EMERGENCY FUNCTION (EF) 15
PUBLIC INFORMATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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EF Coordinator:	San Mateo County Manager's Office - Public Information Officer (PIO)
Joint Primary: Agencies	San Mateo County Manager's Office - PIO San Mateo County Sheriff's Office - PIO
Supporting Agencies:	San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services (OES) San Mateo County Department PIOs Public Safety Agencies

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

The purpose of Emergency Function (EF) 15 is to assist in the provision of accurate, coordinated, and timely information to affected audiences, including governments, media, private sector, and the general population during times of disaster or emergencies.

B. Mission Statement

To provide timely and accurate information to the public during emergencies and to provide protective action guidance as appropriate to save lives and protect property.

C. Scope

1. EF 15 coordinates actions to provide the required external affairs support to local incident-management elements. This annex details the establishment of support positions to coordinate communication to various audiences. EF 15 applies to all departments and agencies that may require incident communications and external affairs support, or whose external affairs assets may be employed during incidents requiring a coordinated response.

2. EF 15 integrates public affairs, community relations, and the private sector under the coordinating auspices of external affairs. Another component, the joint information center (JIC), ensures the coordinated release of information under EF 15.

3. The scope of EF 15 during its activation is to:

    a. Coordinate actions to provide external-affairs support to local incident management elements.

    b. Establish support positions to coordinate communication to various audiences.

    c. Integrate public affairs, community relations, and the private sector under the coordinating auspices of external affairs.

    d. Determine whether emergency warnings and public information are required for protection of public health and safety.

e. Prepare and disseminate warnings on a timely basis.

f. Coordinate with affected jurisdictions within the San Mateo County Operational Area (OA).

g. Establish communications and coordination with the San Mateo County emergency operations center (EOC).

h. Advise EFs of the need to use the Joint Information System (JIS) for all public information releases.

i. Distribute incident-specific procedures to aid or control the transmission of information required for developing emergency public information for dissemination.

j. Establish a public information call-in center to respond to questions, monitor rumors, and facilitate accurate dissemination of emergency public information.

k. Implement operations to monitor media releases relevant to the disaster or emergency event, its impacts, and emergency operations.

l. In coordination with other EFs, determine whether post-event emergency public information will be required on a continuing basis and initiate actions to establish procedures to do so.

II. POLICIES

The following polices apply to the implementation of this EF:

A. The designated primary and support agencies are responsible for and committed to staffing and implementing this EF at the time of its activation by the San Mateo County OES.

B. This EF will be implemented in a manner consistent with the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the basic plan of the San Mateo County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), applicable agency guidelines and policies, and all applicable regulations and statutes.

C. The priorities for emergency operations implemented by this EF will be consistent with and supportive of the San Mateo County emergency operations center action plan (EOC-AP) for the applicable EOC operational period.

D. When the resources and capabilities available to this EF are limited, resource allocation will be in accordance with the priorities established by the EOC-AP, as well as by the following, in descending order of importance:

1. Protection of human health and safety;

2. Protection of critical infrastructure;

3. Protection of property; and

4. Protection of environmental quality.

III. PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

The following planning assumptions have been used to develop this EF. If these assumptions are not valid for a specific event or circumstance, it will be necessary to modify the operational concepts and assigned responsibilities defined herein:

A. The primary and support agencies will have adequate personnel and equipment available at the time of EF activation to support emergency operations. If necessary, the agencies will implement their continuity of operations plans (COOP) in order to support emergency operations.

B. The equipment, systems, and supplies normally available to the primary and support agencies needed for emergency operations will remain functional and/or can be repaired on a timely basis to support the EF's operations.

C. Resources requested from mutual aid or through the County EOC will be provided on a timely basis where needed.

D. Members of the affected public will receive emergency instructions regarding protective actions, business openings and closings, and other changes to normal daily conditions. The public will endeavor to comply with such instructions to the best of their ability.

E. In incidents involving numerous jurisdictions and/or departments and agencies, JIS protocols will be used, including the possible establishment of a JIC.

F. The event requires responding agencies to provide instructions and information to the public about the incident, as well as the actions people should take to save and protect life, property, economy, and the environment.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

This section defines the concept of operations that will be used by the primary and support agencies to implement the EF at the time of a disaster. The concept of operations includes actions to be taken by the agencies responsible for the EF during the pre-event timeframe, as well as during emergency-response and disaster-recovery periods. The concept of operations for the EF is applicable regardless of the scope, type, or duration of emergency event.

A. General

1. EF 15 will be activated, staffed, and implemented by the primary and support agencies whenever directed to do so by the San Mateo County OES and/or the EOC. The primary agency may be directed to activate the EF prior to the onset of an emergency situation, immediately after its impact on the County, or at any time during the activation of the EOC. Once directed to activate the EOC, the primary agency is responsible for notification and mobilization of its personnel and resources as they are needed, as well as directing mobilization of the personnel and resources of designated support agencies.

2. Once activated, designated personnel from the primary agency will coordinate operations of the EF from its position in the EOC, where adequate communications

and data management systems are available. Coordination of the EF operations from the EOC also will be used to ensure coordination of all EF operations with emergency actions being taken by other EFs and the County EOC. Operational coordination by the primary agency will continue from the County EOC until the time the EF is authorized to deactivate and terminate operations.

3. The San Mateo County OES and/or the EOC will activate the EF whenever the known or anticipated effects of the event require its services and capabilities. Activation may be considered needed when one or more of the following has occurred or is expected to occur:

   a. Significant damage to the jurisdiction's infrastructure has occurred or will occur.

   b. Large-scale evacuation is required.

   c. Public safety and security mutual aid resources from San Mateo County and surrounding jurisdictions may be required in support of emergency operations within the municipality.

   d. Significant requirements for coordinated public information and/or warnings exist.

B.   Organization

1. The position of this EF in the EOC organizational structure is shown in the organization chart below. EF 15 is positioned under the Command Staff of the EOC.

San Mateo County EOC Organizational Chart
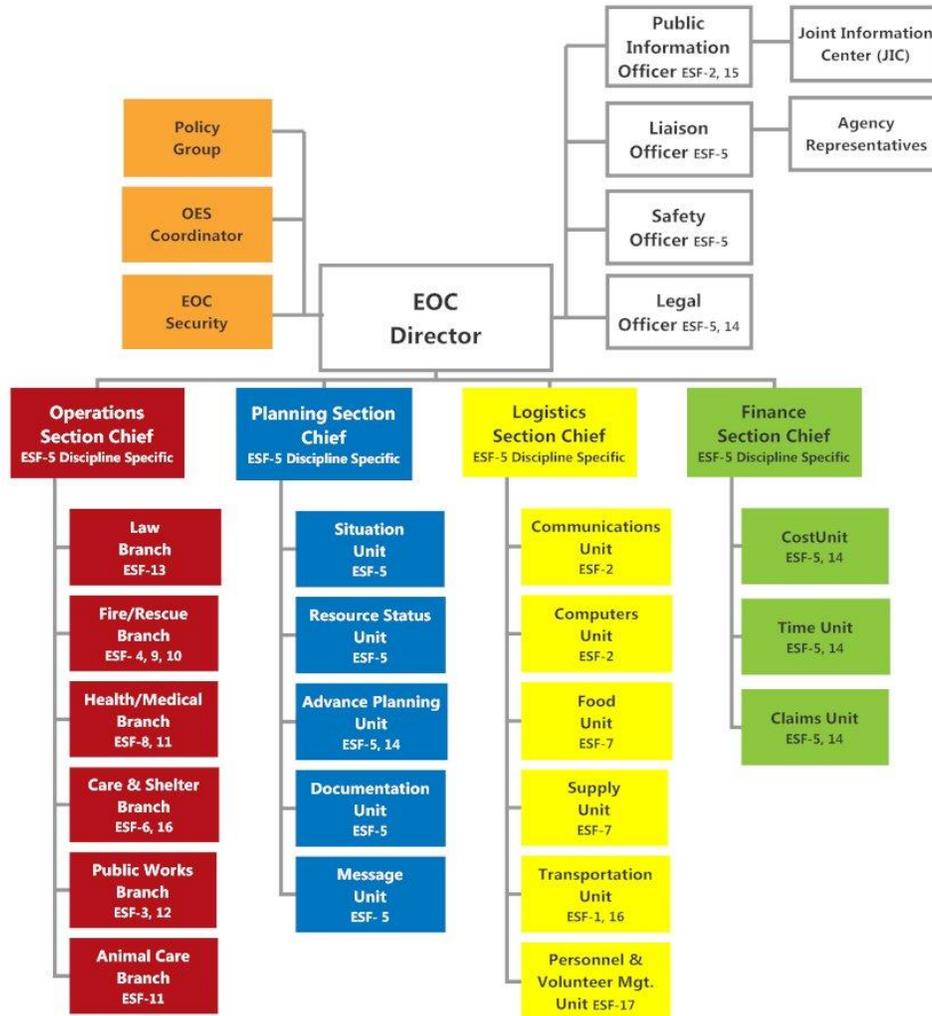
2. The San Mateo County PIO serves as the coordinator and facilitator of operations implemented by EF 15 and, in this capacity, is assisted by the designated support agencies. The primary agency will commit its own personnel, facilities, and resources to EF operations, requesting assistance from the designated support agencies whenever necessary.

3. The organization of the EF is expected to remain the same for both emergency-response and disaster-recovery operations.

C.   Notifications

1. The San Mateo County OES will be responsible for notifying the EF coordinator (or EF alternate coordinator) in the primary agency of the need to activate the EF, or (if indicated) to stand by in the event that EF activation is required. In turn, the EF coordinator (or alternate coordinator) is responsible for notifying the designated support agencies of the notification to activate the EF or to stand by for possible activation. The EF coordinator (or alternate coordinator at the time) is responsible for

determining whether personnel from some or all of the support agencies should be notified and mobilized.

2. The primary agency maintains an up-to-date, 24-hour notification roster of its personnel assigned to this EF, as well as representatives of the support agencies. (This roster could be an attachment to the EF or maintained as a separate document, since it will have home phone numbers and other private information).

D. Emergency Operations

This section describes the emergency operations that may be required by the primary and support agencies in order to be prepared for EF activation, and for the operations to be implemented during the response and recovery phase. Actions to be taken for demobilization of the EF are also defined.

1. Pre-Event Preparedness

    The EF coordinator has management oversight for the EF. To ensure readiness to activate the EF, the primary and support agencies will check that the following actions are taken prior to the onset of an emergency event:

    a. Detailed standard operating procedures (SOP), action checklists, and job aides needed by EF personnel will be developed and available for use.

    b. Equipment inventories and personnel rosters necessary for EF implementation will be up-to-date and immediately available.

    c. As indicated, agencies will ensure that primary and support agency personnel designated for EF implementation have received all necessary and required training and are appropriately credentialed and certified in accordance with guidelines issued by the NIMS Integration Center.

    d. Agencies will assist the designated alternate EF coordinator(s) and the assigned personnel from the EF primary and support agencies in understanding their duties for the EF maintenance and activation, as well as continually improving their capabilities for effective EF implementation.

    e. Agencies will coordinate pre-incident efforts with private-sector organizations as they relate to the EF.

    f. Agencies will coordinate EF preparedness activities related to all levels of planning for response and recovery operations, from county agency response and recovery activities to regional and statewide catastrophic planning, as appropriate.

    g. Facilities, systems, equipment, and supplies that are necessary for EF implementation will be protected from the effects of the event to the greatest extent feasible.

    h. If indicated, personnel will be pre-deployed to protected locations or facilities within the County to expedite implementation of the EF.

    i. Agencies will identify new equipment or capabilities required to prevent or respond to new or emerging threats and hazards, or to improve the ability to address existing threats.

j. Agencies will designate representatives for the EOC.

k. Agencies will develop a public information program to educate the public regarding the effects of common emergency and disaster situations.

l. Agencies will develop plans to coordinate with national, state, regional, county and local news media for emergency operations before, during, and after emergency situations.

m. Agencies will develop plans to conduct a multi-agency/jurisdiction coordinated public information program during emergencies and disasters, including establishing a JIC.

n. Agencies will develop plans and programs to educate the news media that EF 15 is the primary information center during emergency situations.

o. Agencies will develop procedures to organize and operate a media briefing area and/or a JIC.

p. Agencies will provide evacuation information to the affected public.

2. Response Operations

Response operations are conducted during an event, and are necessary to protect people, provide services to people harmed by the event, and mitigate further property or environmental damage, if feasible. Response operations for the EF are considered in two phases: (1) initial actions for the period when the EF is first activated; and (2) continuing actions that are to be implemented, as needed, during each EOC operational period for the response phase until the EF is able to transition to recovery operations. In all cases, the response operations are general guidelines for action, and may be modified, as needed, to adjust to the particular circumstances of the situation. The phases of the response operations are described below:

a. Initial Actions

The following initial actions, as indicated, are to be completed during the first EOC operational period for activation of the EF:

i. When the EOC is activated, the EF coordinator (or designee) will staff the EF 15 workstation, identify which support agencies for EF 15 are needed, and take steps to ensure that support agencies are activated or on alert (as appropriate).

ii. Ensure the functionality of telecommunications and data management systems to be used by the EF, and take corrective actions as needed.

iii. Access needed procedures, checklists, rosters, and inventories.

iv. Complete notifications of primary- and support-agency personnel.

v. Receive an initial briefing and/or information regarding the situation and the current status of County emergency operations by other EFs.

vi. If indicated, direct activation and staffing of facilities outside of the EOC that are necessary for implementation of the EF, including the following:

       a) JIC; and

       b) On-scene briefing locations.

   vii. Establish communications with County and surrounding municipal EOCs and determine the following:

       a) The current status of emergency operations relevant to the EF's operations; and

       b) The protocol for the municipality to request assistance from the EF.

  viii. Establish communications with the corresponding EF at the County EOC (if activated), and define the protocol for requesting County assistance from the EF.

    ix. The EF coordinator will assist with the collaboration and development of operational priorities based on the objectives set forth in the initial briefing.

     x. Implement necessary initial actions specific to the EF based on direction and objectives set forth by the EF 5 (Emergency Management) coordinator.

    xi. Provide timely and accurate emergency alert system (EAS) messages and news releases using common language and terminology to inform the public.

   xii. Provide emergency public information to access- and functional-needs populations.

  xiii. Coordinate with the news media regarding emergency operations.

  xiv. With permission of EF 5 (Emergency Management) coordinator, establish a regular schedule of media briefings.

b. Continuing Actions

The following continuing actions would be repeated, when indicated, during each operational period for the duration of the response period, and until the transition to recovery operations by the EF:

     i. Monitor EF staffing and resource availability and adequacy, and take corrective actions when necessary.

    ii. Review the EOC-AP for the operational period and prioritize EF operations and resource allocation in accordance with its directives.

   iii. Monitor EF emergency actions initiated and/or continuing from the previous operational period until completion.

   iv. Respond to requests from EF personnel at incident scenes or other emergency locations, if applicable, for additional services and assistance.

    v. Plan for and establish relief resources to replace or rotate with committed resources for extended operations.

   vi. Maintain complete and accurate documentation regarding emergency operations and expenditures.

vii. Provide information regarding EF operations, problem areas, and resource needs to EF 5 (Emergency Management) for development of the EOC situation report (SITREP) and EOC-AP.

viii. Participate in EOC briefings when held.

ix. As EF response actions near completion, anticipate and plan for transitioning the EF to recovery-phase operations and provide EF recovery plans to EF 5 (Emergency Management).

x. Disseminate and update public information through numerous channels and methods including but not limited to:

   a) Timely news releases to television and radio stations;

   b) Periodic media briefings or news conferences;

   c) Pre-formatted safety, survival, and shelter tips relevant to the disaster emergency;

   d) Press kits and background news stories;

   e) Pamphlets and literature addressing the hazard or situation;

   f) Social media sites;

   g) EAS;

   h) Hotlines; and

   i) Internet web pages.

xi. Dissemination of information will be in English and other languages deemed necessary to reach the majority of the population. Should a need arise, the County PIO will see that emergency public information materials are prepared for the visually and hearing impaired, and the non-English speaking population.

xii. Organize and operate a press briefing area and a JIC, as appropriate.

3. Recovery Operations

   a. Ensure the completion of all response-phase emergency operations and the resolution of all requests for assistance.

   b. Advise all activated EF support agencies of the initiation of recovery-phase operations, and provide coordination and guidance regarding needed support agency actions.

   c. Review the EOC-AP for recovery and adjust EF recovery actions.

   d. Review the EOC-AP for recovery and (if indicated) adjust EF recovery actions for consistency.

   e. Provide updated information regarding completion of EF response-phase operations to EF 5 (Emergency Management).

    f.   Continue public information activities, including updating the public recovery efforts.

    g.   Process and disseminate disaster welfare and family reunification information.

4.   Demobilization Operations

As EF recovery-phase operations near completion, implement actions necessary to support EF demobilization when authorized by the EF 5 (Emergency Management) coordinator, including (but not limited to) the following:

    a.   Advise activated primary agency personnel, support agencies, and County EOC of the intent to demobilize the EF. If indicated, define methods for providing continuing assistance to agencies following EF deactivation.

    b.   Review all EF operational and financial documentation to ensure its completeness and accuracy.

    c.   Account for all deployed EF personnel, equipment, and supplies.

    d.   Identify EF systems, equipment, or supplies damaged or depleted during EF operations, and assign responsibility for repair or restoration.

    e.   From the OES and/or the EOC unified command, determine the schedule and data needs for the after-action assessment of operations and development of corrective actions and lessons learned, and advise primary and support agency representatives accordingly.

    f.   From EF 8 (Public Health and Medical), determine the availability of services for critical incident stress debriefings (CISD) for emergency workers, and ensure that primary and support agency personnel are advised on ways to access CISD assistance.

    g.   Upon receipt of authorization from the EOC unified command, obtain approved copy of the demobilization plan prepared by the Planning Section to demobilize the EF, and provide completed EF documentation to OES. Notify County EOC, if activated, and all support agencies of the EF's demobilization.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

This section lists the primary and support agencies and their respective responsibilities.

A. Coordinating Agency

1.   San Mateo County Manager's Office – PIO

    a.   Activate the San Mateo County JIC as necessary to support emergency operations. Follow San Mateo County JIC operational guidelines provided in the San Mateo County JIC Plan.

    b.   Notify all affected jurisdictions and stakeholders of operational and situational conditions and provide frequent and regular status updates.

    c.   Post information on the County's Intranet site specifically for County employees.

d. Authorize EAS messages when necessary.

e. Inform the high-risk population of response activities they should engage in and will encounter during and following a disaster.

f. Coordinate with EF 2 (Communications) to provide accessible alert systems.

g. Develop public messaging in multiple formats and languages.

h. Coordinate responsibilities with supporting agencies such as non-governmental partners (e.g. business community, faith-based communities).

B.   Joint Primary Agency

1. San Mateo County Sheriff's Office – PIO

    a. Acts as alternate coordinator in the event the primary coordinator is unavailable.

    b. Performs or assists the coordinating agency with the responsibilities listed above.

C.   Support Agencies

1. All Support Agencies

    Affected agency PIOs will coordinate public information messages and operations with the San Mateo County JIC.

VI.   INFORMATION COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND DISSEMINATION

The primary function of EF 15 will be to provide information to the public involving incidents to persons or property at risk as a result of a natural disaster or terrorist incident, and to provide timely information in support of evacuations, search and rescue, traffic control points, security, shelters, and re-entry. As a result, EF 15 must work closely with numerous other EFs to establish an effective process of communication and information collection.

Critical Coordination Points for EF 15

EF 2 – Communications	Establishes and maintains interoperable communications with county and municipal agencies.
EF 5 – Emergency Management	Coordinates information received from other EFs, as necessary, to ensure accurate and timely releases.
EF 8 – Public Health and Medical	Provides information that will assist access- and functional-needs populations.
EF 13 – Law Enforcement	Coordinates dissemination of security information to the public.

VII. ADMINISTRATION, FINANCE, LOGISTICS

A. Resource Procurement

This section describes the ways in which the EF will procure or obtain the resources that may be required for implementation. Resources, as a general term, encompasses the personnel, equipment, systems, and supplies, as well as highly specialized services that may be needed for EF implementation.

1. In all cases, the primary agency, with continuing representation in the EOC, will serve as the point of coordination to identify resources needed for EF implementation. The primary agency will also be responsible for requesting and directing mobilization of the resources.

2. When resources are needed, the primary agency representative will use one or more of the following for securing and deploying the needed resources in the most timely and cost-effective manner:

   a. Resources under the direct control of the primary agency;

   b. EF support agencies;

   c. Other activated EF representatives in the County EOC; and

   d. Private-sector vendors or contractors that would have the resources available.

3. The EF coordinator will be responsible for determining the process of procurement authorization established by the EF 5 (Emergency Management) coordinator and EF 7 (Resources).

4. In all cases, the primary agency EF representative will have information readily available regarding the categories or types of resources relevant to EF operations to facilitate requesting additional resources.

B. Financial Management

1. EF 7 (Resources) is responsible for managing financial matters related to resources that are procured and used during an incident. During a response, each agency/department is responsible for recording and tracking its own expenditures and seeking reimbursement from the appropriate resource after the event.

2. For reporting purposes, support entities will document their expenditures and submit them directly to the Finance and Administration Section or a designated finance service officer as soon as possible.

C. EF Development and Maintenance

1. The EF coordinator is responsible for EF development and maintenance, which is to be completed with the assistance and cooperation of the designated support agencies.

2. The EF coordinator will review the EF, as well as associated SOPs, checklists, and other documentation, and modify them (if indicated) in response to any of the following events:

a. Upon request of the EF 5 (Emergency Management) coordinator.

b. Following any activation of the EF for response to an actual incident or an exercise.

c. Following any change or development in any municipal government, or any non-governmental organization assigned responsibility for EF implementation.

d. Upon the opening or closing of any major facility of the primary or support agencies that is considered vital to implementation of the EF.

VIII. Authorities and References

The authorities and references documented in the San Mateo County EOP basic plan are considered applicable to this EF.

IX. ACRONYMS

CISD	Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
COOP	Continuity of Operations Plan
EAS	Emergency Alert System
EF	Emergency Function
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EOC-AP	Emergency Operations Center Action Plan
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
JIC	Joint Information Center
JIS	Joint Information System
NIMS	National Incident Management System
OA	Operational Area
OES	Office of Emergency Services
PIO	Public Information Officer
SEMS	Standardized Emergency Management System
SITREP	Situation Report
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures

X.   ATTACHMENTS

Insert agency specific attachments here