

Portland Urban Area Regional Emergency Public Information Concept of Operations (ConOps) Plan

**Prepared by the Portland Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI)
Public Information Officer (PIO) Working Group**

*Approved by the Portland Urban Area
Points of Contact (POC) – January 2009*

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Table of Contents

| <u>Section</u> | <u>Page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| I. Introduction | 4 |
| II. Situation & Assumptions | 5 |
| III. Concept of Operations | 7 |
| IV. Organization & Assignment of Responsibilities | 15 |
| V. Plan Development & Maintenance | 21 |
| VI. Authorities & References..... | 22 |
| VII. Appendices | 23 |

I. Introduction¹

Mission

As public information officers (PIOs) from multiple jurisdictions and agencies, we will contribute to the well-being of the Portland Urban Area following a disaster by communicating with each other, the news media and the public in a consistent, coordinated fashion as we seek to implement incident command's and emergency management's public information objectives.

Purpose

The purpose of the Portland Urban Area Regional Emergency Public Information Concept of Operations (ConOps) Plan is to provide implementing procedures for the operation of a regional joint information system (R-JIS) in the event of a disaster. The plan will be used to conduct and coordinate crisis communications during emergency response and other situations in which multiple organizations need to collaborate to provide timely, useful and accurate information to the public and other stakeholders.

Scope

This plan will guide all city, county and special district crisis communications within the Portland Urban Area comprised of all local jurisdictions within and including Clackamas, Clark, Columbia, Multnomah and Washington Counties. The procedures contained within the plan apply to major disasters that start within the Portland Urban Area as well as disasters that start elsewhere and impact the region to the extent that the coordination of emergency public information is necessary.

¹ For definitions of terms and acronyms, see *Appendix A: Glossary of Terms*.

II. Situation & Assumptions

This section describes general issues for PIOs to consider about the nature of the Portland Urban Area and the regional response to a disaster, as well as assumptions shared by the emergency response agencies around the region regarding media support and the level of public understanding.

Situation

- PIOs from multiple jurisdictions and agencies within and including Clackamas, Clark, Columbia, Multnomah and Washington Counties collaborate to address emergency public information preparedness, response and recovery planning and operational issues.
- PIO collaboration is driven by a regional lead PIO group comprised of PIOs from Clackamas, Clark, Columbia, Multnomah and Washington Counties and the City of Portland with the active support and involvement of PIOs from special districts, cities, the states of Oregon and Washington, the federal government and other agencies. These additional PIOs may include representatives from public works, transit, port districts, utilities, hospitals, medical organizations, the Red Cross and the private sector.
- The Portland Urban Area is subject to a number of natural and human-made hazards that can threaten public health and safety and create a need to communicate emergency information to the public.
- During a disaster, residents of the Portland Urban Area need timely, accurate information about the situation and protective action they can take to minimize injuries, loss of life and damage to property.
- Language, disability, cultural and other factors affecting the ability of residents to receive and understand emergency messages requires that information be provided in multiple formats and through a variety of means.
- Emergencies may develop slowly (e.g., a severe winter storm or flood) allowing sufficient time to effectively disseminate information to the public. Other emergencies may occur suddenly (e.g., an earthquake or hazardous materials release) hindering the timely delivery of information to the public.
- The Portland Urban Area shares a single broadcast media market.
- A majority of the public will turn to television, radio and the internet for emergency information.
- National and international media may place heavy demands on PIOs organized through a virtual joint information center (virtual JIC) or fixed-site regional joint information center (R-JIC), if activated, requiring additional resources.
- Disasters occurring outside the Portland Urban Area may impact the region itself (e.g. a tsunami on the Oregon Coast resulting in a large number of evacuees) and generate media activity within Portland's media market.

- During some disasters, such as a pandemic event, social distancing (measures to decrease the frequency of contact among people in order to decrease the risk of spreading communicable diseases) may limit the number of PIOs able to effectively respond to the situation.

Assumptions

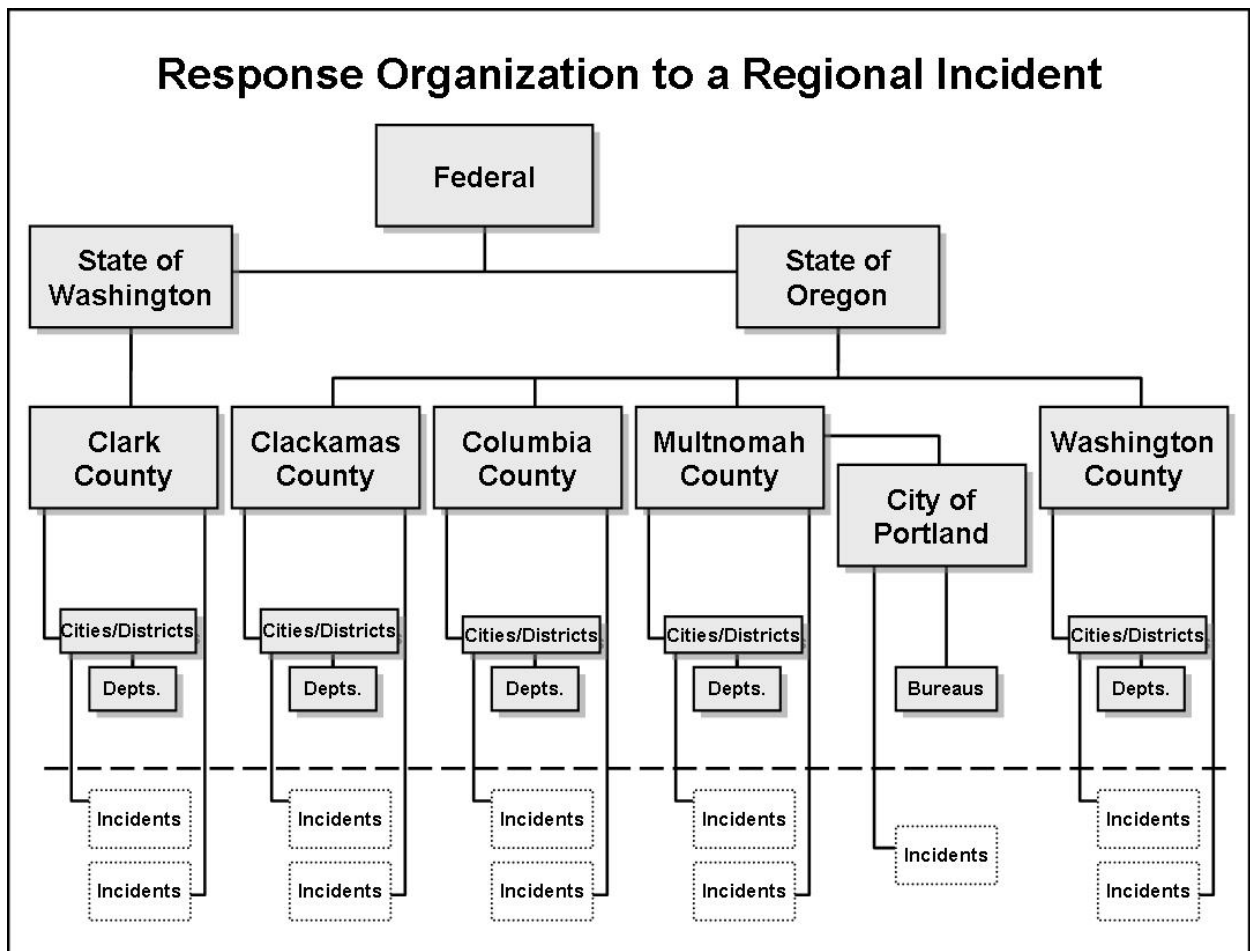
The members of the Portland Urban Area make the following assumptions regarding partner agency/responder support, media support and levels of public understanding or involvement:

- Effective regional coordination will increase public trust in local authorities and increase cooperation and compliance with issued guidance and directives.
- Sufficient communications capability will be available in most, but not all, instances to allow information collection and dissemination.
- Information dissemination resources (including media and local government) will be available in most, but not all, instances to facilitate timely delivery of information to the public.
- Partner agencies will support the ConOps plan by participating in the R-JIS, by contributing PIO resources when possible as mutual aid and by deploying public information resources to operate in an R-JIC (either virtual or fixed-site) in accordance with the phased response described in this plan.
- In seeking to achieve local public information objectives, response entities operating during a regional emergency without coordinating through the R-JIS will be, from a regional perspective, at risk of disseminating conflicting information about situation status, protective actions or other incident-related guidance.
- PIOs will be responsible for developing good relationships, open communication and active coordination among other PIOs operating within their entire jurisdiction/agency and with PIOs from around the region.
- The unique demands of each incident will result in PIOs from various jurisdictions and agencies working together at all levels of the response, from the incident-level to coordinating center-level and upward. For example, a large-scale bio-terrorism incident could involve PIOs from federal, state, county, special district, non-profit and city agencies working together and coordinating public information at incident command posts (ICPs), area commands, city or county coordinating centers and regional, state and federal coordinating centers.
- The non-profit, private-sector, special district and government agency PIOs organized across or with a presence in the six major response entities of Clackamas, Clark, Columbia, Multnomah and Washington Counties and the City of Portland will provide support for regional operations.

III. Concept of Operations

Phase One – Activating Local Joint Information Systems (JIS)

During a disaster, incident commanders (ICs) and emergency managers (EMs) at all levels of the response may choose to delegate emergency public information operations to lead PIOs in accordance with existing plans. Public information resources will be activated and deployed to response entities in conjunction with existing local plans and authorities. These response entities will place a high priority on achieving local emergency public information objectives, maintaining cooperative relationships and keeping open channels of communication with all agencies responding to emergency incidents within their respective areas of operation. This communication and information-sharing activity – both before and during the response phase – is what is meant by the local JIS. Sharing information with neighboring cities and counties and with state and federal response entities will also be a priority.



Public information resources will operate in accordance with the Incident Command System (ICS)/National Incident Management System (NIMS). These resources will include single or multiple PIOs attached to ICPs, area commands, multi-agency coordinating centers (MACCs, such as emergency operations centers (EOCs) or emergency coordination centers (ECCs)) within

all jurisdictions and agencies involved in the response. Public information objectives, key messages, strategies, length of operational periods and other aspects of the response will be developed as part of each entity's planning cycle. In some cases, response entities at any level of the response may activate and operate local JICs in pursuit of their emergency public information objectives.

The lead PIO for each response entity will be responsible for coordinating with their PIO counterparts above and below his or her own entity (e.g., a county lead PIO will coordinate with all lead PIOs from cities inside the county and with state PIOs). Coordination will also occur across the response organization – incident-to-incident or coordinating center-to-coordinating center – but local plans and practice will emphasize intra-jurisdictional coordination. A combination of electronic tools (e.g., computers, cell phones, personal digital assistants, pagers, Web sites, etc.) and non-electronic assets (e.g., media briefing rooms, hard copies of press materials, etc.) will be utilized to execute local PIO plans.

Phase Two – Transition to Regional Joint Information System (R-JIS) Operations

Upon recognition of one or more of the following triggers, any member of the regional lead PIO group – comprised of the lead PIOs from Clackamas, Clark, Columbia, Multnomah and Washington Counties and the City of Portland, and with the help of all other jurisdictions and agencies in the region – may support the R-JIS by convening a conference call/strategy meeting (see *Appendix B* for a sample agenda). These triggers may include, but are not limited to the following:

- The incident is already having or is projected to have a regional impact (may occur in one county but heavily impacts the entire media market);
- Media demands are overwhelming (or are anticipated to overwhelm) local PIO resources;
- There is a need to standardize messaging on a regional basis;
- Activation of a MACC is planned at the regional level;
- An event of national significance (e.g. pandemic, mass evacuation, etc.) impacts the region; or
- Incident commanders/emergency managers in the region request the level of coordination provided by an active, regional joint information system.

PIOs from other jurisdictions and agencies in the region impacted by the disaster may also be included in the conference call/strategy meeting.

Supporting the R-JIS: Regional Lead PIO Group Conference Call/Strategy Meeting

The discussion during the conference call or meeting will be used to:

