

2220 Information Officer

The Information Officer (PIO) is responsible for developing and releasing information, with Unified Command's approval, about the incident to the news media, to incident personnel, and to other appropriate agencies and organizations in as timely a manner as possible. The PIO will obtain information from technical experts to provide to the press and other interested parties. The PIO is also responsible for controlling direct media access to staff within the Unified Command structure. See section 9610 for the Joint Information Center Manual.

Keeping the public and other interested parties informed is always a primary incident objective. Staff members responsible for meeting this objective ensure the community is well informed of the status of the incident, the decisions made and actions taken by the Unified Command. The ultimate purpose of public information efforts conducted during an environmental emergency is to ensure the public is well informed by issuing timely, credible and coordinated releases of accurate information to the news media, government officials and the public. Information may come from flyover or other video coverage, phone calls, in-site interviews, web site posting, public meetings, or other methods.

The RRT/Northwest Area Committee recognizes there is a shared responsibility among the Unified Command representatives to ensure accurate and credible information is made available. It is also the shared role of the Unified Command representatives to ensure appropriate staffing in all positions within the Incident Command System. However, given the importance of the Information Officer duties, and to ensure public confidence and trust, it is the policy of the RRT/Northwest Area Committee for the Information Officer position to be filled by a qualified representative of a federal, state, tribal, or local agency, if available. If no such agency representative is initially available, qualified, or willing to be the Information Officer, a responsible-party representative may, upon the Unified Command's concurrence, fill that role. Furthermore, a transition to a responsible party designated Information Officer may occur with the concurrence of the Unified Command. The RRT/Northwest Area Committee also encourage responsible parties to designate an Assistant Information Officer, who will participate in all the meetings attended by and briefings made by the Information Officer.

Excerpt from National Contingency Plan on public information and community relations.

300.155 (a) When an incident occurs, it is imperative to give the public prompt, accurate information on the nature of the incident and the actions underway to mitigate the damage. OSCs/RPMs and community relations personnel should ensure that all appropriate public and private interests are kept informed and that their concerns are considered throughout a response. They should coordinate with available public affairs/community relations resources to carry out this responsibility by establishing, as appropriate, a Joint Information Center bringing together resources from federal and state agencies and the responsible party.

(b) An on-scene news office may be established to coordinate media relations and to issue official federal information on an incident. Whenever possible, it will be headed by a representative of the lead agency. The OSC/RPM determines the location of the on-scene news office, but every effort should be made to locate it near the scene of the incident. If a participating agency believes public interest warrants the issuance of statements and an on-scene news office has not been established, the affected agency should recommend its establishment. All federal news releases or statements by participating agencies should be cleared through the OSC/RPM. Information dissemination relating to natural resource damage assessment activities shall be coordinated through the lead administrative trustee. The designated lead administrative trustee may assist the OSC/RPM by disseminating information on issues relating to damage assessment activities. Following termination of removal activity, information dissemination on damage assessment activities shall be through the lead administrative trustee.

(c) The community relations requirements specified in §§300.415, 300.430, and 300.435 apply to removal, remedial, and enforcement actions and are intended to promote active communication between communities affected by discharges or releases and the lead agency responsible for response actions. Community Relations Plans (CRPs) are required by EPA for certain response actions. The OSC/RPM should ensure coordination with such plans which may be in effect at the scene of a discharge or release or which may need to be developed during follow-up activities.

2240 Liaison Officer

Incidents that are multi-jurisdiction, or have several agencies involved, may require the establishment of the Liaison Officer position on the Command Staff.

Keeping the public and other interested parties informed is a primary incident objective. Staff members responsible for meeting this objective ensure that elected officials and stakeholders are well informed of the status of the incident, the decisions made and actions taken by the Unified Command. The ultimate purpose of public information efforts conducted during an environmental emergency is to ensure the public is well informed by issuing timely, credible and coordinated releases of accurate information to the news media, government officials and the public.

The liaison officer has the following responsibilities:

- Serve as the initial point of contact for participating federal, state, and local agencies with a vested interest in the response;
- Maintain a spill response summary distribution list for public and private entities requesting spill response status reports;
- Receive and coordinate all calls from public and private entities offering assistance or requesting information; and
- Identify public and private concerns related to the status and effectiveness of the spill response.

The RRT/Northwest Area Committee recognizes there is a shared responsibility among the Unified Command representatives to ensure accurate and credible information is made available. It is also the shared role of the Unified Command representatives to ensure appropriate staffing in all positions within the Incident Command System. However, given the importance of the Liaison Officer duties, and to ensure public confidence and trust, it is the policy of the RRT/Northwest Area Committee for the Liaison Officer position to be filled by a qualified representative of a federal, state, tribal, or local agency, if available. If no such agency representative is initially available, qualified, or willing to be the Liaison Officer, a responsible-party representative may, upon the Unified Command's concurrence, fill that role. Furthermore, a transition to a responsible party designated Liaison Officer may occur with the concurrence of the Unified Command. The RRT/Northwest Area Committee also encourage responsible parties to designate an Assistant Liaison Officer, who will participate in all the meetings attended by and briefings made by the Liaison Officer.