PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER JOB AID

**Public Information Officer** (PIO) performs duties under the Incident Command System to ensure effective coordination with the media, stakeholders, and participating organizations (assisting and supporting agencies) involved in the response. The job of Public Information Officer (PIO) during an emergency response is a critical one. It can have a large impact on the perception of the public, the media, and stakeholders regarding the success or appropriateness of the response activities. Properly managing public information and the media during a response are critical to overall success.

Personnel assigned to this position should have a good public affairs background and experience working with people in other organizations. Since this is a key position in the response organization, assignment should be based on experience level versus rank or employer.

Note 1: The term “stakeholder” as used in this job aid is inclusive of all outside entities with whom the Public Information Officer may interact, such as assisting and cooperating agencies, coordination facilities, elected officials, the public, the media, and special interest groups.

Important: Under one single Incident Command System orgchart, there may only be One person assigned to each title, so there can only be One LOFR, SOFR, PIO, and so on. If the job becomes too much to handle for one person, or if assisting and/or supporting agencies insist on assigning their own member to the existing ICS – Assistants and Deputies may be assigned to the existing title.

* Command Staff positions may have Assistants assigned to each function – Assistant LOFR, Assistant SOFR, Assistant PIO.
* General Staff positions may have Deputies assigned to each function – Deputy OSC, Deputy PSC, Deputy LSC, Deputy FSC.
* The difference between a **Deputy** and **Assistant**:

1. Deputy MUST have all the same qualifications and certifications as the Section Chief they are assigned to assist.
2. Assistant may or may not have all of the qualifications as the General Staff role they are assigned to assist.
3. The role of the Assistant is to channel and relay available information to the General Staff member they are assisting.

**Useful Checklist for the PIO Position:**

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| **What** kind of an incident is this?   * Cyber? * Natural Disaster? * Man-made? * Mixture? |
| **Who** are the key players (Federal, State, local, pvt sector)?  **Who** are your stakeholders?  As PIO you need to know who surrounds you. This way you can understand the Critical Information Requirements (CIR) and ensure proper flow of communications. |
| **When** did the incident begin?   * Are there noticeable changes over time?   As the PIO you need to know if it is stabilized, contained, contracting, or expanding. |
| **Where** did the incident take place?  As PIO you need to know your Area of Responsibility (AOR). Often there may be a difference between your agency’s AOR vs. the Incident AOR. |
| **What is the level of media interest?**   * Which direction is the media driving the story? Has an initial news release been sent out? Has a JIC been established? * What is the tone of media stories? Are they reporting issues that the IC/UC needs to address? * What is the frequency of calls? Is it the same outlet calling or multiple media outlets calling? * How many stories (radio, TV, newspaper, online, etc.) have been generated? Are you tracking them? |
| **What is the level of public interest?**   * Do you need a community relations branch in the JIC? If so, how robust will it need to be? * Does the Unified Command need to evacuate people from the affected area? * How many people are affected? Are they getting the appropriate word from the Unified Command? * What is the impact to the stakeholders? |
| **Orgchart**:   * What is the Incident Organization?   You must know your reporting chain – who do you report to and who reports up to you. |
| **Resources**:   * It helps to know what resources your organization currently has on the scene, this way you can paint a more accurate picture to the media and maintain a positive image of the response. |
| **Meetings:**   * When is your next meeting?   Check the ICS 230 Form or another method of schedule tracker. Use the attached Planning “P” to get a better idea about the meetings you need to attend. |
| **Jurisdiction:**   * Does the incident involve one or more agencies? * Who else is involved? |
| **Expectations:**   * How often does the command want an update from you? * What are their CIRs? * Do you or your APIO(s) have the authority to prepare and release public messages and statements for the press without clearing them with the IC/UC? * Are there Constrains and Limitations (Media interest, Safety of the public, Risk communication, Stakeholder’s concerns, etc.)? * Have you met with the LOFR to “divide and conquer” your duties?   **Remember** – PIO and LOFR will often have similar functions, the best way to separate them is – LOFR deals with the stakeholders and anyone who may need information directly related to the progress of the response, while the PIO deals with press, media, and other aspects of creating/upholding the public image. |
| **Notify:**  Normally, for a cyber/ransomware related incident, there are series of notifications that the victim is suggested to make. It is useful to maintain the list of the entities you may have to talk to.  **Local Press/Media partners**  **CISA:** <https://www.cisa.gov/be-cyber-smart/report-incident>  **FBI Field Office (look up one that covers your locality):** <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices>  **Local Law Enforcement** (determine who your POC is)  **Stakeholders** (determine who your cooperating and/or assisting agencies are, maintain the list of POCs for each) |

