

Group III, Texas Wing

PUBLIC AFFAIRS EMERGENCY PLAN

PLANNING

- 1) The PAO needs to work with the commander and staff to make sure that information management is incorporated into all advanced readiness planning. Having the PAO/IO on the team is a critical component to making sure that the Mission IO:
 - a) Is fully up to speed from the moment that a squadron, group, or wing begins to plan for a SAR or DR response
 - b) Is familiar with all preparatory work being done and the scheduling of such work
 - c) Is familiar with the scope of operations that were anticipated during the readiness planning
 - d) Has a pre-established working relationship with the IC, senior incident staff, wing staff, and outside agencies that were involved in the readiness planning
- 2) Given the complexity and scope of required planning, Disaster Relief readiness planning needs to have the PAO/IO dialed in from the very beginning.

PRE-EVENT

Based on previous experience, establish likely locations for the ICP and become familiar with the facilities there. Go on-site.

1) Physical layout –

- a) Where would you work from? Identify your office space.
- b) What's available to you to do the job? Tally your assets. If you'll need it and it isn't there, you'll need to bring it along.
- c) Who is your local PAO? IO qualified? More than one available? Your human assets are your most important resource.
- d) Is there emergency power generation?
- e) Will emergency power support all your communications needs?
- f) Is there an on-site printer available?

2) Computer Equipment –

- a) Plan on using a laptop. Load it with all needed software and then use it to make sure it works the way you want it to.
- b) Set it up for e-mail and, if necessary, web-mail if you cannot access your regular ISP for automatic message download.
- c) Use your laptop during an exercise and run it through its paces. Make sure it will do what you need – editing, manipulating photos, burning CDs and so on.
- d) Take along a power strip for power access.
- e) Take an Ethernet switch to share a hard-wired Internet connection
- f) Take spare Ethernet UTP cable connectors.

3) Communications – Internet

- a) Is there Internet access?
- b) Does it require a password?
- c) Is it hard-wired or wireless (or are both present)?
- d) Will your computer work with it?
- e) Will your regular PC work safely with available emergency power without using a voltage regulator? If not, add a voltage regulator to your kit.
- f) Ditto for your laptop.
- g) Will you have access to a temporary Internet dump site where you can post news releases and images?

- h) Will you be able to access it from the remote location?
 - i) At the very least, have a laptop and cell phone that you can power from a vehicle, in case all other power is down.
 - j) Ideally, your laptop will have a CD burner that you can use to hand-distribute news releases.
 - k) At the media's option, ask them to bring a memory stick. You can load your news releases and photos on it for them.
- 4) Communications - Telephone**
- a) How many phone lines are available?
 - b) Would you have a dedicated line or extension?
 - c) Is there a cell phone tower that serves the area?
 - d) Can you use it with your cell phone?
- 5) Communications – Radio**
- a) Is there a permanent installation?
 - b) Is there a portable, self-powered radio setup on site? If not, will one be brought along?
 - c) Does the wing or unit own a mobile, self-contained communications van/trailer?
 - d) Will you be able to use the radio to distribute news releases if all else fails?
 - e) Identify remote locations likely to still have Internet access in case your ICP is cut off.
 - f) Make sure the remote location will be manned by someone capable of transcribing and disseminating information via the Internet, so you can radio or phone it over.
- 6) Communications – Hand carry**
- a) If nothing else is available to you, will you have one or more runners capable of taking news releases to the local media?
 - b) Will you be able to have your news release(s) hitch a ride on a mission plane that could land at a location that is still able to communicate via the Internet?
 - c) Will there be someone there capable of disseminating the information for you?
- 7) Media access –**
- a) Do you have direct access to editor/chief reporter?
 - b) Will the media come to you for news?
 - c) If you have no power or communications at all, is there a plan in place for periodic visits from a media runner to pick up news releases from you?
 - d) If security is in place, make arrangements to have the media runner announced, so you can deliver your CD, hard-copy news, or the media's memory stick loaded with the current information.
- 8) Lodging –**
- a) Will you have lodging / meals available locally?
 - b) Will you be able to pitch a tent on site? (Airport security might need advance notice about this.)
 - c) Will you be able to move around? (Again, Airport security)
 - d) Will you have parking available? (Airport security)

DURING THE EVENT

- 1) Have your 101 Card clipped to your uniform.** Wear appropriate uniform at the ICP
 - a) Be prepared to present current documentation of your mission qualifications and other documentation, as required.
 - b) Make yourself a laminated clip-on card that says INFORMATION OFFICER and wear it on your chest.
 - c) Wear your best uniform appropriate to the area
- 2) Report to the incident commander for:**
 - a) A briefing on the current status of the mission, and
 - b) Information that may be released to the public.
- 3) When releasing approved information**
 - a) Inform the public without overwhelming them. Give out only what's necessary.

- b) Refrain from giving too much detail. The more detail you give, the more likely the media is to misunderstand it, or decide to highlight some irrelevant portion of your report.
- c) Do not lie.
- 4) **Set up your desk**
 - a) Set up computers and bring them online
 - b) Check your Internet connection
 - c) Check your e-mail connection
 - d) Check your printer connection
 - e) Check your supply of blank recordable CDs
 - f) Start preparing initial news release for IC approval
 - g) Prepare handouts including press kits and other contents of your mission kit.
 - h) Make sure you have full media contact information
 - i) Meet liaison officer(s) and extend full cooperation.
- 5) **Keep an ear to the ground** –
 - a) Advise the IC on all matters leading to releasing information concerning the mission.
 - b) Make your report attractive to the public and have it work towards recruiting and retention.
- 6) **Prepare an initial news release**
 - a) Based on the IC's vision, include appropriate public information
 - b) Write it in journalistic style
 - c) Have the IC approved it before you distribute it.
- 7) **Plan additional news releases** and updates any time conditions change.
 - a) Plan on at least three news releases a day. Early to mid morning, early PM, and late PM (this last one an end-of-day release).
 - b) Write a flash release any time the circumstances call for it.
 - c) Obtain IC approval for each news release before dissemination.
- 8) **Do not speculate**
 - a) Nor give the appearance of speculating, especially during a press conference or visit.
 - b) If you don't know, state that fact and say you'll try to find out.
 - c) If the information cannot be released, give a reason why this is so and promise to release it as soon as approved.
- 9) **Keep mission participants informed**, and incorporate this information in the regular briefings.
 - a) Ask them not to speak to the public or press but direct all inquiries to the IO or IC.
 - b) Ask them to gather information and bring it to you. All mission personnel are important information collectors.
 - c) Ask them to take pictures and give them to you. Images from the field are very important for full reporting.
 - d) Ask them not to voice disapproval or criticism of the mission, cooperating agencies, or anyone associated with the mission or the public.
 - e) Ask them to treat all mission participants with respect. If there is any disagreement, especially with someone from a different agency, bring it to the attention of the IC immediately. **Do not** decide to vigorously defend your position.
 - f) In case of a fatality, refer all inquiries to the IC or IO.
 - i) If the participants are first on site and there is a fatality, inform immediately the IC, IO, and Chaplain. Operationally, follow SOP.
 - ii) If they are first on site and there are injured persons, render immediate aid, call for help, and inform the IC and IO. Operationally, follow SOP.
 - g) No information on injuries or fatalities will be released unless approved by the controlling agency and the IC.
- 10) **Post copies of all your news releases**
 - a) At the ICP,
 - b) On the Internet,
 - c) On the Group and Wing websites,
 - d) As required by SOP and the mission.

- 11) **Disseminate all your news releases**
 - a) To the local media,
 - b) State media,
 - c) PA channels at Wing, Region and (when requested) National HQ.
- 12) **Request additional IO support as needed.**
 - a) Ideally, you'll have enough trained IOs available for working at the ICP and at least one remote location (your alternate or emergency ICP).
 - b) You might need additional IO personnel from outside your wing if the event acquires greater scope or extends over many days.
 - c) Make sure you account for adequate rest periods.
 - d) Request prompt action from your Wing PAO in posting news releases.
- 13) **Wrap up the day's activities**
 - a) Give the IC full statistics, details, interviews, media contact lists, activity log including details of media releases (use ICS Form 214 unless otherwise directed), notes or search leads, as appropriate.
 - b) Use the above to brief other IO staff who may serve on the mission.
 - c) Send copies to your wing and region PAOs, and (if requested) to National HQ.
 - d) Complete all required forms and paperwork prior to leaving the incident command post for the day.
- 14) **Answer media questions**
 - a) As fully and accurately as operational security rules allow.
 - b) Do not speculate.
 - c) If you don't know the answer, don't guess. Instead, promise to check.
- 15) **Verify credentials** and complete CAPF 9 releases for media representatives requesting to accompany flight crews or ground teams on sorties.
 - a) They must be approved by the IC.
- 16) **Cooperate with media personnel**
 - a) Render all possible courtesy and assistance.
 - b) Ensure they do not impede or interfere with the conduct of the mission.
 - c) If needed, designate areas for media and ensure they have escorts when outside these areas.
 - d) Media should not be allowed in the incident command staff area without the IC's permission.
- 17) **Monitor news coverage of the mission**
 - a) Newscasts, newspapers and news websites.
 - b) Contact media to correct any reporting errors.
- 18) **Direct and monitor the timely release of information and photographs to**
 - a) Newspapers, wire services, radio, television, or Internet media representatives
 - b) Also internal CAP newsletters and communication channels.
- 19) **Assist the CISM team or Chaplain** in dealing with family members of those who are affected by the mission.
- 20) **Coordinate releases with other participating agencies** and ensure that appropriate credit is given to all agencies.
- 21) **Obtain Client Agency approval**
 - a) To disseminate photos and information gathered as a result of their formal request for CAP support.
 - b) To use any of information obtained under these circumstances on articles for internal CAP publications or external media.

POST-EVENT

The event itself will suggest many of the following (or other) activities. These are minimum guidelines, based on the principle of "how could I have done better this time?"

- 1) Contact the press and ask whether you could have done better in providing information to them.

- 2) Contact your counterparts in participating agencies and ask whether you met their expectations in the way of cooperation and professional team work.
- 3) Ask your subordinate PAOs if they feel something could have been done better.
- 4) Ask your IC the same question.
- 5) Establish whether your job was made harder by poor telecommunications.
- 6) Ask "field" participants whether they felt you kept them informed.
- 7) Tally what went right, and establish why.
- 8) Review your procedures and determine whether you could have done better.
- 9) Tally what went wrong, and establish why.
- 10) Review your procedures and see if you or your plan were part of the problem.
- 11) Work with other sections (such as communications, air operations, ground operations, security, and any other section involved in some way in the production, checking, and dissemination of information) to find out how they could have supported you better, and vice-versa.