fish and wildlife can be harmed when their bodies contact oil or when they ingest oil. For aquatic birds and furred marine mammals, oil may cause feathers and fur to lose the ability to trap air and keep water out. These animals are then susceptible to hypothermia and reduced buoyancy. Aquatic birds that are oiled will often attempt to come ashore to escape the cold water. When oil coats fish and invertebrates, it can lead to smothering or tissue damage. There are also toxic effects from ingesting or inhaling petroleum products. Depending on the amount and type of oil ingested, fish and wildlife may die or experience a variety of toxicological effects including immune and reproductive system effects and disrupted organ function. In addition to direct effects on fish and wildlife, oil can also contaminate and persist for long periods in the habitats upon which these animals rely.

Q: What process does the animal go through after capture?
A: The bird or other animal is handled very carefully, in order to reduce the animal's stress while it receives a medical examination and is then stabilized before being cleaned. Oiled wildlife must be kept warm, as oil disrupts the normal ability of fur and feathers to retain body heat. The animal is first stabilized in the field, and then medically evaluated once it arrives at a wildlife rehabilitation facility. Sick or injured animals are provided veterinary care at this point. Once the animal is medically stable (usually 48 hours or more after arrival) it will be washed using an oil-dispersing detergent, rinsed, dried and then undergo a conditioning phase to restore the waterproofing to its feathers or fur. All wildlife must be fully waterproof and healthy enough to be released back to the wild. On average, this entire process lasts a minimum of 7-10 days.

Q: How successful is rehabilitation?
A: That depends on several variables, such as the animal's species, physical condition prior to oiling, the time of year and weather conditions in which it was oiled, the length of time between initial contact with oil and the animal's capture, the type of oil, and the availability of an oiled wildlife care facility with experienced oiled wildlife responders .

Q: Can people volunteer to help?
A: Yes, there are a variety of jobs that volunteers can safely do in response to an oil spill. Hazardous materials training may be required for some of these jobs. Each incident is unique, however, and whether or not volunteers are used during a spill response is the decision of the unified command.

Q&A (Public Health and Safety)

Q: What about public health?
A: The public is advised to avoid contact with the oil and to keep pets on leashes away from beaches or areas where the product has accumulated. In addition, they should not to attempt to rescue oiled wildlife. Untrained individuals who attempt to rescue wildlife may

cause more harm than good and may injure themselves in the process. If oiled animals are scared back into the water by pets or people, their chances of survival decrease dramatically. If someone comes in contact with the oil, he/she should wash it off with warm water and soap, baby oil, or a widely used, safe cleaning compound such as the cleaning paste sold at auto parts stores.
The safety officer in the Unified Command will set up air monitoring equipment, as needed, to identify atmospheric hazards for spill responders. He will provide the data collected to the Unified Command and to the local public health department, which will determine whether the human population is endangered. The local public health department is responsible for alerting the public if there is a health hazard. People may smell spilled petroleum product, even when there is no threat to public health. Some may experience headaches and/or nausea, as well. If discomfort, such as headaches, develops the affected person should consult his/her personal physician.

Q: Who would handle an evacuation of the community?
A: This is extremely rare; however, the local Office of Emergency Services (OSE) would handle the evacuation of communities threatened during a spill. If the OES decides there is a risk to public health, they will tell local radio and television stations to notify the public via the Emergency Broadcast System. Local law enforcement personnel would direct the evacuation, and possibly make public address announcements from vehicles being driven through the affected area.

Q: What should people do if they think they've been exposed to toxins?
A: Contact your local Public Health Department, and then get medical attention from your personal physician, just as you would for any illness or injury. Anyone without a personal physician will be advised on further action by the health department staff.

Q. What if you can't find a Responsible Party?
A. In the case of a "mystery spill" – where the spiller can't be identified, located, or is insolvent – a rapid response will be funded by either the State or Federal Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund. In many cases, the state fund can be reimbursed by the federal fund. If the state fund can not be reimbursed, and the amount is significant, a mechanism will be activated for the oil industry to replenish the account. Since the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act of 1990 was enacted, the account has never had to be replenished with a higher fee.

Q&A (Dispersants)

Q: Why are dispersants used on an oil spill?
A: Dispersants are used to minimize the environmental impact of an oil spill. Dispersants do not eliminate the problem of an oil spill, but are intended as a means of reducing the overall environmental impact of an oil slick at sea. Dispersant use accelerates the weathering and biological breakdown of oil at sea and reduces the impact of oil on sensitive near shore environments. Dispersants are also highly effective in reducing exposure of sea birds and marine mammals to oil, as most sea birds are oiled by slicks on

the surface of the sea or in near shore coastal habitats. Undispersed slicks and residual oils are a persistent threat to near shore, birds, mammals and intertidal communities due to the toxicity of, and contact with oil. Dispersed oil is less "sticky" than undispersed oil; therefore, the adhesion and absorption onto surfaces and sediments of dispersed oil is greatly reduced compared with the original oil slick.
In a spill incident, environmental trade-offs of protection and sacrifice will occur. These decisions are not taken lightly by response authorities and will be based on the best available advice and scientific data to achieve a net environmental benefit.

Q: What are oil spill dispersants?
A: Dispersants are chemical formulations with an active ingredient called surfactants. Surfactants are specifically designed chemicals that have both hydrophilic (water liking) and oleophilic (oil liking) groups in the chemical compound. These chemicals reduce the interfacial tension between the oil and water and help the creation of small oil droplets, which move into the water column facilitating quicker natural biological breakdown (biodegradation) and dispersion. By decreasing the size of the oil droplets and dispersing the droplets in the water column, the oil surface area exposed to the water increases and natural breakdown of the oil is enhanced. This removes the threat of the oil from the water surface to within the water column.
Dispersion is a natural process that occurs in surface slicks as wind and wave action break up the surface slick. However, naturally dispersed oil droplets tend to recoalesce and return to the water surface and reform as surface slicks. The addition of chemical dispersants allows the wind and wave action to then carry the small oil droplets away and dilute the concentration of the droplets in the water column; these dispersed oil droplets are then targeted by indigenous oil-consuming microbes where they are broken down into the ultimate components, carbon dioxide and water.

Q: On what basis is the decision made to use dispersants in a spill incident?
A: The main basis for decision making in determining whether oil spill dispersant will be used is: Will the application of the chemical dispersant to the spilled oil minimize the overall environmental impact of the oil spill? Except for the impact on wildlife, the most damaging effect of oil spills is when the oil strands on shorelines or enters restricted shallow waters like estuaries. Dispersants are a prime and vital response tool to stop oil coming ashore or from entering sensitive near shore environments, especially when weather and sea conditions do not allow the use of oil containment and recovery equipment.
Dispersants are usually not applied to oil spills in “near shore areas,” for example, where sea grass beds, oyster beds, mariculture or coral reefs are present. However, dispersant use may be authorized by the Region X Regional Response Team in these circumstances when there is a possibility of an impact of oil on a more sensitive near shore habitat, or wildlife impacts are possible. For example, when an approaching oil slick may impact sensitive marine mammal breeding areas, or endangered species such as migratory birds.

Q: What are the negative effects of dispersants on the environment?

A: The acute toxicity of dispersed oil generally does not reside in the dispersant but in the more toxic fractions of the oil. Dispersing oil into the water in situations where there is little water movement or exchange, such as shallow embayments, increases exposure of subsurface, benthic organisms and fish to the toxic components of the oil.
Fish and other marine life in the larvae stage or juvenile stages are more prone to the toxicity effects of oil and dispersants. Therefore, it is unlikely dispersants will be used near commercial fisheries, important breeding grounds, fish nurseries, shellfish aquaculture, etc., unless it is to protect a more important environmental resource.
Sea grasses and coral reef communities are particularly sensitive to dispersed oil because the oil/dispersant mixture in the water column will come into direct contact with these sensitive ecosystems. Generally, there is reluctance by spill responders to use dispersants in shallow waters less than 30 feet deep, although there may be situations where using dispersants could prevent impacts to near shore habitats and wildlife.

Q: Who authorizes the use of dispersants during an oil spill response?
A: Under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, the Regional Response Team has authority over dispersant use for marine oil spills. The National Contingency Plan (NCP) provides that the Federal On-scene Coordinator, with concurrence from the U.S. EPA and the State representatives, may authorize the use of dispersants. However, only dispersants listed in the NCP and licensed for use by the state may be used.
Criteria detailed in the Northwest Regional Contingency Plan (NWRCP) must be met before the Federal On-scene Coordinator can authorize dispersant use in offshore areas designated as pre-approved in the NWRCP. If it is determined that a spill does not meet the pre-approval conditions, then the final decision for a dispersant-use determination rests with the RRT.

Q: How effective are oil spill dispersants?
A: Chemical dispersants aid the natural dispersion of oil by reducing the oil/water interfacial tension and, along with the natural motion of the sea, allow the breakup of oil into very fine droplets. Effectiveness of oil dispersion by chemical dispersants at sea is governed by a range of conditions and include the type and chemistry of the oil, degree of weathering of the oil, the thickness of the oil slick, type of dispersant, droplet size and application ratio, prevailing sea conditions (wave mixing energy), and sea temperature and salinity. When dispersants are being considered for use or are put into use, a field monitoring program called SMART (Special Monitoring of Applied Technologies) is conducted to test the effectiveness of the dispersant on the spilled product and to continually monitor the adequacy of the dispersant application as the operation proceeds. If the monitoring results indicate the dispersant use is not meeting the objectives of the response, its use will be re-evaluated and/or ceased.

10.8 Agency Communication Managers

Organization	Contact	Webpage or Email
Washington State Governor's Office	Communications Executive Director	https://governor.wa.gov/office-governor/office/office/executive-team
Idaho Office of Emergency Management	Agency Contacts	https://ioem.idaho.gov/about/contact/agency-contacts/
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality	Media Contacts	https://www.deq.idaho.gov/about-us/contact-us/media-contacts/
Idaho Department of Fish and Game	Directory	https://idfg.idaho.gov/about/directory
Idaho Department of Water Resources		IDWRInfo@idwr.idaho.gov
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality	Media Contacts	https://www.oregon.gov/deq/about-us/pages/media-contact.aspx
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife	News Media Contacts	https://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/directory/contact_us.asp
Washington State Department of Ecology	Spills Program Communications Lead	https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Contact-us/Media-contacts
Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife	Communications Division	https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/contact/media Communications@dfw.wa.gov
Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission	Communications Office	media@parks.wa.gov
Puget Sound Partnership	Communications Office	https://www.psp.wa.gov/contact.php
Washington State Department of Health	Media Contacts	DOH-PIO@doh.wa.gov
Emergency Management Division, Washington Department of the Military	Public Information Officers (activations only)	800-688-8955

Organization	Contact	Webpage or Email
Washington State Department of Agriculture	Communications Office	https://agr.wa.gov/about-wsda/news-and-media-relationsAbetts@agr.wa.gov
State of Washington Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development	Media Relations Office	https://www.commerce.wa.gov/media-center/
Washington State Patrol	General Media Contacts	https://www.wsp.wa.gov/media/pio-contacts/
Washington State Department of Transportation	Media Contacts	https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/contacts/media-contacts
Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission	General Contacts	https://www.utc.wa.gov/contact-us

10.9 Field Escort Equipment and Communications Checklist

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

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

Communications:

- VHF radio
- Cell phone

Information:

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