



## **ANNEX B**

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

#### **I. PURPOSE**

To establish procedures for the preparation and dissemination of official, coordinated, pertinent and accurate information and instructions to the University community and the general public should it become necessary to implement the Emergency Response Plan in whole or in part.

#### **II. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

- A. When advised by the Executive Director for Emergency Management or the Emergency Response Coordinator of the possibility or existence of a Condition 2 or Condition 3 emergency, the Public Information Officer will activate the public information plan provided in this annex.
  - 1. News releases, instructions and general information originated by various participating University agencies will be channeled through and approved by the Incident Commander and Public Information Officer (PIO).
  - 2. The information center will continue to function through all phases of a crisis operation, to include providing guidance leading to a return to normalcy.
- B. Centralized control and dissemination of factual information is necessary to assure a well-informed public, to avoid or minimize the release of misinformation and to deflate rumors.
  - 1. Primary responsibility for all official information and instructions released rests with the Executive Director for Emergency Management.
  - 2. Authority to release official information or instructions to the public may be delegated to a specific individual, hereafter

referred to as the Public Information Officer (PIO). The PIO may be the Public Information Officer or a delegate.

3. Any individual may forward information they feel should be released to the public to the Public Information Officer.
  4. The release of accurate information precludes the necessity of a "rumor control center."
  5. Any information prepared for release must be accompanied by appropriate data, documents or other substantiating information.
  6. Any individual who is required or who desires to release any public information will submit the information to the Public Information Officer.
  7. Any information released by anyone other than the Executive Director for Emergency Management or the Public Information Officer will not be considered official and the news media will be so informed.
  8. Any person, department or agency releasing information to the public on their own cognizance must bear the responsibility for any legal, moral or other ramifications and repercussions resulting from that release.
- C. A Public Information Center (PIC) is necessary to assure timely dissemination of accurate information and official instructions to the public and to respond to the numerous inquiries that can be expected during the course of an emergency.
1. The PIC should be located in close proximity to the Emergency Management Center.
  2. An accurate, current file of official information pertaining to the welfare, assistance centers and other related matters which pertain to the individual citizen, must be available and maintained at the PIC.
  3. Facilities should be available in the PIC or nearby in which to brief public officials, news media, community leaders or citizens about developments, requirements or the status of the operation. The PIC and the briefing facility would function as the informational arm of University authorities.

- D. General information, instruction or direction to the public and news of any crisis operations can be given verbally; however, highly detailed and specific instructions should be provided in writing. Bulletin boards, newspapers and handouts may be used to provide specific information, schedules, etc.
  - 1. News releases, bulletins and specific instructions should be numbered and must be time dated to avoid any confusion as to which are current or the most recent.

### **III. ORGANIZATION**

- A. The Public Information Officer (PIO) will be appointed by the Director of Communications and Media Relations. The PIO should be an employee of the Office of Media Relations.
- B. A Public Information Center (PIC), staffed by qualified personnel, will be made available to the PIO. Sufficient personnel will be assigned to permit around the clock operation, should that become necessary.

### **IV. RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. The Public Information Officer should maintain plans for contacting all mass media serving the county, the Denver metro area and the University. A list of media outlets and contacts will be maintained by the Office of University Communications.
- B. The Public Information Officer is responsible for operation of the PIC and for the overall public information program.
  - 1. The Public Information Officer is an advisor to the Executive Director for Emergency Management, Incident Commander and other local authorities on public information matters, apprising the Executive Director for Emergency Management of the public information situation.
  - 2. The Public Information Officer is responsible for liaison with the news media to ensure maximum response capability during an emergency.
  - 3. The Public Information Officer will prepare news releases during emergency situations, and will otherwise review, edit and clear material with the Incident Commander for public release under established policies.

4. The Public Information Officer must be very knowledgeable about all State, County and University plans so that efforts will ensure the results designed by the Executive Director for Emergency Management.
5. Upon receipt of information for release, the PIO will:
  - a. Verify the authenticity of the information contained in the release.
  - b. Determine if the information contained in the release is in the public interest and will not create unwarranted or unnecessary fear, anguish or other adverse reaction among the public. However, news releases will not be withheld simply to avoid political or public official embarrassment should the situation so warrant.
  - c. Verify that a duplicate release has not already been made.
  - d. Prepare the release in accordance with accepted journalistic practices, if time permits, and ensure fair and timely release of the news or information.
6. The PIO is also responsible for gathering information from the media and community, and reporting relevant details back to the Emergency Response Committee.
7. The PIO must maintain a current and accurate file and record of all information released to the public and the news media which will include, but need not be limited to:
  - a. Name, address, telephone (office, pager or cellular telephone) number of the release initiator.
  - b. Text of the news release.
  - c. Substantiating records for the release.
  - d. Date and time received.
  - e. Date and time released.
  - f. How and to whom the news release was issued.

## **V. COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA**

- A. All available communications media should be used to communicate with the public, especially the local resources. Examples of suggested news releases, public information handouts and bulletins are maintained in the Office of University Communications.
- B. The best and most rapid means of disseminating emergency information to the public is through the broadcast media. It is reliable, immediate, and the general public has a strong reliance on information received over radio and television. For that reason, a system of communications with the public, in time of emergency, was organized. It is called the Emergency Alert System (EAS).
- C. A list of news media that have agreed to broadcast or publish official emergency information is kept on file in the Office of Media Relations.