Introduction to Incident Information S-203

NFES 2915

Student Workbook

JANUARY 2008

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

on behalf of the

NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

The following training material attains the standards prescribed for courses developed under the interagency curriculum established and coordinated by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. The instruction is certified for interagency use and is known as:

Introduction to Incident Information, S-203
Certified at Level I

This product is part of an established NWCG curriculum. It meets the COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND FORMAT STANDARDS – Sixth Edition, 2003 and has received a technical review and a professional edit.

Member NWCG and Training Working Team Liaison

Date January 31, 2008

Chairperson, Training Working Team

Date 1/31/08

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Sponsored for NWCG publication by the NWCG Training Working Team.

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ATTN: Great Basin Cache Supply Office, 3833 South Development Avenue, Boise, Idaho 83705.
Order NFES 2915.

PREFACE

Introduction to Incident Information, S-203 is a suggested training course in the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) wildland and prescribed fire curriculum. It was developed by an interagency group of experts with guidance from NWCG Training under authority of the NWCG. The primary participants in this development effort were:

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The NWCG appreciates the efforts of these personnel and all those who have contributed to the development of this training product.

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Introduction to Incident Information, S-203

Unit 0 – Introduction

OBJECTIVES:

During this unit the instructor will:

1. Introduce the instructors and students.

2. Discuss administrative concerns.

3. Introduce the course.

4. Review the pre-course work.

I. INTRODUCTIONS

II. ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERNS

III. KEYNOTE SPEAKER

IV. COURSE INTRODUCTION

Incident managers and line officers now recognize that communicating effectively with the public and the news media during an incident requires the special skills and knowledge of trained Public Information Officers (PIO).

A. Course Objective

The course objective is stated in broad terms and defines what students should be able to do after completing the S-203 course:

The students will demonstrate the skills and knowledge of a Public Information Officer by successfully participating in the simulation and passing the written exam.

B. Unit Objectives

The S-203 course is divided into eight units of instruction. Longer units are divided into lessons. Each unit and lesson contains objectives designed to ensure that the course objective is accomplished.

Unit and lesson objectives are stated in more specific terms that define what students should be able to do after completing each unit and lesson. Unit and lesson objectives are presented at the beginning of each unit and lesson.

We will touch on aspects of establishing and maintaining an incident information operation, from getting organized to communicating with internal and external audiences to handling special situations.

C. Student Workbook

The student workbook is designed to:

- Minimize the need to take notes.
- Serve as a study guide for unit and lesson reviews and the final exam.
- Use as a reference when assigned to incidents as trainees.

D. Student Performance Requirements

At the end of each unit and lesson (except for this unit), you will complete a review, in quiz format, to determine how well you understood the information presented.

- Unit and lesson reviews are not graded, but will serve as study guides for the final examination.
- You will be evaluated on participation in exercises and an incident simulation.
- A final examination covers the material presented in the course. To successfully complete the course, you must attain a minimum score of 70%.

Successful completion of this course will provide you with knowledge and skills needed to serve as a PIO **trainee** on incidents.

V. PRE-COURSE WORK

In the Incident Command System (ICS), one incident PIO is designated per incident. Assistants may be assigned to help that primary PIO.

Within the world of wildland fire, positions are further broken out to indicate experience levels. The three levels of qualification for Public Information Officers are PIO1, PIO2, and PIOF.

The Type 1 and 2 designations recognize higher skill and experience level requirements based on the complexity of the incident.

This course, intended for personnel who will be working primarily in wildland fire, is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed for the entry level of qualification, PIOF.

PIO's and PIOF's may be assigned to incidents of various levels of complexity. For example:

- At a Type 1 wildland fire incident, a PIO1 would be the designated Public Information Officer and could have a PIO2 or PIOF as assistants.

- At a Type 3 wildland fire incident, it is possible that a PIOF would be the primary or only Public Information Officer.

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Unit 1 – The Roles and Responsibilities of Public Information Officers

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Describe the purpose and importance of incident information.

2. Identify the roles and responsibilities of Public Information Officers in incident management.

3. List the characteristics and skills of effective Public Information Officers.

4. Describe how current issues affect the scope of incident information.

I. THE PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF INCIDENT INFORMATION

A. What kinds of events arouse human interest and curiosity?

- Fires
- Floods
- Earthquakes
- War
- Celebrity activities
- Terrorism
- Search and rescue
- Scandals
- Natural wonders
- Scientific discoveries
- Accidents

B. What draws us to these events?

- Crisis
- Drama
- Danger
- Destruction
- Conflict
- Suspense
- Rare/unique

C. What makes an event noteworthy?

- Is it relevant to me?
- What affect is it having on people?
- How close is the nearest media outlet?

D. Who needs information?

- The public
- The news media
- Elected officials
- Special interest groups
- Local/jurisdictional agencies
- Local emergency response units

E. Why is providing information important?

- In a time of crisis or confusion, information is a basic human need like food, water, and shelter.
- If information about the incident is not readily available from an official source, the public and the news media will find someone else to talk to.
- Public concerns can influence incident management.
- Information reduces uncertainty and anxiety.

F. Why is anticipating information needs important?

- May mean the difference between successful management of the incident and a greater crisis.

- The first source frames the issue.

- Public information officers can truly make or break the reputation of agencies.

II. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensuring safety and welfare of yourself and others.

- Developing current, accurate, and complete incident information.

- Providing a central source of information for the media and the public.

- Facilitating effective contacts between the public and incident personnel.

- Serving as "chief storytellers" for the agency or agencies managing the incident.

- Providing information to incident personnel, local agency personnel, and cooperators.

- Tracking down and dispelling rumors.

- Being alert to sensitive political, social, and environmental issues that relate to the incident and keeping the Incident Commander (IC) and other appropriate incident managers apprised of them.

- Sharing with the IC or other appropriate incident managers any information that might affect the performance or safety of agency personnel.

- Using the incident to communicate other approved messages.

- Informing individuals and organizations in affected communities.

- Maintaining positive interpersonal relationships.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS AND SKILLS OF EFFECTIVE PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS

- Ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.

- Ability to organize and schedule activities.

- Skill in analyzing information and relaying it in terms the media and public can understand.

- Ability to work under pressure for extended periods of time.

- Knowledge of incident terminology and organization.

- Ability to work as a key member of a team.

- Ability to maintain composure, even in very difficult situations.

- Ability to maintain good interpersonal relationships in the performance of duties.

- Knowledge of basic wildland fire suppression techniques, wildland fire behavior, weather, and fireline safety.

- Familiarity with communications equipment, procedures, and basic functions/capabilities.

IV. NATIONAL INTERAGENCY FIRE MESSAGES

Public Information Officers must:

- Know about the current issues facing your host agency or unit.

  These issues can affect incident management and incident information operations.

- Watch what you say.

  How you talk about an issue can directly affect the perception of the issue (perception is reality).

  How you talk about wildland fire can affect the perception of prescribed fire/fire use, and prevention activities.

- Be aware of key messages.

  The interagency fire community and its agencies develop key messages each year that you should be aware of.

- NWCG key messages website:

  http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/wfewt/message/key_message.pdf

V. CURRENT ISSUES AND EXPERIENCES

- Context for Incidents

  - Incidents ARE NOT isolated events.

  - Incidents DO NOT occur in a vacuum.

  - Incidents DO occur in environmental, social, and political contexts.

  The contexts can determine the way incidents are managed and the way the incident information function operates.

UNIT 1 REVIEW

1. Why is the information function important? (circle one)

   A. Information is a basic human need.
   B. The public and news reporters will find another source to talk to.
   C. Public concerns influence incident management.
   D. All of the above
   E. None of the above

2. Public Information Officers have the responsibility to: (circle the answers that apply)

   A. Provide prompt, accurate information to the news media and the public.

   B. Provide information to incident personnel and cooperators.

   C. Serve as the sole spokesperson for the incident.

   D. Keep the Incident Commander and other appropriate incident managers apprised of sensitive political, social, and environmental issues that relate to the incident.

3. List three characteristics or skills needed by a Public Information Officer.

4. Why do you need to know the current issues facing the agencies or the region in which you're working as a Public Information Officer?

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Unit 2 – Initial Stages – from Mobilization to Action
Lesson A – Mobilization

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Describe steps to prepare for dispatch to an incident.

2. Describe the mobilization process.

3. Explain the importance of documentation.

I. PREPARING TO BE DISPATCHED

A. Kits

The public information officer kit contains the supplies you need to get started.

B. Personal Gear

- Keep a bag packed with personal items.
- Be aware of weight restrictions.
- Living conditions may vary depending upon the incident; be prepared.

C. Availability

- With supervisory approval, make sure your dispatch knows you are available for an assignment.
- Follow agency procedures.
- Have a photo ID and a valid qualifications card.

II. MOBILIZATION

A. Dispatch

Obtain complete information from dispatch upon initial activation.

- Incident name and number
- Incident order number (O number)
- Name and location of IC or on-scene PIO
- Expected duration of assignment
- Reporting location, time, and date
- Phone contacts
- Travel arrangements
- Weather, terrain and living conditions (pack appropriately)

B. Check-in

- Check in according to agency guidelines.
- Arrive properly equipped with personal identification, incident qualification card, cell phone, and information kit.
- Arrive SAFELY within acceptable time limits.
- Receive briefing from IC or PIO who will supervise you.
- If possible, get phone number of local PIO.

III. DOCUMENTATION

Documentation becomes the official record of the incident.

- Begin to document your actions as soon as you're dispatched.

- Ask your supervisor what documentation you should be responsible for.

- Create and maintain important documents related to contacts with communities, reporters, and other key audiences such as:

  – Unit Logs (ICS 214)

  – General Message Forms (ICS 213)

  – Copies of news releases, fact sheets, and other products

  – News clippings related to the incident

  – Photographs and video

- Follow demobilization procedures.

  – You must transfer incident information and pending commitments to the host agency or incoming incident personnel before you demobilize.

  – Plan ahead for this.

2A.6

Incident Information Kit

Qty.	Item	Qty.	Item
1	Stapler	1	¾” binder clips
1 box	Staples	4	1” binder clips
1	Staple remover	1 box	Small paper clips
1	Heavy duty staple gun	1 box	Push pins
1 box	Staple gun staples	1 box	Sm and med permanent markers
1	Clipboard	2	Highlighter markers
3	Scotch tape in dispensers	3	Pencils
3 rolls	¾” masking tape	1	Pencil sharpener
1	Calculator (and spare batteries)	1 doz	Pens
1	State road map of incident’s state	1 box	Rubber bands
1	Map of USA	1 pkg	File folders
1 box	Map pins	12	Manila folders
1 pkg	Dry erase markers	10 sheets	White computer paper
1	Roll of surveyor flagging	10 sheets	Colored computer paper
1	Hole punch	5	9 x 12 envelopes
5 pads	Post-it notes, assorted sizes	2	Pocket notebooks or ruled tablets
1	Agency phone directory	10	Sheet protectors
1	8” pair of scissors	20	Communication logs
1	6” X-Action knife	2	Telephone message pads
2 sets	Pre-made bulletin board titles	10	ICS 214 unit logs
1	Fireline Handbook (NFES 0065)	1	Incident Response Pocket Guide (NFES 1077)
1	Fire information banner	1	ICS 213 General Message
2	Disposable cameras or 1 digital camera with replacement batteries	1	Laptop/printer; memory stick w/forms loaded on it; phone and answering machine

Personal Items for the PIO Travel Bag

2	Fire shirts (yellow Nomex)	1	Hard hat
2	Fire pants (Nomex)	1	Fire shelter
1 set	Casual clothes	1	Water bottle
6 pr	Heavy boot socks	1 pr	Leather boots with 8” top
1 set	Warm clothes to layer (sweat pants, wind pants, hooded sweatshirt)	1	Pocket knife (pack in your bag if flying; don’t try to carry on board a commercial aircraft)
1	Parka, wool sweater, or jacket	1	Small first aid kit
1 set	Face towel, wash cloth, bath towel	1 pr	Leather gloves
1 set	Personal toiletries	16-day supply	Personal medications
1 pr	Camp shoes	1 set	Rain gear
1	Travel alarm clock and spare batteries	1	Sleeping bag
1	Camping pillow	1	Small tarp
1	Insect repellent	1	Sun screen
1	Lip protection	1	Sunglasses
1	Flashlight with spare batteries	1-2 loads worth	Laundry soap
1	Small sewing kit	1	Foam pad or air mattress
1	Cap or hat—without corporate logos	1 pr.	Shower flip flops
1 set	Agency uniform (only if requested by hosting unit)	1	Tent
1	Name tag	1 set	Earplugs

UNIT 2A REVIEW

1. List three actions that you must take before being dispatched to an incident.

2. Get approval from your ____________________ before you indicate your availability for an assignment.

3. Name at least five pieces of information you need to obtain from the dispatcher upon initial activation.

4. Why is it important to maintain the Unit Log and other documentation?

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Unit 2 – Initial Stages – from Mobilization to Action
Lesson B – Action

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. List the initial incident facts that the public needs.

2. Identify the “Triple A” thought process.

I. INITIAL INCIDENT FACTS

EXERCISE: Initial Attack Information Needs

Overview: Students will identify information needs from different segments of the public.

Instructions:

1. You will be divided into groups and assigned a role.

2. The instructor will read a scenario; you are to listen to the scenario from the perspective of your assigned role.

3. You will have five minutes to discuss the scenario and write a list of what information you want.

A. Basic Facts

These are things people want to know immediately and accurately.

1. Type of incident

2. Location of the incident

3. Threats to life, property, and resources

4. Time the incident started and who reported it

5. Agencies, equipment, and personnel responding to the incident

6. Agency with jurisdictional authority

7. Cause

8. Evacuations

B. Where to get the facts

When an incident first breaks, complete and accurate information is difficult to obtain. Nevertheless, the media and public will be demanding information. You will need the basic facts, fast.

Your best sources of information early on will likely be:

- Dispatch
- Scanner
- Radio
- Initial responders
- Send someone to the scene

The dispatcher may be too busy to talk to you and the scanner or radio may offer only sketchy information. Sending a PIO to the scene is a good way to get information.

II. “TRIPLE A” THOUGHT PROCESS

A. During the first stages of any incident, information officers must:

1. **Assess** the current situation and respond to immediate public and news media demands for incident information.

2. **Analyze** the incident’s potential, project public and news media demands for incident information, and plan a course of action.

3. **Act** on your plan.

Remember – assess, analyze, and act!

B. Early Survival Tips

1. Survival Tip #1 – Needs and Expectations

   - If the incident occurs on your home unit, you might be the only public information officer working on it. Check with your local line officer for his or her needs and expectations.

   - If you are off your home unit, check in with the on-scene PIO or IC regarding immediate needs and expectations.

2. Survival Tip #2 – Use your Kit and Delegate when Possible

   - You’ll need the materials in your kit as you begin work. If coworkers are available to help you, assign each person specific tasks, such as:

     – gathering and posting information
     – preparing maps
     – responding to telephone calls

   - Secure an appropriate sized work space and arrange it so that it’s comfortable and efficient.

3. Survival Tip #3 – Don't Panic!

- Information will probably be hard to come by at first. If nothing else, take down names and telephone numbers of the media and public who call and tell them you will call them back as soon as you have more information.

- Be sure and follow up as soon as possible.

- It's OK to ask the media and public for cooperation.

    – Explain that initial reports from the scene are sketchy and information is unconfirmed.

    – Stick to the facts; do not be pressured into guessing or speculating.

UNIT 2B REVIEW

1. List the initial incident facts that the public needs.

2. Identify the "Triple A" thought process.

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Unit 3 – Incident Information Operations

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Describe the duties of a Public Information Officer in a field information operation.

2. Explain the duties of a Public Information Officer in an incident information center.

I. TYPES OF INCIDENT OPERATIONS

A Public Information Officer may function in various environments.

A Public Information Officer may work at a remote incident base in the wilderness. This is an example of a field information operation.

At a high profile incident, a Public Information Officer may work with others at a center located in a city or other easily accessible place. This is an example of an incident information center.

Public Information Officer duties will differ depending whether the assignment is at a field information operation or incident information center.

II. FIELD INFORMATION OPERATIONS

A. The main duties of Public Information Officers **in the field** are:

1. Gather information about the incident and provide it to the incident information center.

2. Help identify and track down rumors.

3. Provide information and interviews to media representatives who visit the ICP, base camp, and incident.

4. Arrange for the media to interview other incident personnel.

5. Provide personal protective equipment to media who want to go to the incident.

6. Escort the media around the Incident Command Post, base camp, and incident.

7. Conduct tours of the Incident Command Post, base camp, and incident for VIPs and the public as appropriate.

8. Conduct community relations activities to keep local residents and visitors informed about incident status.

9. Photograph and videotape the incident.

10. Provide information to incident personnel.

11. Document actions.

B. Establishing a Field Information Operation

Below are work space location requirements for Public Information Officers in the field:

1. Located in tent, trailer, or under a tarp.

2. Serves as check-in point for the public and news media who visit the ICP, base camp, or incident.

3. Should be in a highly visible area away from the IC's work space.

4. The ideal location is between the entrance to the Incident Command Post or base camp and the IC's and Planning Section Chief's work spaces.

5. Should be well signed.

6. At least two telephones are, or can be, installed. (You should also have a cell phone.)

7. The media and public can find you.

8. You will not interfere with other Incident Command Post activities and they will not interfere with you.

9. Sufficient space, lighting, and access to tables and chairs.

10. A copy machine, fax machine, computer, and printer can be installed or accessed.

11. Room to expand your operation if and when it is necessary.

12. Adequate parking for the media and the public.

C. Supplies and Equipment

A Public Information Officer in the field often has little to work with.

Your Public Information Officer kit is key in these situations, to get you up and running until more supplies can be ordered.

Ideally, your work space should be equipped with:

1. Large table(s) and chairs

2. Identifying sign or banner

3. Large bulletin board

4. Office supplies (information kit)

5. A writing board, easel chart, or easel for sharing the latest information with other Public Information Officers.

6. Reserved telephone for relaying information to the incident information center.

7. Lights for night operation

8. Personal protective equipment for Public Information Officers and news media.

9. First aid kit

10. Magnetized “Public Information Officer” car door signs

11. Maps

12. Outdoor bulletin board

13. Copy machine, fax machine, computer, and printer

14. Still, video, or digital cameras; film or videotape; battery chargers

15. Incident radio

16. Vehicles on site

D. Coordination with the Incident Information Center

All Public Information Officers need to cooperate closely to:

1. Ensure an effective and efficient incident information operation.

2. Ensure consistency of information, messages, and operating procedures.

3. Reduce duplication of effort.

III. INCIDENT INFORMATION CENTERS

Depending on the incident, it is possible to utilize an information center that might be removed from the incident site but is more accessible to media and/or the public.

A. Establishing the Center

1. The center should be established:

   - When the incident is likely to continue and there is going to be sufficient public and news media interest to require an expanded operation.

   - Before the public and news media are forced to go elsewhere for information.

   - Early in the incident.

2. An incident information center serves two main functions:

   - Place where requests for incident information are channeled, which relieves dispatchers and other incident personnel from the responsibility of responding to requests from the public and news media.

   - Place where accurate and timely incident information is compiled, organized, and disseminated to the public and news media.

3. Information centers can be set up and staffed at various different levels:

   - National
   - State
   - Regional
   - Unit

B. Duties of Public Information Officers in Information Centers

Public Information Officers who work in incident information centers may:

1. Provide media outlets and the public with the incident information center location, phone numbers, operating hours, and webpage addresses (if being used).

2. Gather information about the incident and update fact sheets, news releases, and web pages. (For web pages, check with local agency for protocol, procedures, and passwords. Some agencies have databases that create web pages for you.)

3. Gather information from the internet and other sources about related aspects of the incident, such as environmental effects, safety, rehabilitation, and national / regional situation.

4. Prepare fact sheets and news releases. Clear fact sheets and news releases with the information center manager.

5. Prepare and update maps and other visual aids.

6. Give interviews and provide updates to media that call the incident information center.

7. Arrange telephone and in-person interviews with incident personnel for the media.

8. Follow up on media requests for updates and additional information.

9. Document media contacts by maintaining a communications log that includes the name of the caller, the name of the outlet, and the type of information requested.

10. Arrange and schedule media flights of the incident and obtain information on media representatives and aircraft for the air operations branch director.

11. Arrange for escorts for media going to the incident and clear access with the operations section chief.

12. Notify media of personal protective equipment needed to go to the incident.

13. Provide photographs and videotape shot by incident personnel to the media when access is limited.

14. Provide incident information to members of the public when they call the information center.

15. Keep cooperating agencies informed about the incident status.

C. Establishing an Incident Information Center

The Incident Information Center should be located in a place where:

1. An adequate number of direct line telephones are already in place, or can be readily installed.

2. The Incident Command Post can be reached within a reasonable amount of time.

3. The media and public can find it.

4. You will not interfere with dispatchers and other incident personnel and they will not interfere with you.

5. There is sufficient floor space, wall space, lighting, and access to tables and chairs.

6. Computers, a copy machine, and a fax machine are in place or are readily available.

7. There is room to expand the operation if and when it becomes necessary.

   If you are setting up the information center for a unit or agency other than your own, check to see if there are any pre-existing arrangements.

   There might be a facility already reserved and equipped to function as an incident information center.

D. Tips for Setting up an Incident Information Center

1. Arrange the room carefully to allow for foot traffic and maximize wall space.

2. Situate the tables and chairs so information posted on the walls can be seen easily.

3. Space telephones far enough apart so they will not interfere with one another. Locate a phone reserved for internal use only apart from the other phones.

4. If necessary, provide a separate space and bank of phones for the media and the public, preferably in a different room.

   In some situations this may not be possible, and you may have to allow the media and public to use phones in the incident information center.

5. Post a map of the incident, preferably one with an acetate overlay so it can be updated, and an incident status board (blackboard style or acetate overlay) where they can be easily seen by Public Information Officers using the phones.

6. Post a sign outside the incident information center to direct the media and public.

7. Post a bulletin board with incident information and a map outside the incident information center to reduce foot traffic inside.

8. Schedule incident information center operating hours to accommodate news media needs.

   On some incidents, and in some media markets, this may require the incident information center to be open 24 hours a day.

E. Supplies and Equipment

Supplies can be ordered through the proper channels during an incident, but it may be several hours or even days before they arrive.

It is much more efficient to have essential supplies assembled ahead of time and stored either at the facility that will serve as the incident information center or in a kit that can be transported.

- Telephones/fax machines
- Answering machine and continuous track message tape
- Television and video cassette recorder (VCR) or digital video camera.
- Incident radio
- Computers and printers (with internet access)
- Vehicles

F. Participation of Cooperating Agencies

If the incident involves cooperating agencies, such as the county Sheriff's Department, state emergency, or disaster relief bureaus, you may want to consider asking representatives of those organizations to work in the incident information center.

- It is very beneficial to have someone with detailed knowledge about cooperating agencies and that can speak for them.

- Representatives of cooperating agencies can alert other information center personnel to sensitive issues with their agency, as well as address these issues with the public and media.

- Participation of cooperating agencies in incident information centers communicates that incident management is an interagency effort.

  If cooperating agencies cannot commit a representative to the incident information center, it is important to establish a system and schedule to obtain information from cooperating agencies, including the current commitment of resources and key concerns and messages.

UNIT 3 REVIEW

1. List five functions of a Public Information Officer in the field:

2. The PIO in the field should have a work space located in the same tent, trailer, or building as the IC.

   A. True
   B. False

3. List three things that should be taken into consideration when determining a location for a PIO's work space in the field.

4. Which of the following supplies and equipment are needed in a PIO's work space in the field? (circle all correct answers)

   A. Telephones
   B. Table and chairs
   C. Candy bars and soda pops
   D. Books and magazines
   E. Lights for night operation

5. Describe the two main functions of an incident information center.

6. List five functions of a Public Information Officer working in an incident information center.

7. When locating an Incident Information Center, which of the following should be considered? (circle all correct answers)

   A. Easy for media and public to find.

   B. Proximity to good restaurants and movie theaters.

   C. Room to expand the information operation if and when it becomes necessary.

   D. Will not interfere with Incident Command Post activities, dispatchers, and other incident personnel.

   E. Sufficient sleeping space for media and public.

8. List three pieces of equipment Incident Information Centers should contain.

9. The PIOs in the field and PIOs in the information center should work completely independently of each other.

   A. True
   B. False

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Unit 4 – Gathering and Assembling Information

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Describe sources of incident information.

2. Prepare a fact sheet.

3. Review a news release.

4. List three examples of other messages and describe the value of incorporating messages into incident information.

I. SOURCES OF INCIDENT INFORMATION

A. Agency Administrator

Provides delegation of authority, direction on the kinds of messages, the themes of messages, and subjects of special concern. Understands “big picture” and local political issues.

B. Incident Management Team Members

As an incident progresses, PIOs need to continue to gather information about it.

Once an Incident Management Team is assigned to the incident, the team members, as opposed to the dispatcher and the scanner or radio, will become the primary sources of information.

It is important to understand the duties and responsibilities of each position in the Incident Command System so that you know who can provide you with specific kinds of information.

Incident Management Team information sources include:

1. Incident Commander

   Can provide the general status of the incident, incident objectives, outlook for the incident, progress made, and problems and concerns.

2. Safety Officer

   Can provide safety concerns and measures and the number and extent of injuries.

3. Liaison Officer

   Can provide information about the participation of other agencies.

4. Planning Section Chief

   Can provide the current and predicted status of the incident, day and night operational period plans, and the Incident Action Plan.

5. Situation Unit Leader

   Can provide maps and intelligence reports, infrared data, weather forecasts, and incident status summaries (ICS 209).

6. Resource Unit Leader

   Can provide the location of personnel and equipment assigned to the incident.

7. Operations Section Chief

   Can provide in-depth details about tactical activities and implementation of the incident action plan. Can also provide information about best places to take photographs and shoot video.

8. Logistics Section Chief

   Can provide information about food, facilities, transportation, supplies, support equipment, communications systems, medical services, and ordering.

9. Finance Section Chief

   Can provide incident costs.

10. Agency Administrator

   Can provide big picture, delegation of authority. Knows local political issues.

C. Local Agency Personnel

Local agency personnel can provide information about:

- Local media
- Community concerns
- Political issues
- Incident history
- Geography
- Road access
- Weather

D. ICS 209, Incident Status Summary

- Provides official statistics about the incident.

- The Situation Unit prepares the ICS 209 for presentation to the Planning Section Chief before each planning meeting.

E. Incident Action Plan (IAP)

- Contains valuable information about the incident and is probably the best source of information about strategy.

- Includes objectives, crew assignments, safety concerns, and communications information.

- Updated twice a day by the Planning Section.

F. Briefings and Planning Meetings

1. Briefings

- Excellent source of information about current and predicted conditions.

- Often held twice a day at the Incident Command Post.

- Open to anyone who wants to attend.

2. Planning meetings

- Held to set incident management priorities.

- Often occur twice a day, in the morning and evening, at the Incident Command Post.

- Attendance at planning meetings is restricted to members of the Incident Management Team.

- Usually only the supervisory Public Information Officer participates.

G. Visits to the Incident

Direct observation of incident activities will help you pull all the information together and make sense of it.

H. The Internet

Various agency web pages are useful for information gathering.

The National Situation Report, historical statistics, and terminology are available at www.nifc.gov.

Agency specific policies are found at their respective websites. Following is a list of helpful websites. These websites were current as of the printing of this course.

- ICS forms
  http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/forms/icsforms.htm

- National Incident Information Center
  http://www.fs.fed.us/news/fire/

- Fire Terminology
  http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/ioswt/glossary/glossary.htm

- Incident Management Team Center
  http://www.imtcenter.net/

- Inci Web
  http://www.inciweb.org

- National Information Officers Association
  http://www.nioa.org/

II. PREPARING FACT SHEETS

A. Fact Sheets

- Organize information quickly and easily for the media and public in a way they can understand.

- Present information about the incident in an abbreviated, bullet style.

- Are quicker to produce than news releases.

- Can be an important element of a briefing packet or be used as a briefing paper. These materials are provided to media and special guests and VIPs.

B. Organizing Information for a Fact Sheet

1. Organize by using the principles of good news writing.

   A good news story always contains five "w's" and an "h." Try to include as many as possible in the lead.

   - Who is the story about?
   - What is the subject of the story?
   - When did it occur?
   - Where did it occur?
   - Why did it occur?
   - How did it happen?

2. Order these facts according to their importance to the incident.

   If the most significant fact about a wildfire is that it burned a county commissioner's home, "who" would be the most important fact.

3. All applicable “five w’s and h” facts should be contained in the first three or four sentences.

   The rest of the fact sheet should present additional facts in order of importance and interest.

   You will need to determine which facts are relevant and important and which are not.

C. Fact Sheets - Good and Bad

Good fact sheets:

- Should be simple and concise. **Never use agency or technical jargon.**

- Are best if limited to one page so they can be easily posted.

- Always include the date and time the fact sheet was prepared and the name and telephone number of a contact person.

D. Fact Sheets and the Media

- Most reporters will write their own stories, based on the facts provided in a fact sheet or news release.

- Reporters rarely reprint fact sheets or news releases word for word.

- Your goal should be to write in a clear, concise manner so that reporters and editors can understand your meaning and use more of your writing in their stories.

FACT SHEET EXERCISE: Read “The Day the Dam Broke” scenario and prepare a fact sheet based on the information you determine to be most important and relevant.

The Day the Dam Broke Scenario:

Collapse of earthen dam on the Rio Bravo River. Dam was constructed in 1967 for irrigation and recreation. Dam is maintained by Laughlin Water District. Dam is approximately 4 miles northeast of Grass Valley, Colorado. The lake behind the dam was stocked in 1980 with 5,000 yellow perch. Last year a similar dam collapsed near Ripton, Colorado, killing seven anglers.

Break occurred at 2:00 p.m. on May 25 (Memorial Day Weekend). Cause of the collapse is unknown. Water is flowing at the rate of 50,000 cubic feet per second. Many homes are located on the banks of the river, downstream from the dam. The river is world famous for rafting and kayaking. The river also provides critical habitat for the endangered spotted salmon. It will take at least five days to repair the dam. Laughlin Road destroyed where it crosses river about .5 miles downstream from the dam site; road provides access for exclusive High Peak Resort. Tomatoes are the major crop in this area.

Evacuation of New Line Hamlet (population 60), one mile below dam site, called at 1:45 p.m. by Rogue County Sheriff’s office; condition unknown. County Sheriff assisted by Laughlin Volunteer Fire Department. Federal Bureau of Reclamation, Colorado Department of Water Resources, US Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management have provided 75 employees to assess resource damage and help with flood control measures. So far, agencies have spent $600,000 on emergency efforts.

Unseasonably high temperatures are predicted for the next week, which could cause snow to melt faster than normal and increase the amount of water flowing downstream. Piney Bluff campground is severely damaged by water. Several people camping at the campground when the incident occurred. Four persons with minor injuries at the campground. The rumor is that several people reported fissures in the dam’s face to the Water District last week.

III. WRITING A NEWS RELEASE

A. Purpose of the News Release

News releases provide a narrative summary of incident events. If well written, they can become the backbone for a reporter's story.

B. News Style

- Write news releases in the "inverted pyramid" style, with the most important thing first, the next most important thing second, and so on in descending order of importance.
  - This will cause you to have to choose which elements of your story to say first, second, and so on.
  - The "lead" sentence should give the essence of the story, written as if it is the only thing you will hear about the story.
  - Read newspaper stories to see the inverted pyramid in action.
- Write like a reporter would, so that your words get used.
  - This allows the news release writer to translate jargon and not leave that task to the reporter, who may or may not understand jargon used on the incident.
- Read sample news stories from today's paper to get a flavor for the kinds of words reporters use.
  - Notice that most words are Anglo-Saxon and not Latin derivatives.
- Use short words and rely on verbs to paint powerful and vivid pictures in the minds of people not versed in the details you and your incident team work with everyday.
  - "See Spot run," is more understandable to more people than, "Notice Spot perambulating in a highly excited state."

NEWS RELEASE EXERCISE: Use the fact sheet you just wrote to create a news release. You may refer to the example on page 4.19 in your student workbook. Double space the release; do not make it more than two pages long.

IV. INCORPORATING OTHER APPROVED MESSAGES

Gathering and disseminating the “hard facts” about an incident (the type, location, lives and property threatened, etc.) is the information officer’s first responsibility. But there is more to effective incident information than just providing routine facts and figures.

A. Personal Perspectives

- Direction of the Agency Administrator and the intentions of the Incident Commander.

- Feelings about how the work is going, assurances that things are well in hand, or carefully worded warnings to expect tough times ahead.

- Observations of the Incident Commander and other incident personnel are often helpful to the public and news media in understanding an incident.

B. Educational Messages

An incident also provides opportunities to communicate other important educational messages because agencies have the attention of the public and news media, and they are eager for information.

Take advantage of these “teachable moments.” A few key words or a simple phrase may be all you need to integrate an educational message into an incident fact sheet or news release, media interview, or personal conversation.

- Prevention

  Educate the public about how to prevent similar or related events from occurring in the future or how to minimize impacts of the incident that is already underway. A wildfire may provide an opportunity to educate the public about fire prevention.

  Example: The 5,000-acre Elkins Ranch Fire, now burning out of control 10 miles east of Reno, is the result of a carelessly discarded cigarette. Conditions are very dry and people who work or recreate outdoors should smoke only in their vehicles or cleared areas.

- Emergency Preparedness

  Educate the public about how to prepare for unpreventable types of disasters or emergencies in the future. A flood incident may be an opportunity to educate the public about proper evacuation procedures. A fact sheet, news release, media interview, or personal conversation might incorporate that information as follows:

  Example: The flood has caused more than 300 people to flee their homes. The weather forecast calls for more rain and warm temperatures, which increases the risk of additional flooding. People who live within two miles of the Payette River between Banks and Boise are urged to prepare for the possibility of flooding by packing valuables into their cars, placing sandbags around their home or business, and contacting the Red Cross to find out the location of the nearest emergency shelter.

- Resource Management

  Educate the public about other aspects of resource management. A hurricane incident may be an opportunity to educate people about the implications for resource management. A fact sheet, news release, or media interview might incorporate that information as follows:

  Example: Hurricane Humphrey has downed more than 500,000 pine trees in the National Forests of South Carolina. This has destroyed habitat for three rare species of birds, and damaged hundreds of miles of popular hiking and off-road vehicle trails. Foresters have already started planning salvage timber sales to remove some of the dead trees.

- Benefits or Positive Outcomes

  Many incidents, even natural disasters, have long term environmental benefits. For instance, human caused wildfires can result in improved wildlife habitat. However, benefits should be mentioned only with great sensitivity toward those people who may have suffered losses during the incident. In addition, be prepared to answer public and news media questions about why agencies are spending so much money to minimize the impacts of incidents if they are so beneficial.

- Interagency Cooperation and Volunteer/Community Efforts

  Recognize the efforts of other agencies in responding to incidents. This recognition is important because turf battles can develop if employees of other agencies feel they are not receiving proper credit.

  Don’t forget to mention the contributions of public service organizations, such as the Red Cross or local municipal departments, as they are often overlooked. If volunteers have assisted during the incident, be sure to give them credit. Recognition in a newspaper article or the local news will mean a great deal to them and encourage their future involvement.

FACT SHEET Ridge Fire

August 11, 2003

Information Contact: Diane Jakich, Sheila Comings
Phone: (406) 859-3211

What: Wildland fire, lightning-caused
Started: 8/8/2003
Location: 17 miles northwest of Philipsburg
Legal Description: Lat 46˚ 28.53 Long 113˚ 32.12
Jurisdiction: USDA-FS, Northern Region, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Cooperating Agencies: Granite County Sheriff's Office, Town of Philipsburg

Current size: Estimated 50 acres **Containment:** 0%
Estimated Containment Date: 8/16
Estimated Control Date: 8/20

Resources on Fire: There are **94** people, including **three** 20-person hand crews and **one** 14-person initial attack crew, assigned to the fire. Equipment includes **two** helicopters, **three** engines, and **one** dozer. **Two** skidgines have been ordered. A **Type 3 Incident Management Organization** is in place, under the leadership of Type 3 Incident Commander Tom Heintz and Trainee Gary Lambert. Incident Command will transition from the Pintler Ranger District in Philipsburg to the base camp when it's established.

Yesterday's Activity: The fire is located in a remote, inaccessible area of the Beaver Creek Drainage east of Sandstone Ridge. High temperatures, low humidities and erratic winds all contributed to rapid fire growth, but helicopter bucket work and retardant drops helped ease fire growth and brought many of the "spots" under control. Hand crews were not put on the fire due to accessibility issues and safety concerns.

Today's Accomplishments: A dozer-created skid trail increased access to the area and allowed firefighters to begin putting in hoselays around portions of the fire. Retardant proved to be successful and the fire has failed to burn any additional acreage. No handline has been put in at this time.

Special Concerns/ Safety: Safety is always #1 among all firefighting agencies. Inaccessibility and difficult terrain limit progress on fire-line construction.

Prevention Message: The fire danger in southwest Montana is very high to extreme. All federal and state lands moved into Stage 2 fire restrictions on July 28, 2003. These restrictions prohibit campfires and charcoal fires, but gas and propane stoves are okay to use. Smoking is prohibited outside of buildings, vehicles, and developed recreation sites unless you're in a 3 foot diameter area cleared of all burnable vegetation. Blasting, welding, chainsaw operation or other use of internal combustion engines or activities that generate flame or flammable material is prohibited between 1 p.m. and 1 a.m. Last, but not least, driving off designated roads and trails is prohibited with either vehicles or ATVs.

For additional information on the Ridge Fire, visit the Beaverhead-Deerlodge Forest website, at ***www.fs.fed.us/r1/b-d***

For further fire information around the region, visit ***www.fs.fed.us/r1/fire.html***

FACT SHEET 1	Cooney Ridge Complex

August 13, 2003 10:00 A.M.

Contact: Cooney Ridge Complex information contacts will be available later today after the Incident Command Post is established. A fire information hotline for large fires in Northern Idaho and Western Montana has been set up at the Northern Rockies Incident Information Center, 1-800-781-2811

Website: www.fs.fed.us/r1/fire/2003fires/index.shtml

What: Wildfire, lightning-caused **Started:** 8/08/03

Location: About 11 miles east of Florence, Montana

Legal Description: Complex contains Holloman, Cooney Ridge, 3 Mile, and Wanderer Fires

Current Size: Approx. 3000 acres **Containment:** 5%

Estimated Containment Date: Unknown

Threats to Human Life/Safety: Potential threat to residents east of Florence and in the Rock Creek drainage but **no** evacuations ordered at this time.

Resources Threatened: Potential threat to major power transmission lines serving the Bitterroot Valley; Miller Peak Electronic Site

Injuries in last 24 hours: 0

Jurisdiction: Montana DNRC- Southwest Land Office, USDA-Forest Service, Lolo National Forest and Bitterroot National Forest.

Other Cooperating Agencies: Ravalli County, Missoula County, BIA, BLM, NPS.

Resources on Fire: Bob Sandman's Northern Rockies Type 2 Incident Management Team will assume management of the incident at noon today. Two dozers and Florence Volunteer Fire Department.

Resources ordered: 12 Type 2 crews, 4 Type 1 crews, 2 Type 1 helicopters, 2 Type 2 helicopters, 2 Type 3 helicopters, 20 Type 6 engines. Resources are limited and will be assigned based on priority.

Remarks: The Incident Management Team is currently sizing up the fire. Infrared flight last night will be analyzed and give us more accurate data on fire size and location. The Incident Command Post will be located 4 miles east of Florence. Camp setup in process today.

Restrictions/Closures: Currently under Stage II Fire Restrictions. Areas and roads in the vicinity of the fires on the Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests have been closed.

FIRE INFORMATION FACT SHEET

DATE: TIME:

FIRE:

LOCATION:

ACRES:

FIRE CAMP LOCATION:

JURISDICTION:

INCIDENT:

FIRE INFORMATION OFFICER:

CONTACT NUMBER:

FIRE CONTROL AGENCIES:

ACTIONS TAKEN:

CONTAINMENT:

RESOURCES:

PERSONNEL:

TOTAL PERSONNEL:

ENGINES:

BULLDOZERS:

HELICOPTERS:

AIR TANKERS:

OTHER:

SPECIAL CONCERNS:

WEATHER AND FIRE BEHAVIOR:

ROAD AND/OR TRAIL CLOSURES:

This is an example of a news release written from the facts provided in the exercise. This is not the answer, just one of many possibilities.

NEWS RELEASE

Rogue County Disaster Office
News Contact: Helen Jones
3815 Pine Knoll
Grass Valley, Colorado 86547
Telephone: (732) 555-1212

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 25, 2009

DAM COLLAPSE FORCES NEW LINE EVACUATION

Grass Valley, Colo.--The 60 residents of New Line, Colo., assisted by Rogue County sheriff's deputies and Laughlin volunteer fire fighters, are scrambling for safety as an earthen dam on the Rio Bravo River collapsed from unknown causes at 2 p.m. today.

The dam is a mile upriver from the central Colorado hamlet.

The evacuees' condition is unknown, said Rogue County Sheriff Ronald Bosworth, but four persons were reported hurt at a nearby campground.

The sheriff said that, while details are sketchy, the injured were presumably in the Piney Bluff campground, which was severely damaged by flood waters unleashed by the dam break.

Several people had been reported camping there at the time of the incident.

Laughlin Road, which provides access to the High Peak Resort, is reported washed out where it crosses the Rio Bravo River, a half-mile downstream from the dam.

The dam, about four miles northeast of Grass Valley, was built in 1967 for recreation and irrigation purposes and was maintained by the Laughlin Water District. It provided water for local tomato growers and sport for perch anglers.

It's similar in construction to one that collapsed last year in Ripton, Colo., killing seven anglers, Sheriff Bosworth said.

NEWS RELEASE POINTS

- Did your news release have a header, with contact address, phone number, name, date?

- Did you use Inverted Pyramid and five W's and an H?

- Did you write in news style (using news style abbreviations, time, capitalization, distance, short grafs, direction, attribution, contractions)? See AP style guide for guidance.

- How did you deal with speculation and rumor about the leaking dam, and which campground was drowned? Avoid speculating, rumor, and unsubstantiated information.

- Did your news release offer assurance that help is being provided?

- Was your writing gender neutral, wherever possible (firefighters, anglers)?

- Did you provide attributions to opinions, claims or quotes?

- Did you use the word “said” instead of “stated” and other words?

UNIT 4 REVIEW

1. List one item of information you could get from each of the following incident management team members:

   A. Incident Commander:
   B. Safety Officer:
   C. Liaison Officer:
   D. Planning Section Chief:
   E. Situation Unit Leader:
   F. Resource Unit Leader:
   G. Operations Section Chief:
   H. Logistics Section Chief:
   I. Finance Section Chief:

2. The current official statistics on the incident may be found in the ____.

3. List the “five W’s and the H” of good news writing:

4. Why do incidents provide good opportunities to incorporate other educational messages?

5. List the three types of educational messages that could be incorporated in incident information.

Introduction to Incident Information, S-203

Unit 5 – Working with the News Media
Lesson A – Media 101

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Define principles of good media relations during an incident.

2. Explain different needs among media.

3. Describe the role of the news media.

4. List the two main functions of the PIOF in working with the news media.

I. THE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD MEDIA RELATIONS

A. As a PIOF, you must learn:

- What the media need to put together a report about an incident.

- How the media get what they need.

- Everything you can about the media in general and local media in particular.

- To share your media insights with other public information officers when an incident is in your area.

- What questions to ask local agency personnel if you are assigned outside your jurisdiction.

B. Some important general principles to follow when working with the media:

- Assume that each news media representative is a professional trying to do his or her best to convey accurate information to the public.

- Spend time getting to know reporters and building working relationships with the media that will be mutually beneficial long after the incident is over.

- Treat all reporters equally. Do not give preferential treatment to either your favorite local reporter or famous national correspondents.

- Tell the truth.

- Take the initiative to tell the bad news first. Never cover up bad news.

- Keep your commitments and don't promise anything you can't deliver.

- Understand and respect the fact that a reporter's number one priority is meeting their deadline.

- Remember that reporters will get the information with or without you.

II. UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEDIA

The need for information, interviews, visuals, and access to the incident varies greatly between print and electronic media and between national, regional, and local media.

Understanding these differences and working to accommodate them will increase your success in working with the media.

A. General Differences in Media Needs

1. Deadlines

Each media outlet has a specific deadline, a time by which reports must be turned in.

Deadlines vary greatly among media. Instead of trying to memorize all the different deadlines, simply ask the media what their deadline is and provide information they request in time for them to meet their deadline.

2. Scope of coverage

National and regional media usually want the "big picture" while local media want very specific information.

Know who you are talking to so you can properly emphasize the most important items.

B. Types of Media

1. Wire Services

The wire services provide information to almost all major newspapers, television stations, and radio stations across the country.

News organizations subscribe to wire services and scan them frequently for local, regional, and national information.

Sometimes, media outlets print or broadcast stories exactly as they are reported on the wire.

Other times, media outlets will contact the source identified in the wire story and write their own report.

Wire services should be the first media outlet you contact when an incident with any significant potential occurs.

Wire service reporters usually want a large amount of detailed information about incidents.

Sometimes they also want sidebar or feature stories. If the incident is significant enough, a wire service reporter may want to visit the site.

Often, local newspaper, television station, and radio station reporters sell their stories to wire services for use at the regional or national level.

2. Newspapers

There are two types of newspapers, dailies and weeklies. Newspaper reporters usually want a lot of detailed information about incidents.

They also appreciate suggestions for human interest or sidebar stories. In addition, newspaper reporters want graphics and photographs to illustrate the story.

Sometimes, a newspaper reporter will get the information they need over the telephone and a photographer will be sent to the scene to take pictures.

Other times, both the newspaper reporter and the photographer will travel to the scene.

Treat photographers the same way you treat reporters. Work with the operations section chief to determine the best places to photograph the incident.

If a newspaper is covering the incident but does not have a photographer available to send to the scene, they may accept photographs that you can provide.

If you are providing photographs to a newspaper, make sure they are high quality and that they are the appropriate size and have the right finish.

If you don't have the skills to shoot photographs yourself, you may want to hire professional photographers to take pictures with all rights reserved for the agency or agencies managing the incident.

The photographs can be used for incident documentation, training, and visual presentations after the incident is over as well as for newspaper coverage.

3. Radio

The medium of radio is one of immediacy. Radio stations usually broadcast news every hour or half hour.

Consequently, radio reporters usually want frequent updates, particularly during morning and afternoon drive times.

Radio news stories are usually very short, sometimes just two or three sentences, so reporters want only the most important facts about an incident.

Some radio reporters may want to visit the incident to obtain interviews and record background sound.

Radio reporters often tape record interviews over the telephone. They are required by law to notify you before they begin taping.

Sometimes, Public Information Officers will be asked to participate in live radio talk shows. These can last anywhere from a few minutes to as long as an hour if listeners are allowed to call in and ask questions.

4. Television

In television, pictures are more important than words. Television reporters want to be where the action is. They also want human emotion to help tell the story.

Television stories are usually fairly brief, ranging in length from 30 seconds to two minutes, so reporters want general information.

Television reporters often cover several stories each day so they usually want to get information and pictures quickly.

Television reporters may also want to interview Public Information Officers or other incident personnel live on the telephone or in person during newscasts or have them appear on the set in the studio.

Satellite technology, which enables television stations to transmit information instantaneously around the world from even the most remote locations, has changed the way television reporters operate.

If the incident develops into a major event, television stations may send satellite trucks to broadcast live from the incident around the clock.

5. Internet

Although many of the above media maintain web pages, there are news outlets that exist solely on the Internet.

They will take news anytime and in any form: audio, video, still photos, or text.

III. THE ROLE OF THE NEWS MEDIA DURING INCIDENTS

Incident managers must be concerned not only with what is happening on the ground, but also with the public's perceptions of the incident and actions that agencies are taking to respond to it.

In most cases, the media serve as the main source of information about incidents for the public. Most of us know this from our own experience of turning on the radio or television, or reading the paper, to find out the latest information about an incident that has occurred in an area where our family or friends live.

If we think back to those times, most of us can probably remember feeling grateful when the media had timely, accurate, and in-depth information and frustrated when they couldn't tell us much about what was going on.

It's important to keep that perspective when you are serving as a Public Information Officer.

Think of the media as allies, not adversaries. The media can:

- Provide a link between incident managers and the public.
- Reduce the number of citizens who call or visit the incident seeking information.
- Help stem panic or quash rumors.
- Mobilize volunteers if they are needed.
- Provide incident managers with information about public perceptions and community concerns.

IV. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICERS AND THE MEDIA

Well-informed Public Information Officers can greatly reduce demands on other incident personnel for information and interviews and can explain activities or actions that might otherwise be misinterpreted by the media.

A. Good Public Information Officers:

- Anticipate media needs and pre-plan responses.
- Serve as advocates for the media to other incident personnel.
- Are pro-active and go to the media with information.

B. Public Information Officer Tasks in Working with the Media

- Provide information by answering questions, handing out fact sheets, releasing news releases, and updating web pages.
- Provide interviews, or arrange for the media to interview other incident personnel.
- Schedule and conduct media briefings.
- Escort, or arrange escorts for, the media to visit the incident.
- Work with Operations to coordinate media flights of the incident.
- Document media contacts.
- Monitor news coverage of the incident.

LESSON 5A REVIEW

1. List three principles of good news media relations:

2. Describe two of the main functions of a Public Information Officer with regard to the news media:

3. List three ways the media can help Public Information Officers.

4. List one specific need of each medium.

   A. Television:

   B. Radio:

   C. Print:

5. The media are adversaries because they provide a link between the incident managers and the public.

   A. True
   B. False

Introduction to Incident Information, S-203

Unit 5 – Working with the News Media
Lesson B – Fostering Good Media Relations

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. List three media access issues that require direction from the IC.

2. Describe the Public Information Officer's role in arranging media briefings, escorts, and flights.

3. Describe three ways to address problems with the news media.

4. Explain the importance of documenting media contacts.

I. EARLY DECISIONS ABOUT MEDIA ACCESS

A. Direction from the Incident Commander

1. Expectations for media coverage from the IC and agency personnel.

2. Availability of the IC and other incident personnel for interviews.

3. Approval of incident information for release.

4. Whether or not media can fly in agency owned or contracted aircraft.

5. How much access the media will be allowed to the incident.

B. Alternatives for Media Access

1. Provide open access.

   - Best option

   - Helps ensure that incident personnel are the source of information that appears in news articles and broadcasts.

2. Deny access.

   - Almost always counter-productive.

   - If incident personnel will not talk to the media, other people will.

   - These individuals usually have less accurate and complete information about the situation and often have other agendas.

3. Control access.

- Often preferred by incident personnel but it usually does not sit well with reporters.

- Effort expended in achieving control and the hard feelings created usually come back to haunt you.

- Plan ahead; have enough personnel on hand to provide information and guide each reporter or news crew around the incident.

II. MEDIA ACCESS METHODS

A. Media Briefings

In incidents with a high level of media interest and fast-breaking developments, a daily or twice-daily media briefing featuring the IC, other members of the Incident Management Team, or the agency administrator can:

- Save time by reducing the number of requests for individual interviews.

- Help the media schedule their time.

- Alert reporters to good news and photo opportunities during the day.

B. When scheduling and conducting media briefings:

- Discuss the idea with the IC and other appropriate incident personnel and local agency representatives.

- Set the time, location, and duration of the briefing to meet the media's needs – 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. are generally good times for the media.

- Use an easily accessible location that doesn't interfere with incident management.

- Keep briefings relatively short – about 15 minutes of information – and then allow time for questions and answers.

- Help prepare the IC and other incident personnel and local agency representatives by preparing talking points and reviewing possible questions that reporters might ask.

- Prepare and post maps, charts, status board, and other visual aids to illustrate key points.

- Develop and distribute handouts.

- Notify the media of the time and location of the briefing. Make sure to include all media that have expressed interest.

- Have a PIO start the briefing, set the rules, make introductions, and conclude the briefing.

C. Media Escorts

Carefully plan and execute escorts:

- Always provide media escorts around the ICP, base camp, or incident. Unescorted reporters and photographers can unknowingly get into unsafe situations or interfere with incident operations.

- Coordinate media visits to the incident with operations section chief. The operations section chief can provide information about the most accessible locations, as well as the best photo and video opportunities, on the incident.

- Try to have more than one PIO or other incident personnel available to escort crews. Reporters and photographers do not like to travel in packs.

- On a fire incident, media must be escorted to the fire by qualified personnel to ensure safety. Plan ahead to discuss escort guidelines with safety officer or IC.

- If several reporters and photographers have requested a flight in agency owned or contracted aircraft, have them select one photographer and/or videographer to fly as a “pool” shooter. This person can provide the images to all interested news organizations and the agencies managing the incident as a condition of the flight.

- If there are multiple flight opportunities, but limited space available, you may want to have the media draw straws to determine who gets to fly and require the “winners” to provide their photographs and video to the “losers.”

- Plan in advance to have personal protective equipment available for any media who show up without it. The safety of media who visit incidents should be a top priority. If you can’t provide protective equipment, you may find yourself trying to deny access to reporters because you were not prepared to help them. Most reporters will not accept such excuses.

D. The News Media and Air Operations

- The news media often require flights over the incident to obtain photographs and video and to understand the “big picture.”

- For safety reasons, all media flights must be arranged and scheduled with the air operations branch director.

- If the airspace has been closed, media aircraft must have the air operations branch director’s permission to enter the airspace prior to flying over the incident.

- If you are contacted by the media and they express an interest in flying their own aircraft over the incident, alert them that they must negotiate approval of their entry and exit plans with the air operations branch director.

  Get the reporter’s name and phone number and give to the air operations branch director.

III. HANDLING PROBLEMS WITH THE MEDIA

No matter how good your relationship with the media is, there will be times when you have problems with them about the way they have covered an incident.

There are times when it is appropriate to voice your concerns and times when it is best to remain silent. You will need to use your judgment to determine which situations are serious enough to merit addressing and which are not.

A. Assessing Problems with Coverage

1. Lack of coverage or partial coverage.

2. Stories lacking balance and context.

3. Sensational stories that minimize the facts.

4. Editorials critical of incident management operations.

5. Tension or open antagonism toward PIOs.

B. Analyzing the Cause of the Problem

1. Were relations bad before the incident?

2. Have PIOs been responsive to the media's needs? Have they returned telephone calls, met deadlines, and provided accurate information?

3. Has anyone shown favoritism? Has anyone tried to control access unnecessarily?

4. Have incident personnel been rude, unhelpful, or arrogant?

5. Is this a real problem? Is it an internal problem?

C. Actions to Remedy Problems

If the answers to these questions indicate that the incident information operation is not to blame for the situation, and you decide that it needs to be addressed, take the following steps:

1. Do not overreact and do not become defensive. Maintain a calm, courteous, and professional attitude.

2. Talk to the reporter, face to face if possible.

3. Offer to clarify information.

4. Ask how PIOs can help prevent the situation from occurring again.

5. Try to find areas of mutual interest or define ways you can work together to meet your needs and the needs of the reporter. End the conversation on a positive note.

6. If you are experiencing a significant problem with the media or a particular reporter, keep the IC and everyone involved in the incident information operation informed.

7. If you cannot resolve the issue with the reporter, contact their boss, usually an editor, producer, or news director.

8. If the medium you are having trouble with is a newspaper, the article contains a serious factual error, and the reporter and/or editor refuse to run a correction, you may want to consider drafting and submitting a letter to the editor or a guest editorial (with supervisor approval).

IV. DOCUMENTING MEDIA CONTACTS

A. Documenting media contacts is important to:

- Ensure you have the information needed to keep interested news organizations updated with information on incident status.

- Document the history of the incident and track any problems with the media should they arise.

Use a communications log for routine contacts and the ICS 214, Unit Log for significant events.

B. Regardless of which form you use, include:

- Caller’s name.
- The news organization they represent.
- Time, date, and subject of the call.
- Caller’s telephone and fax number.
- Whether it is an incoming or outgoing call.

C. Monitoring News Coverage of Incidents

Public Information Officers should monitor newspaper, television, radio, and online news coverage of the incident for accuracy.

- Clip newspaper articles or print or save them from the internet
- Record news broadcast stories of the incident.

Increasingly, documentation is recorded electronically, not on paper. Follow the directions of your supervisor in documenting news coverage of the incident.

LESSON 5B REVIEW

1. Early in an incident, you should meet with the Incident Commander to discuss: (list three)

2. The best option is to provide __________ access for the media to an incident.

3. List three things to do to prepare for a media briefing.

4. What is the top priority in planning to escort reporters?

5. If a television station calls the Incident Information Center and requests to fly their own helicopter over an incident, you should: (circle one)

   A. Forward the call to the Incident Commander for action.
   B. Tell the television station to have a safe flight.
   C. Contact air operations and arrange it.

6. When a problem arises with the news media over coverage of an incident, the best way to handle it is to go straight to the editor of the newspaper or producer of the radio or television station.

   A. True
   B. False (the reporter who wrote the story should be talked to first)

7. Why is it important to document all media contacts?

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Unit 5 – Working with the News Media
Lesson C – Media Interview Exercise

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Identify three ways to prepare for interviews.

2. List three do's and don'ts for interviews.

3. Describe how talking points help prepare for interviews.

4. Participate in simulated media interviews.

I. PREPARATION FOR EFFECTIVE MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Providing information and interviews to the news media, either on the telephone or in person, can be an intimidating experience, even for people who have done it many times.

A. How to Prepare for Interviews

1. Find out as much as you can about the story the reporter plans to write. Ask:

   - If it is a general or feature story.

   - What section of the paper or what newscast it is being prepared for.

   - What questions the reporter is going to ask.

2. If it is a telephone interview and you don't feel prepared, ask if you can call back in a few minutes. Take some time to get organized and then follow up.

B. Determine if you're the right spokesperson.

1. The spokesperson should have:

   - In-depth knowledge of the interview subject
   - A presentable appearance
   - A pleasant voice

   If you don't meet these criteria, find another spokesperson that does.

2. Prepare for the interview by asking yourself:

   - What would the public want to know about the incident?
   - Why is it important?
   - Who is affected by it?

3. Develop two to three key messages and other educational messages:

    - Deliver them during the interview.

    - Try to give the most important first.

II. INTERVIEW DO'S AND DON'TS

A. Do's

1. Be concise; give 10 to 20 second sound bites, regardless of the medium.

2. Be prepared to answer tough questions by anticipating them and roughing out an answer in your mind.

3. Remember, it's okay to make a mistake. Ask the reporter if you can start over if you stumble in your response or you aren't happy with your answer.

4. Speak in personal terms.

    - Don't say, "The (agency) thinks..."

    - Instead, say "We think..."

5. Remember that you represent the agency or agencies managing the incident. You have no personal opinion.

6. Be quiet when you finish answering a question.

    Reporters know that silence for some people is uncomfortable and sometimes they use it to get you to say something you didn't intend to say.

7. Assume the reporter needs help.

    - Use cues such as, “The important thing to remember is...” or “The point is...”

    - They will help you maintain control of the message.

8. Avoid speaking for other agencies or other individuals.

9. Keep your answers simple.

B. Don’ts

1. Don’t call other people names or talk down to them. Don’t try to discredit people or organizations.

2. Don’t use jargon and acronyms.

3. Don’t say it if you don’t want it on the airwaves or in print – even if you think the cameras and microphones are off. Remember, there is no such thing as “off the record.”

4. Don’t ever say “No comment.” If you can’t answer a question, say so and explain why.

5. Don’t get angry or upset. If you are badgered, stay calm, take a deep breath and restate your major point as nicely as possible.

6. Don’t answer a question if you don’t know the answer. Say you don’t know the answer and promise to get it. Then follow through. Never guess or speculate.

7. Don’t repeat language that is negative or uncomfortable.

8. Don’t try to be cute or funny.

C. TV Do's and Don'ts

Because television is a visual medium, on-camera interviews require some additional preparation.

1. TV Do's

- Before you start the interview, look behind you. If you don't like the background, ask the photographer to find another location.
- Wear attire that is appropriate for the setting.
- Make sure that your appearance is presentable.
- Look at the reporter, not the camera, while you are answering questions.
- Watch your body language and facial expressions.

2. TV Don'ts

- Avoid wearing hats. If you must wear one, make sure it is appropriate.
- Do not wear sunglasses or photosensitive glasses.

III. TALKING POINTS

- Brief statements that you can develop to explain an incident.
- Meant to be spoken aloud, in plain language.
- Should be approved by your information supervisor or the IC.
- Keep you focused during an interview.
- Dynamic and may change over the course of an incident.

MEDIA INTERVIEW ROLE PLAYING EXERCISE.

LESSON 5C REVIEW

1. What can an incident information officer do to prepare for a media interview?

2. What should you do if you make a mistake during an interview?

3. When should you respond to an interview question with "No comment"?

4. If you don't know the answer to a question, you should:

5. When you finish answering a question you should:

6. What are talking points? (Choose all that are correct)

   A. Brief statements that you can develop to explain an incident. Meant to be spoken aloud, in plain language.

   B. Are long, complex thoughts in bureaucratic jargon that don’t explain much at all.

   C. Should be approved by your information supervisor or the IC.

   D. Keep you focused during an interview.

   E. Are read from a script you recite into a microphone.

   F. Dynamic and may change over the course of an incident.

   G. Are never written down.

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Unit 6 – Working with Other Key Audiences
Lesson A – Community Relations

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Describe the importance of working with residents of communities affected by incidents.

2. Describe principles and techniques of community relations.

3. Describe situations that require special community relations actions.

I. WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY INCIDENTS

Incidents can:

- Be traumatic for people who live, work, and recreate in affected areas.
- Have physical, psychological, and economic impacts on well-being of communities.
- Be relatively simple and easy to resolve, like traffic problems.
- Be very complex and seemingly intractable, such as loss of community identity.

Even the most efficient and well-trained incident management teams can be confronted with serious community concerns.

For instance, the most effective firefighting actions might not satisfy residents if they think their needs and concerns are not being addressed by the incident management team.

A. Community Outreach and Involvement

1. Outreach is a key responsibility of PIOs and other incident personnel.

   - There may be little media interest or media information may not be timely or detailed enough to meet community needs.
   - In remote areas, residents may not have regular access to the media.

2. PIOs have two main functions:

   - Keep individuals and organizations in affected communities informed about, and involved in, the incident and incident management activities.

   - Enable individuals and organizations in affected communities to express their concerns, needs, and issues to the incident management team.

B. The Importance of Community Relations

1. Reduce uncertainty and anxiety, quell rumors, and stem panic.

2. Help people make informed decisions and take appropriate actions.

3. Inform individuals and organizations about what to expect after an incident.

4. Empower people

   - Informed people feel they have some degree of control over their situation.

   - While incident personnel are generally portrayed as “heroes” by the media, residents of communities are often described as “victims.” Work to avoid reinforcing this idea.

   - Feelings of helplessness can lead to anger, resentment, and counter-productive actions such as:

     – Negative remarks to the media

     – Petitions to incident management teams

     – Disruptive interference in incident management activities

5. Engage people in the effort.

   PIOs can provide or support avenues for individuals and organizations to get involved in the incident management effort such as volunteering to complete necessary tasks.

6. Build links or relationships between agencies and communities for the duration of the incident and for the long term.

   Crises bring people together – even people with different values, backgrounds, and beliefs will usually put their differences aside and work together for the common good.

   Effective community information and involvement during an incident can strengthen good agency/community relationships and help repair bad ones.

7. Help people express their feelings.

   Individuals who live in communities affected by incidents often experience a wide range of emotions such as:

   - Fear
   - Anxiety
   - Anger
   - Hostility
   - Insecurity
   - Confusion
   - Frustration
   - Pleasure
   - Gratitude

8. Demonstrate agency concern, responsibility, and competence.

   PIOs can reassure individuals and organizations in communities that incident managers understand what the community values such as property, landmarks, the economy, and air quality.

II. PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS

A. Principles

1. All communities are different and will require different outreach and involvement strategies.

- People who live, work, and recreate in affected communities need accurate, timely, detailed information about incidents that are impacting them or may impact them.

- Good outreach and involvement strategies recognize and plan for the fact that incidents can create a high degree of stress and tension within and among communities.

- Affected communities recover best when individuals and organizations are involved in some way in incident management activities.

- Communities consist of a variety of individuals and groups that often have different needs.

- Incidents provide opportunities to educate communities about other agency programs and activities.

2. Remember, with communities you must:

- Be flexible
- Listen, listen, listen
- Meet them on their turf
- Answer their questions
- Earn credibility
- Make sure they hear it from you first
- Involve community members in providing info
- Follow through on commitments

B. Considerations

As you think about the community you're working with consider:

1. Past similar incidents

2. Potential effect on community

3. Perceived or real threat

4. Planned events/historical happenings

5. Effects on value systems

    - Rangeland may be more valuable to a rancher than a home.

    - Pine trees may be more valuable to a cabin owner than the cabin.

6. Economic viability

7. Community resources available

C. Key Audiences

Identify the communities directly affected by the incident and key individuals and organizations within those communities.

- Local agency personnel are the best source to identify key people.

- The agency administrator may have key individuals and organizations that he or she wants you to pay special attention to.

1. Landowners

   This can be a diverse group with different management objectives for their individual properties. They are likely to feel threatened by an incident and will want to know of planned incident management actions. Their property may be the source of their income.

2. Homeowners and homeowners associations

   These individuals want lots of information and contact with incident personnel – their homes may be at risk. Information officers can help minimize their fears by providing incident information and/or referrals to community service organizations for assistance.

3. Elected officials

   Elected officials at all levels – local, county, state, and federal – will want to be kept informed about incidents that affect their constituents.

4. Community leaders

   This group can include prominent teachers, business people, or community service providers.

5. Local community service organizations

   These organizations can often contribute important resources or knowledge to incident management activities. They also need information to plan their own operations.

6. Permittees

   People who have permits to graze livestock, mine, serve as outfitters and guides, and conduct other economic activities in areas involved in, or located near incidents will want to be kept informed about the status of the incident and incident management activities that may affect their operations.

7. Recreationists

People who hike, mountain bike, fish, camp, and engage in other outdoor recreation activities located in or near areas involved in incidents will want to know whether to go ahead with plans to visit those areas or go somewhere else.

8. Business owners

Businesses, particularly those that rely on tourists, can be severely impacted during an incident because of loss of revenue. Sometimes the public will perceive a problem where there is none and will avoid businesses and areas that are not affected by the incident. PIOs can help get the word out about what facilities and services are and are not affected.

9. Conservation groups

Conservation groups will want to know how incidents, and incident management activities, affect their area of interest, such as wildlife.

10. Tribal governments

Incident may be in or near Native American tribal lands. Tribal organizations should be informed of plans and activities related to the incident.

11. Other groups

During an incident, people who live or work in affected areas will want frequent updates about the status of incidents and specific details about incident management activities. Other groups and organizations may include schools, churches, summer homeowners, senior centers, and law enforcement.

III. CONDUCTING COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

Use existing information networks to communicate with key individuals. For instance, if a local service club has a weekly breakfast meeting, a PIO may be able to appear as a guest speaker.

Local agency personnel can provide you with valuable information about credible ways to communicate with key individuals and organizations in affected communities.

A. One-Way Communication

1. Neighborhood information centers

   These centers, which are located in communities affected by an incident, can be used to provide information and assistance to residents and visitors.

2. Unstaffed information kiosks or bulletin boards at strategic locations.

   Post incident information and maps at places where incident management activities draw a crowd:

   - Grocery stores
   - Post offices
   - Community buildings
   - Libraries
   - Banks
   - Churches
   - Evacuation centers
   - Roadblocks, highway turnouts
   - Fixed wing bases and helibases

3. Fact sheets and maps

   Update these as often as necessary, daily or twice a day, and distribute to local businesses, elected officials, and others.

4. Programs for local cable television

   Some communities operate their own cable television channels and will run short incident updates, maps, and other visuals once or twice a day. Other cable television channels feature community message boards between programs that may be used to provide information.

5. Internet sites

   Many agencies, communities, and groups already have websites. You may have information that they want to post or link to their webpage.

B. Two-Way Communication

Individuals and organizations in affected communities often want to express their needs, concerns, and issues to incident personnel.

1. Individual contacts and visits

   If key individuals are spread out over a wide area, PIOs and other incident personnel can visit them in person or call to update them on the status of the incident and receive any input they might have on incident management activities.

   a. Traplines

      A series of places, such as local businesses, agency offices, homes, and bulletin boards, where PIOs leave or post incident information on a regular basis. Frequency is determined by need.

   b. Evacuation centers

      High priority for one-on-one visits.

2. Town hall meetings

   If residents are not spread out over too wide of an area, town hall meetings can be a good way for the IC or PIO to provide a briefing on the incident and incident management activities, listen to comments, and respond to questions.

   Representatives of cooperating agencies may also want to participate. However, large meetings can be risky when emotions are running high.

3. Community/civic organization meetings

   Community and civic organizations will often agree to let a PIO or other incident personnel speak at a meeting.

4. School programs

   These can be used to help children cope with incidents affecting their communities and convey information to parents.

5. Special community events

   If a special event occurs during an incident, such as a county fair, you may be able to set up a booth to provide information, respond to questions, and listen to concerns of residents and visitors.

   Reporting and responding to these issues and concerns will build credibility for the incident management team and the agencies they represent.

6. Relaying community feedback to incident management team

   Two-way communications allow community members to:

   - Tell you how the community perceives your efforts.
   - Help you find rumors.
   - Tell you about specific concerns/issues and local political sensitivities.
   - Provide recommendations to the incident management organization and local agency about how to respond to community concerns, needs, and issues.

C. Getting Individuals and Organizations Involved

1. Direct or support volunteer efforts.

   Volunteers can:

   - Help conduct community relations activities.
   - Provide food and other supplies for neighbors who have been forced from their homes.
   - Assist in any number of other incident management activities.

2. Provide tours of the incident base and incident.

   - Residents are usually very interested in seeing incidents and incident management activities up close.
   - Tours can be an excellent way to educate the public and gain their support.

D. Wrap Up

- Write thank you notes and forward future commitments to arriving team or home unit.

- Collect posted materials.

IV. SPECIAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS EFFORTS

Some situations indicate a heightened need to reach out to individuals and organizations in affected communities:

- When incidents threaten or impact populated areas.

- In the event of deaths or serious injuries.

- When major travel corridors are closed or restricted.

- When rumors, political concerns, or community actions hamper incident operations.

- When communities can take action to prepare for or prevent damage in the midst of an expanding incident.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS EXERCISE:

Read the scenario and take notes. The instructor will then assign your group one of the issues below. In your group, develop a community information and involvement strategy to address your assigned issue. Write your answers on a flip chart and present your strategy to the class.

Scenario:

The Pitchfork Fire started two days ago during a thunderstorm. It has burned almost 10,000 acres and shows little sign of slowing down. Extreme fire behavior is predicted as winds are expected to gust to 35 miles per hour, relative humidity drops into single digits, and temperatures hover in the mid-90s.

The fire is located about six miles northwest of Ridgetop, a town of 1,200 people, which depends heavily on summer tourism. Several issues are brewing in Ridgetop and the residents are becoming more vocal about them.

The IC is worried that any one of these community concerns could turn into a major issue. He wants to spend more time concentrating on fire strategy and less on dealing with the community. He wants the PIOs to come up with a community relations plan that will resolve as many of these issues as possible.

Group 1 Issues:

- Two grocery stores are in Ridgetop, and the owner of one says all of the fire business is going to his competitor.

- The chamber of commerce is very concerned that news of the fire will discourage tourists from coming to town. Pitchfork Creek is one of the best trout fisheries in the state. Summer is the prime tourist season for the town.

Continued on next page.

Group 2 Issues:

- The weekly newspaper, “The Pitchfork Prong,” ran a story quoting local people looking for work on the fire who weren’t hired. “They’ll bring in crews from another state, but won’t hire locals,” one resident grumbled.

- The mayor of Ridgetop called the IC to complain that while he supported the firefighting effort, he was not getting accurate, up-to-date information, putting him at a disadvantage with townspeople. “I can’t answer their questions,” he says.

- Rumors are buzzing that the town itself might be in danger if the prevailing wind changes. Privately, the IC says he has a concern, too.

Group 3 Issues:

- Two cabins have been destroyed by the fire. The owner of one says he’s disappointed that a greater effort wasn’t made to protect his cabin. “While my cabin burned, firefighters were sleeping in the city park,” he told TV reporters who were covering the fire.

- A local conservation group, “Friends of the Pitchfork,” has volunteered to work on firelines in order to help protect habitat for a sensitive plant, the pitchfork livervetch (pitchforkius burnnalotsa).

Group 4 Issues:

- The owner of the local bowling lanes, “The Down and Out Pin,” says he’ll give a 50% discount to anyone who wants to “come in and relax after a shift on the line. Beer will be half price, too.” He wants the IC to get the word to the line.

- A dozen people who said they were firefighters stayed at a local motel for two nights, then left without paying. The owner of the motel is furious and wants immediate payment.

- The IC has a message to call Mr. Ronald Fannortner, a cabin owner in the area and the brother-in-law of Congresswoman Betty Lou Fannortner, who was quoted in the paper yesterday as “taking a keen interest in management of the Pitchfork Fire.”

LESSON 6A REVIEW

1. Why shouldn't Public Information Officers rely on the mass media to reach individuals and organizations in communities affected by incidents?

2. List three principles of effective community relations.

3. Which of the following <u>are not</u> purposes of community relations activities?

   A. Inform individuals and organizations about what to expect after the incident.

   B. Demonstrate agency concern, responsibility, and competence.

   C. Engage people in the effort.

   D. Enable key individuals and organizations to determine incident strategy and tactics.

   E. Establish links or relationships between publics and agencies for the duration of the incident and for the long term.

4. List three key individuals and organizations that should be included in community outreach activities.

5. Name two community relations methods you could use to provide information to key individuals and organizations and also allow them to ask questions and voice their concerns and suggestions.

6. Name three situations that may require special community relations:

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Unit 6 – Working with Other Key Audiences
Lesson B – Internal Audiences and Cooperators

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Identify internal audiences and cooperators and describe the importance of keeping them informed.

2. Describe tools and techniques to keep internal audiences and cooperators informed and involved.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

A. Helps Maintain Morale and Team Spirit

Informed employees are happier and more productive.

B. Ensures Efficient Incident Management

Good internal communication ensures that incident personnel have the information they need to make strategic and tactical decisions and avoid duplication of effort.

C. Promotes Support for Participation in Incident Management

Many employees who work on incidents do so at the expense of their "real jobs." Agency managers and supervisors are more likely to let employees serve on Incident Management Teams or work on incidents that occur on other units if they are informed about the incident.

D. Identifying Internal Audiences

While each incident will be different, there are generally four main internal audiences:

1. Incident personnel

These are the people who are working to manage a wildland fire, control a flood, or clean up an oil spill.

2. Command staff

3. Local agency personnel

   These are mainly the people who work in the agency on whose jurisdiction the incident occurred.

4. Cooperating organizations

   These include local government agencies as well as private and non-profit service and emergency organizations.

II. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION METHODS

A. Keeping Incident Personnel Informed

Incident personnel need two main types of information:

1. Information about what's happening on the incident.

   Incident personnel can become overly focused on their particular work task and lose sight of the big picture.

   It is important to keep them updated on what's happening on the rest of the incident so that they understand the progress and the contributions they are making.

2. Information about the outside world.

   Many incident personnel work on incidents for several weeks at a time, or in the case of firefighters, travel from one incident to the next for months on end.

   After a while, they start to feel isolated from the outside world. They want to know what is happening in current events and how their favorite baseball team is doing. It is the responsibility of PIO to provide that information.

B. Methods of Keeping Incident Personnel Informed

There are many ways to keep incident personnel informed about what is happening on the incident and in the outside world.

1. Bulletin boards

Posting bulletin boards in strategic locations at the ICP and base camp is a good way to provide information to incident personnel.

Bulletin boards should be updated at least once a day and preferably twice. Be careful never to post anything of questionable taste.

The bulletin boards should contain:

a. A map of the incident

b. Fact sheets or news releases about the incident

c. A copy of the Incident Action Plan

d. Safety messages

e. A list of crews and agencies assigned to the incident

f. An incident management organization chart

g. News clippings and photos of the incident

h. A National Interagency Fire Center situation report or a geographic area's situation report

i. Front page newspaper stories

j. Sports pages

k. Comics

l. Letters of appreciation from the public

m. Other relevant information from the internet

2. Newspapers

   a. Order daily newspapers to monitor media coverage of the incident.

   b. Order enough so that you can place a few copies in strategic locations at the Incident Command Post and base and send a few copies to satellite locations.

3. Incident newsletter

   On longer incidents, you may want to publish a simple daily newsletter.

   This could include:

   a. Messages from the IC

   b. An incident status report

   c. A map of the incident

   d. Safety messages

   e. General news items

   f. Sports scores

   g. Comics

h. Human interest stories about incident personnel

i. Feature stories about incident management activities

j. News about cooperating agencies

k. Recognition of individuals and crews for special efforts, contributions, and heroic acts

Make sure to distribute copies of the incident newsletter to satellite locations.

4. Television programs

If an important news program is scheduled that should be seen by all incident personnel, try to record it on a video cassette recorder and show it several times on a monitor at the ICP and base camp.

5. Presentations

On long running incidents, you may want to schedule short presentations in the evenings for incident personnel. These presentations could be on almost any appropriate topic of interest, for instance the history and significance of the area where the incident is occurring, or the culture of local residents.

C. Keeping the Incident Management Team Informed

Inform members of the command and general staff of information that can impact incident operations. For instance, reports that incident personnel are using illegal narcotics.

- Communicate through formal channels, such as briefings and meetings.

- Can also communicate through informal conversations.

D. Keeping Local Agencies Informed

Local agency personnel are usually very interested in incidents that occur in their "backyard" and will be the ones dealing with long-term effects after the incident is over.

Local agency personnel can respond to basic public and internal inquiries about incidents, relieving pressure on the incident information operation.

They can also provide people who want more extensive information with the Incident Information Center telephone number.

- Develop a list of local agency offices, telephone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses.

- Send updates to local agency offices, as well as all fact sheets and news releases, at least once a day and preferably twice.

- If you post an Internet site, the local agency may be able to get the incident information they need there.

E. Keeping Cooperating Agencies Informed

Most incidents involve several different agencies – federal, state, and local. Incidents either occur on land under the jurisdiction of more than one agency, or personnel from different agencies are working on the incident due to mutual aid/closest forces agreements for wildland fires and interagency mobilization.

Incident management teams also consist of employees of many different agencies. In addition, private and non-profit service and emergency organizations are also involved.

- Communicate with cooperating agencies in the same way you do with local agencies.

- Letters of appreciation to cooperating agencies after the incident are also part of good internal communication.

F. Keeping Home Offices Informed

Personnel who are sent to work on incidents from other areas need recognition on their home turf that what they are doing is worthwhile.

This helps build support for participation in incidents and on incident management teams.

- If time permits, you may want to consider providing incident information to the home offices of personnel from out of the area and to media located in those towns.

- You can get information about the home offices of incident personnel from the resources unit leader.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS EXERCISE.

The instructor will read a scenario and then assign your group one of the issues below. In your group, develop a strategy to address your assigned issue. Present your strategy to the class.

Group 1 Issues:

A story in the “Pitchfork Prong” newspaper featured a firefighter who had worked 14 days in a row. The story was fine, although the firefighter did complain that “after a while, the food gets pretty bad. Yesterday, the bag lunch contained two sandwiches that must have had a pound of margarine and two scoops of mayonnaise on each of them.” The caterer read the story and is very upset, claiming that the quote will hurt his chance of getting called to other incidents. Privately, you agree with the firefighter – the caterer doesn’t exactly run a four-star kitchen. A local community group has volunteered to provide “supplemental meals” to firefighters who are hungry.

Continued on next page.

Group 2 Issues:

The north end of the fire is particularly troublesome. Access is limited to helicopters because the terrain is rugged. The operations section chief decided to spike out two crews on that edge of the fire during the second day. Both of the crews are from out of state. Radio contact is the only means of communication. At the morning briefing, you pick up information that the spiked-out crews are feeling isolated from the rest of the fire organization and not getting much news about how fire fighting is progressing. You've heard that the spiked crews might be there for another week. What can you do to help the crews in spike camp?

Group 3 Issues:

The Pitchfork Ranger District has assigned an agency representative to the fire, but he doesn't seem very interested in the job. Both you and the liaison officer are having a hard time tracking him down. In the meantime, the IC has heard from both the district ranger and the forest supervisor that they'd like to be "better informed" about the fire's progress. The liaison officer is having a difficult time keeping up with just the local non-government interests. At the end of the evening briefing, you hear someone from the district ranger's staff say, "Well, the IC is from the National Park Service and you know they just don't do things like we do." You feel a communication rift is developing between the team and the local jurisdiction, and perhaps, within the fire organization itself. What can you do to address the problem?

Group 4 Issues:

Because of the dangerous weather conditions and the rugged terrain that much of the fire is burning in, injuries are reported every day. The medical unit leader has hired three local EMTs to assist on the fire. Two of the EMTs are doing excellent work, but the third seems to have an attitude problem. He is especially critical of the medical unit leader and will talk about her to almost anyone. Specifically, he accuses her of not responding properly to a firefighter who fell and might have broken an ankle. "She didn't even know how to tell the difference between a sprain and a break," he says at lunch. The EMT has even complained to the IC about the medical unit leader, who has 20 years of experience and a good reputation. The EMT lives in Ridgetop and you can only guess what kind of false information he is spreading around town. What steps do you need to take?

LESSON 6B REVIEW

1. Why is it important to keep internal audiences informed? List two reasons.

2. Which are not internal audiences for incident information?

   A. Incident Personnel
   B. Command and General Staff
   C. National news media
   D. Local agencies
   E. Local homeowners' association
   F. Cooperating organizations

3. Which of the following should be posted on bulletin boards for incident personnel? (circle all correct answers)

   A. Map of the incident
   B. Sports page
   C. Safety messages
   D. Pages from Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition
   E. List of crews assigned to incident

4. Public Information Officers should communicate with other members of the Command and General staff only in formal briefings.

   A. True
   B. False

5. List three types of cooperating agencies that might be involved in incidents.

6. Why is it important to provide incident information to local agency offices and cooperating organizations?

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Unit 7 – Long-Term Planning and Strategy

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Describe why it is important to plan ahead.

2. Describe three special situations.

3. Describe incident characteristics that affect public interest and incident complexity.

4. List the elements of a simple information strategy.

I. PLANNING AHEAD

Planning ahead in an incident is crucial; if the complexity of the incident grows, you'll need to keep up.

In the rush of events, planning can seem like an "extra" you don't have time for. Planning will allow you to get control of the information operation, so you aren't swept along by events.

Planning ahead allows you to anticipate expected changes in complexity, availability of resources, and changes in the size of incident organization, including demobilization. After dealing with initial information needs, begin planning for the longer term.

Usually, *at a fire incident*, a PIO1 or PIO2 will be assigned to develop an incident information strategy, but you might find yourself in charge as the incident escalates and you need to know the basics of planning ahead.

II. SPECIAL SITUATIONS

The reason you plan is so you can handle the unexpected. Every incident has the potential for special situations, such as accidents, to occur.

A. Special Situations Require Additional Planning

- These situations can dramatically increase already heavy demands for incident information.
- They can become incidents within the incident.
- If not managed properly, such events can be extremely disruptive to normal incident operations and can seriously damage the managing agency's reputation.
- Be ready to handle special situations by anticipating things that can go wrong during an incident and preparing contingency plans to dealing with them.

B. Examples of Special Situations

1. Injuries and fatalities

   Never release names or identifying characteristics, such as crew name or base station, of incident personnel or the public who have been injured or killed during an incident until the next of kin have been notified and the IC has given permission. The lead law enforcement agency will usually notify the next of kin.

2. Evacuations

   Evacuations are normally ordered, conducted, and rescinded by law enforcement agencies.

3. Investigations

   If the cause of an incident is well established and the IC gives permission, the Incident Information Center may release an approved statement about the cause.

   In all other cases, it is best to say the cause of the incident is under investigation.

   - Aircraft crash
   - Equipment accident
   - Law enforcement action or investigation
   - Legislative investigation

4. Other special situations

   - Major response error, resulting in loss of property or injuries

   - Resource shortages

   - VIP criticism of incident operations

   - Angry public

- Stress related reactions by agency personnel or public
- Problems associated with the use of an inmate crew
- Conflict between cooperating agencies
- Defamation of cooperators
- Destruction of homes
- Rumors
- Religious or cultural insensitivity

C. Role Clarification

These situations often involve other jurisdictions that may have lead responsibility.

1. Before taking action in special situations, be sure of your role.

2. It is critical to know the lead agency's policies for handling special situations and the release of information to the news media and public.

   Some agencies will want the incident management team to handle special situations while others will want local personnel to take care of them.

3. Discuss the policy with the PIOs to whom you report, the IC, or local agency administrator if you are the only information officer assigned to the incident.

4. Reach agreement ahead of time on what your role will be in the event of a special situation.

III. FACTORS THAT ADD COMPLEXITY TO AN INCIDENT

When planning ahead, you need to assess the complexity of the incident and the public's interest in it.

For example, an incident that threatens human life would probably generate a high level of public and news media interest, whereas an incident in a remote area may not.

A. Factors

- Visibility, size and location or proximity to important landmarks or sensitive environmental areas.
- Rarity of the incident.
- Potential for the incident to escalate.
- Likely duration of the incident.
- Damage or the potential for damage, to property and resources.
- Deaths or serious injuries, or the threat of death or serious injuries, to incident personnel or civilians.
- Prominent people affected by the incident.
- Cause of the incident.
- Similar incidents occurring elsewhere.
- Values at risk.
- Fuel type, fuel load, topography, weather
- Agency policy
- Interagency cooperation on a large scale and complex jurisdictions.

- Greater public awareness and concern about environmental issues.

- Legal, budget, and political constraints and sensitivities.

- Greater potential exposure of the public to wildland fire, especially in the wildland/urban interface.

- Public distrust of government agencies.

- Increasingly sophisticated and competitive 24-hour news media and internet coverage.

B. Assess, Analyze, Act – Long Term Planning

Apply the "AAA" thought process to long-term planning as you did in meeting your initial information needs.

1. <u>Assess</u>: Complexity and public interest.

   If you're the first PIO to arrive on an incident, consider the things that could make the incident grow beyond your capability to respond.

   - Will the incident last long enough and affect enough people so that you'll need an information center?

   - Will you need to order more PIOs to deal with increasing interest?

   - Will you need to set up bulletin boards or establish a "trapline"?

   - Will you need field information operations?

   - Will you need to order supplies (vehicles, cameras, phones)?

2. Analyze: Coming up with a plan.

- After the Assessment phase, project the effect of these factors on the future of your information operation.

- Consider the concerns of the IC and local agency administrator.

- Develop an information strategy.

3. Act: Carry out the strategy.

After developing the information strategy, as described below, and receiving approval from the IC, it's time to carry out the strategy.

- Place orders

- Lay groundwork for any information centers, traplines, and other steps your plan calls for.

- Local agency resources may help you get through the next few hours or days until more help arrives.

IV. DEVELOPING AN INFORMATION STRATEGY

A simple strategy should include:

- Incident summary (basic facts)
- Concerns/issues
- Information objectives
- Audiences
- Methods for reaching audiences
- Key messages
- Strategy monitoring
- Communication methods

This strategy can be a one-page write up or a list of bullets on a 3 x 5 card. Don't get stuck in a reactive mode – be positive and "proactive."

INFORMATION STRATEGY EXERCISE.

Use the scenario below to develop an information strategy for the next three days.

<u>Scenario</u>:

A wildland fire in the Pitchfork Creek drainage is now in its second day. The fire has grown from 50 acres to 2,000 acres. News media and resident interest is increasing as rapidly as the acreage. You've been the only PIO and your phone has been busy all day.

A thunder cell moved across the fire this afternoon and we have reports of half a dozen new smokes from spot fires. It has been hot and windy this afternoon. You can now see a large smoke column from town. It's a nice area up there, with lots of fir and some pine, and overgrown in places. It's steep, too.

A couple of recreation sites and summer homes are in the path of the fire, and evacuations are a possibility in the next 24 hours. Several Type 1 crews are ordered and expected by nightfall. A fire camp is established at the Pitchfork School.

SAMPLE INFORMATION STRATEGY:

Situation statement (who, what, where, why):

Concerns:

Communication Objectives:

Audiences:
  Internal:

  External:

Methods:

Key Messages/Talking Points:

Monitoring Methods (How will you know you’re succeeding?):

SAMPLE INFORMATION STRATEGY
NO NAME FIRE
July 16, 20XX

I. Incident Summary: The lightning-caused No Name Fire, which started July 12, is burning in heavy fuel near a popular recreation area and is threatening several homes near the forest boundary. The team took command of the fire today from a local forest Type 3 team. The fire is burning towards X community and evacuations are under way.

II. Information Objectives

- Keep evacuees, other affected residents, business owners, political leaders informed about the fire through personal contacts, radio interviews and other media outlets, the forest website and public meetings.
- Work with the local forest PAO to keep recreational visitors and permittees informed of fire progress, suppression tactics through personal contact.
- Advise the IC of the public perception and any external issues that may arise.
- Communicate with internal audience through information boards, talking with crews and team members, keeping them informed about the outside world and interest in fire.
- Provide timely information to tourists through websites, chamber of commerce and tourism bureaus in area.
- Provide information updates to politicians (including Governor's office), cooperators, district forest employees, state forestry officials, sheriff's department and other key players.
- Provide timely, accurate information to the media, respecting their deadlines and needs.

III. Incident Influences

A. Internal Influences

1. This is first time a national IMT has been ordered for a fire on the forest, so the local unit is not accustomed to working with an outside team.
2. Forest is home to T&E species.
3. Recent budget cuts left the fire staff short two positions, and without needed suppression equipment. The local employees are disheartened because they think the fire would not have gotten out of hand if they were still fully staffed and properly equipped.

B. External Influences

1. Evacuees are blaming the USFS for the fire getting out of control.
2. Active environmental group concerned about the Woodland Mink habitat.
3. Local residents have misconceptions about the firefighting policy on the forest, and believe this fire was allowed to burn for the first several days.
4. Resources are limited due to an active fire season.
5. This is the prime season for hiking, horseback riding and other recreational-users of the forest, and it is a difficult audience to reach.

C. Social Concerns

1. The relationship between the Forest Service and the local political leaders is delicate and must be maintained or even improved through the efforts of the IMT.
2. The sheriff, who is up for election, is very critical of the Forest Service's handling of the fire.

D. Environmental Influences

1. Air Quality: An inversion has left much of the X Valley enveloped in smoke for three days.
2. Water Quality: The fire is burning in the X watershed, the primary watershed for three towns.

E. Cultural Influences

1. A faction of the community is very anti-government.
2. Permittees need to graze sheep in the immediate fire area.
3. Area is a prime recreational use, so closures and restrictions are unpopular.

IV. Target Audience

A. Evacuees, local residents and business people.
B. Visitors to the Forest and surrounding tourist attractions.
C. Elected officials.
D. Park personnel, so a consistent message is being given to the public.

V. Key Messages

1. We will work aggressively to contain the fire within the forest boundary, while protecting private property and structures.
2. Evacuees will be allowed to return to home as soon as it is safe. We will keep evacuees constantly updated.
3. There is a smoke problem, both in terms of motorist safety and public health. While a burnout operation will cause more smoke initially, it may be a necessary suppression tactic to remove unburned fuel and secure the north line of the fire.
4. Permittees and recreational users will be kept informed through the local forest service office, the forest website and the chamber of commerce.
5. While this fire was likely caused by lightning, recreational forest users and residents need use extreme caution so no additional fires are ignited. Please avoid any open fires, make sure all terrain vehicles have working spark arrestors and properly dispose of all smoking materials.
6. Residents surrounding the Boise National Forest should take proactive steps to create defensible space around their homes by keeping the grass mowed, trees limbed up to six feet and combustibles at least 30 feet from their homes.

VI. Methods of Dissemination

A. Local Media
   1. Radio interviews and updates with the local radio stations
   2. Local papers
   3. Regional Television
   4. Regional Radio
   5. Regional Print

B. Information boards and officers at evacuation centers

C. Information boards at ICP, mess tent and base camp

D. Photo support – Since access to the fire is limited, we will try to provide photos to the media when requested.

E. Fire Awareness Flyers
   1. local convenience stores and high traffic places
   2. Restaurants
   3. Forest website
   4. Local forest office, ranger district

F. Public Meetings – We will schedule them as needed

G. Personal Contacts

VII. Methods of Monitoring:

A. Through media coverage
B. Talking with local politicos
C. Working closely with forest PAO

SAMPLE INFORMATION STRATEGY
______________________ INCIDENT
DATE: _______

PURPOSE: This strategy will help to achieve both immediate (incident) and long-term (agency) communications goals. This Information Strategy will (1) inform in a timely, consistent and appropriate manner; (2) increase awareness and understanding; (3) gain the public's support of incident management objectives and strategies; and (4) influence behaviors positively.

I. **THE SITUATION:** Discuss Background, Significant Issues/Concerns, and Information Resources.

BACKGROUND:

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES/CONCERNS:

INFORMATION RESOURCES: (Brainstorm list of potential locations as information sites; community meetings; trapline(s); web page; special people or places that may be available).

– Existing:

– Needed:

II. COMMUNICATION GOALS & OBJECTIVES: Goals describe desired outcomes. Objectives are clear, specific and measurable methods to achieve the goals.

III. KEY MESSAGES: Address the important issues identified in the Situation. Effective messages are clear, simple, concise and tailored to the target audiences.

- Public and firefighter safety are our primary concerns. Homeowners near the fire area should stay apprised of the situation through local media, the Bitterroot National Forest website and the fire information center. Know your evacuation route and be ready to leave quickly if an evacuation is necessary.
- We allow some fires to burn in wilderness areas for natural resource benefit as long as the fires are meeting resource objectives but not posing threats to life and property. They are monitored on a daily basis to ensure they are still within the desired range. If they grow outside acceptable parameters, we treat them as a wildfire.
- Homeowners should make sure any flammable materials, including firewood, pine needles, leaves, dead vegetation, are moved at least 30 feet from your home. Clean any needles or leaves from your roofs, water your lawns and keep ample turnaround space for fire equipment.

IV. TARGET AUDIENCES: What specific groups, organizations, or individuals—both internal and external—are affected by or interested in the incident and its outcome.

List Key Target Audiences

EXTERNAL INTERNAL

ANY ADDITIONAL AUDIENCES?

IV. TARGET AUDIENCES **EXTERNAL:** News media; Visitors; Residents; Elected Officials; Landowners; Community Key Contacts; Organizations; Law Enforcement; Tribal; Neighboring Communities; State Gov't (Governor, Legislators, Departments…); Evacuees; **INTERNAL:** Responsible agency; Cooperating agencies; participating agencies; Incident personnel; Contractors….	APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION TOOLS DAILY UPDATES PRESON TO PERSON COMMUNITY TRAPLINES ICP INFO. CENTER SATELITE INFO. CENTER WEB SITE TOWN MEETINGS ATTEND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS. FORMAL BRIEFINGS FORMAL TOURS SCHOOL PROGRAMS RADIO PROGRAMS PUBLIC ACCESS TV POSTERS--CAMPGROUNDS FACT SHEETS	RECOMMEND FREQUENCY OF CONTACT	PERSON OR POSITION RESPONSIBLE TO MAKE CONTACT
EXTERNAL:			

IV. TARGET AUDIENCES **EXTERNAL:** News media; Visitors; Residents; Elected Officials; Landowners; Community Key Contacts; Organizations; Law Enforcement; Tribal; Neighboring Communities; State Gov't (Governor, Legislators, Departments…); Evacuees; **INTERNAL:** Responsible agency; Cooperating agencies; participating agencies; Incident personnel; Contractors….	APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION TOOLS DAILY UPDATES PRESON TO PERSON COMMUNITY TRAPLINES ICP INFO. CENTER SATELITE INFO. CENTER WEB SITE TOWN MEETINGS ATTEND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS. FORMAL BRIEFINGS FORMAL TOURS SCHOOL PROGRAMS RADIO PROGRAMS PUBLIC ACCESS TV POSTERS--CAMPGROUNDS FACT SHEETS	RECOMMEND FREQUENCY OF CONTACT	PERSON OR POSITION RESPONSIBLE TO MAKE CONTACT
INTERNAL			

V. MONITORING METHODS: Methods to measure whether actions meet objectives. Indicate how you will track/measure success of your communication efforts; e.g. review media coverage; talk with community leaders, and ask local residents for feedback.

Monitor the TV, newspaper and radio coverage of the fire to see if it is positive, or what concerns are out there. Talk with media covering the fire. Use time on the traplines to see what the public is saying about the fire and the flow of information. Stay in close contact with Area Command, information officers from surrounding fires, the local public affairs officer, local community leaders, cooperators, business leaders, visitors to the forest.

Talk with the Incident Commander and Area Command, line firefighters, and other team members, about any rumors, concerns or unrest that they have heard.

PREPARED BY: ____________________________ DATE: ___________

REVIEWED BY: ____________________________ DATE: ___________

UNIT 7 REVIEW

1. Describe why it is important to plan ahead.

2. List three special situations:

3. List five incident characteristics that affect public interest and incident complexity.

4. List five elements of a simple information strategy.

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Unit 8 – Incident Simulation

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this practical exercise, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate incident information principles, tools, and techniques in a simulation.

2. Demonstrate professionalism, good judgment, and teamwork in a simulation.

3. Produce a long-term strategy document based on the simulation.

SIMULATION INSTRUCTIONS

Today's exercise is intended to simulate a typical incident. The class will be divided into information teams and you will be expected to put into practice the principles you have learned this week:

- Sizing up the incident's potential
- Developing a strategy
- Building an organization
- Delegating responsibilities
- Organizing information for dissemination
- Participating in media interviews
- Providing information to the public

Each team will select a supervisory public information officer. The responsibility of the supervisory public information officer is to organize the team and keep it on track. The other students will act as assistants to the supervisory public information officer.

An observer will be assigned to each team. The observer's primary role is to record and evaluate you and your team's responses to the situations that arise. You will be evaluated on the appropriateness and timeliness of your response.

The simulation will begin in ten minutes with a briefing from the IC. Listen carefully and take good notes. The IC will provide you with all the information they have at the time regarding the incident.

After the briefing, the information teams will go to their assigned information centers. The information centers will be equipped with basic supplies. Public and media inquiries will begin almost immediately, so it will be essential that you organize quickly and be prepared to respond.

You may order personnel, equipment, and supplies, and get in touch with the IC and other members of the incident management team by sending a written message or by calling.

Throughout the simulation, you will be expected to share responsibilities. All members of each information team should be productively occupied. Team members should rotate telephone duty and media interview responsibilities.

Instructors may wander through your center to observe your team or to consult with the observer. Since it is possible that instructors may also be role players, make sure you ask who they are when they arrive. Remember, documentation is essential.

The simulation will continue without interruption until 1100 (or 1530) today. Updated information on the incident will be provided to your team periodically, but not on a regular basis.

When the simulation ends, the observer will discuss their thoughts about the performance of the team. During this team critique, each of you will have an opportunity to share your own observations about your successes and areas for improvement. Following the team critique, the entire class will reconvene to discuss the exercise.