

CHATHAM COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

APPENDIX 15-1 TAB B JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

DECEMBER 2009

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ACRONYMS

AD	Assistant Director
CEMA	Chatham Emergency Management Agency
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
DO	Duty Officer
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
GEMA	Georgia Emergency Management Agency
IC	Incident Commander
ICS	Incident Command System
JIC	Joint Information Center
JIS	Joint Information System
LPIO	Lead Public Information Officer
MACS	Multi Agency Coordination System
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PIO	Public Information Officer
UC	Unified Command
VOAD	Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster

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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Protection of public health and safety in the event of a major emergency or disaster requires a number of local, state, federal, and private industry organizations to provide accurate and timely information to the public.
- B. A community's information system must be able to provide the public with the information they need in order to cope with an emergency. The coordination of this information and its timely dissemination is imperative.
- C. Joint Information System
 - 1. The Joint Information System (JIS) integrates incident information and public affairs into a cohesive organization designed to provide consistent, coordinated, accurate, accessible, timely, and complete information during crisis or incident operations.
 - 2. The mission of the JIS is to provide a structure and system for developing and delivering coordinated interagency messages; developing, recommending, and executing public information plans and strategies on behalf of the Incident Commander (IC); advising the IC concerning public affairs issues that could affect a response effort; and controlling rumors and inaccurate information that could undermine public confidence in the incident response effort.
- D. Joint Information Center
 - 1. A Joint Information Center (JIC) is a collocated group of representatives from agencies and organizations involved in responding to an emergency who are designated to manage public information needs. Through a JIC, it is possible for public information releases to be coordinated by developing cooperative working relationships between local, state, and federal government agencies; business and industry organizations; and the news media.
 - 2. The JIC structure is designed to work equally well for large or small situations and can expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident.
 - 3. When multiple public or private agencies and organizations come together to respond to an emergency or manage an event, efficient information flow is critical to effectively carry out public information responsibilities as well as meet the expectations of the public. A JIC is a centralized "communication hub" that serves to achieve that information flow.

4. Establishing a JIC, developing processes and procedures, and training staff on how to operate a JIC effectively allows response organizations to be more proactive in responding to the information needs of responders, the public, federal, state and local governments, foreign governments, and industry.
5. Because of the critical nature of providing emergency information to disaster victims, time spent organizing rather than responding at the time of an event can lead to confusion and a loss of public confidence. Through a JIC, the different agencies (including state, local, and other entities) involved in a response can work in a cohesive manner, enabling them to “speak with one voice.” By maintaining a centralized communication facility, resources can be better managed, and duplication of effort minimized.
6. Finally, the use of a JIC allows for tracking and maintaining records and information more accurately—therefore, improving the ability to conduct post-incident assessments that can be used to improve crisis communication and general response activities during future incidents.

II. PURPOSE

A. JIS

1. Emergencies can and do occur at any time. During a disaster or emergency, the highest priority of the Chatham Emergency Management Agency (CEMA) is to protect the population, public and private facilities and to assist in coordinating the response to an emergency situation. This document provides guidance on establishing a JIS as well as how to operate a JIC during an emergency that involves multiple agencies from within the county.
2. The JIS provides the mechanism to organize, integrate and coordinate information to ensure timely, accurate, accessible and consistent messaging across multiple jurisdictions and/or disciplines, including the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It includes the plans, protocols, procedures and structures used to provide information to the:
 - a. General public
 - b. Disaster victims
 - c. Affected jurisdictions
 - d. Elected officials

- e. Community leaders
 - f. Private sector media NGOs
 - g. Response and recovery organizations (i.e. urban search and rescue, utilities)
 - h. Volunteer groups [i.e. Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD)]
 - i. International interests (i.e. international media and donations)
 - j. Other impacted groups
3. Federal, State, tribal, local and voluntary agencies, private sector Public Information Officers (PIO)s and established JICs are critical supporting elements of the JIS. Key elements include the following:
- a. Gathering, verifying, coordinating and disseminating consistent messages
 - b. Interagency coordination and integration
 - c. Support for decision-makers
 - d. Flexibility, modularity and adaptability
4. Agencies issue their own releases related to their policies, procedures, programs and capabilities; however, messages need to be coordinated utilizing the JIS to ensure message consistency.
- B. JIC
1. To ensure coordination of public information during incidents that involve multiple agencies and/or jurisdictions, the Incident Commander / Unified Command (IC/UC) may use a JIC to support the gathering, verification, coordination and dissemination of accurate, accessible and timely information. The JIC is the central location that facilitates operation of the JIS. In the early stages of response to an incident, the Lead Public Information Officer (LPIO) shall consult with the IC/UC regarding the opening of a JIC. The IC/UC shall retain authority to order the opening of Chatham County's JIC, although the LPIO may recommend the opening of a JIC when it is appropriate.

2. JICs are established:
 - a. At the direction of the IC/UC at various levels of government
 - b. At pre-determined or incident-specific sites
 - c. As components of Federal, State, tribal or local Multiagency Coordination Systems (MACS)
3. JICs may be staffed:
 - a. By representatives from all agencies and jurisdictions involved in the response and recovery operation
 - b. Through intrastate and interstate mutual aid agreements

III. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- A. During disasters, the general public will want information about the emergency situation and instruction on proper response actions.
- B. The media will demand information about emergency situations and disasters. The local media, particularly television and radio, will perform an essential role in providing emergency instructions and up-to-date information to the public.
- C. Depending on the severity of the emergency, or the media's perception of the severity of the emergency, regional and national media will also cover the event and insist on information and comment from local officials.
- D. Depending on the severity of the emergency, telephone communication may be sporadic or impossible. Local and regional radio and television stations without backup emergency power may also be off the air. If this occurs, public address systems on emergency vehicles and door-to-door sweeps may be initiated.
- E. The need for information will be overwhelming if sufficient staff is not available, and/or staff is not trained to operate from a pre-established set of procedures.
- F. Rumors of misinformation can cause unnecessary distress among citizens, provoke counter productive public actions, and impede response and recovery efforts.
- G. Depending on the severity of the emergency, many federal, state and local agencies will have to work together as they become involved in a large-scale emergency.

- H. Each response organization will implement its own internal public information plans until the agencies involved agree to participate in a JIC and the JIC is declared operational.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

- A. CEMA's public information efforts will focus on event-specific information. This information generally will be of an instructional nature focusing on such things as warnings, evacuations, and shelter options.
- B. Since public information is a critical function of emergency management, this Tab will categorize public information procedures and their implementation in the four phases of emergency management. Exact timelines for implementation of public information procedures will be discussed in the Concept of Operations section of this Tab.
- C. This JIC Tab will be implemented upon the recommendation of the Director of CEMA with the approval of the Chairman, Chatham County Board of Commissioners and the concurrence of the Mayors of the Municipalities.

V. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

- A. When to Establish a JIC
 - 1. The JIC structure is most useful when multiple agencies and organizations come together to respond to an emergency or manage an event and need to provide coordinated, timely, accurate information to the public and other stakeholders. For proper coordination in a major emergency or disaster, it is essential that emergency information be released from a single point to ensure accuracy, consistency, and authenticity. Just as the establishment of the Incident Command System (ICS) avoids multiple command posts, the establishment of the JIC will avoid multiple information release points.
 - 2. Emergency situations could include natural disasters (floods, fires, hurricanes, and storm surge), oil spills and other hazardous substance releases, or terrorist incidents.
 - 3. The JIC structure may also be useful in coordinating multi-agency event planning for major national or international meetings and events, such as the G8 Summit.
 - 4. While a single JIC structure is preferable, the system is flexible enough to accommodate virtual or multiple JIC locations as

required. The following table provides a description of different types of JICs:

- a. Incident: Typically, an incident specific JIC is established at a single, on-scene location in coordination with Federal, State, tribal and local agencies or at the national level, if the situation warrants. It provides easy media access which is paramount to success. This is a typical JIC.
- b. Virtual: A Virtual JIC is established when a physical co-location is not feasible. It connects PIOs through e-mail, cell/land-line phones, faxes, video teleconferencing, web-based information systems, etc. For a pandemic incident where PIOs at different locations communicate and coordinate public information electronically, it may be appropriate to establish a Virtual JIC.
- c. Satellite: A Satellite JIC is smaller in scale than other JICs. It is established primarily to support the incident JIC and to operate under their direction. These are subordinate JICs, which are typically located closer to the scene.
- d. Area: An Area JIC supports multiple-incident ICS structures that are spread over a wide geographic area. It is typically located near the largest media market and can be established on a local, State or multi-state basis. Multiple States experiencing storm damage may participate in an Area JIC.
- e. Support: A Support JIC is established to supplement the efforts of several Incident JICs in multiple States. It offers additional staff and resources outside of the disaster area.
- f. National: A National JIC is established when an incident requires Federal coordination and is expected to be of long duration (weeks or months) or when the incident affects a large area of the country. A National JIC is staffed by numerous Federal departments and/or agencies.

B. Flexible and Functional Approach

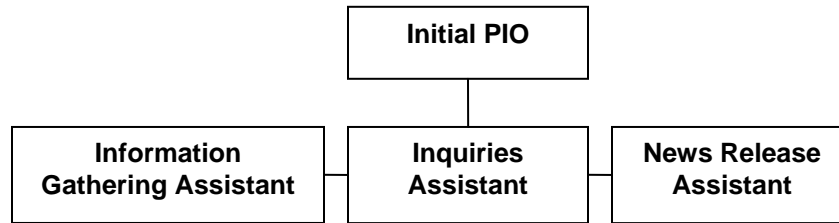
1. The JIC structure is designed to accommodate the diverse range of responses likely to be performed by local PIOs, ranging from a large multi-agency, all-hazards response to a small single agency, single-hazard response. The structure can grow or shrink depending on the unique requirements of a specific response and it should be customized for each response. This adaptability

encompasses staffing, organizational structure, facilities, hours of operation, resource and logistical requirements, and products and services.

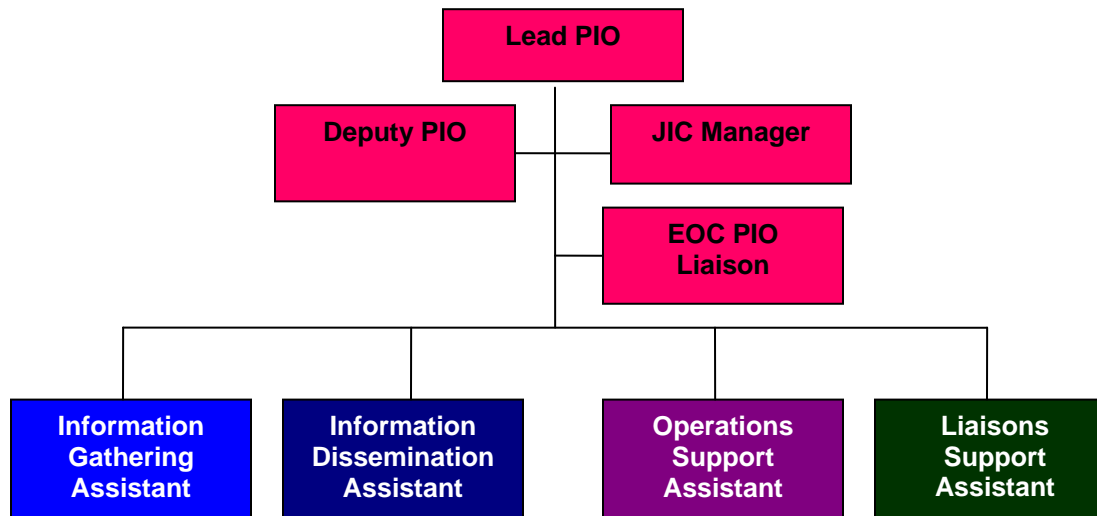
2. The JIC organizational structure is based on functions that must generally be performed whether a person is handling a routine emergency or managing communications for a major response to a disaster. Following are options for organizing a JIC for small, medium, and large incidents.
 - a. The focus for the small and medium incidents is on functions since as few as one person can be involved in carrying out all the activities for a particular function in the JIC. However for large incidents, functional roles may be carried out by multiple staff to ensure efficient operations. For example, for an initial response to an incident, all functional areas may be managed by four people: the LPIO and three assistants. The LPIO is responsible for directly managing all of the activities in the JIC until the authority for an activity is delegated to another person. As incidents grow, the LPIO may delegate authority for performance of certain activities to others, as required.
 - b. For a large incident, as many as 60 people may be needed to manage the activities required to carry out the functions efficiently and effectively. Establishment of Satellite JICs may be needed to cover a very large incident or one affecting a very large area in one or more states. Personnel assigned to a Satellite JIC must always communicate in coordination with the main JIC.

C. JIC Organization Charts

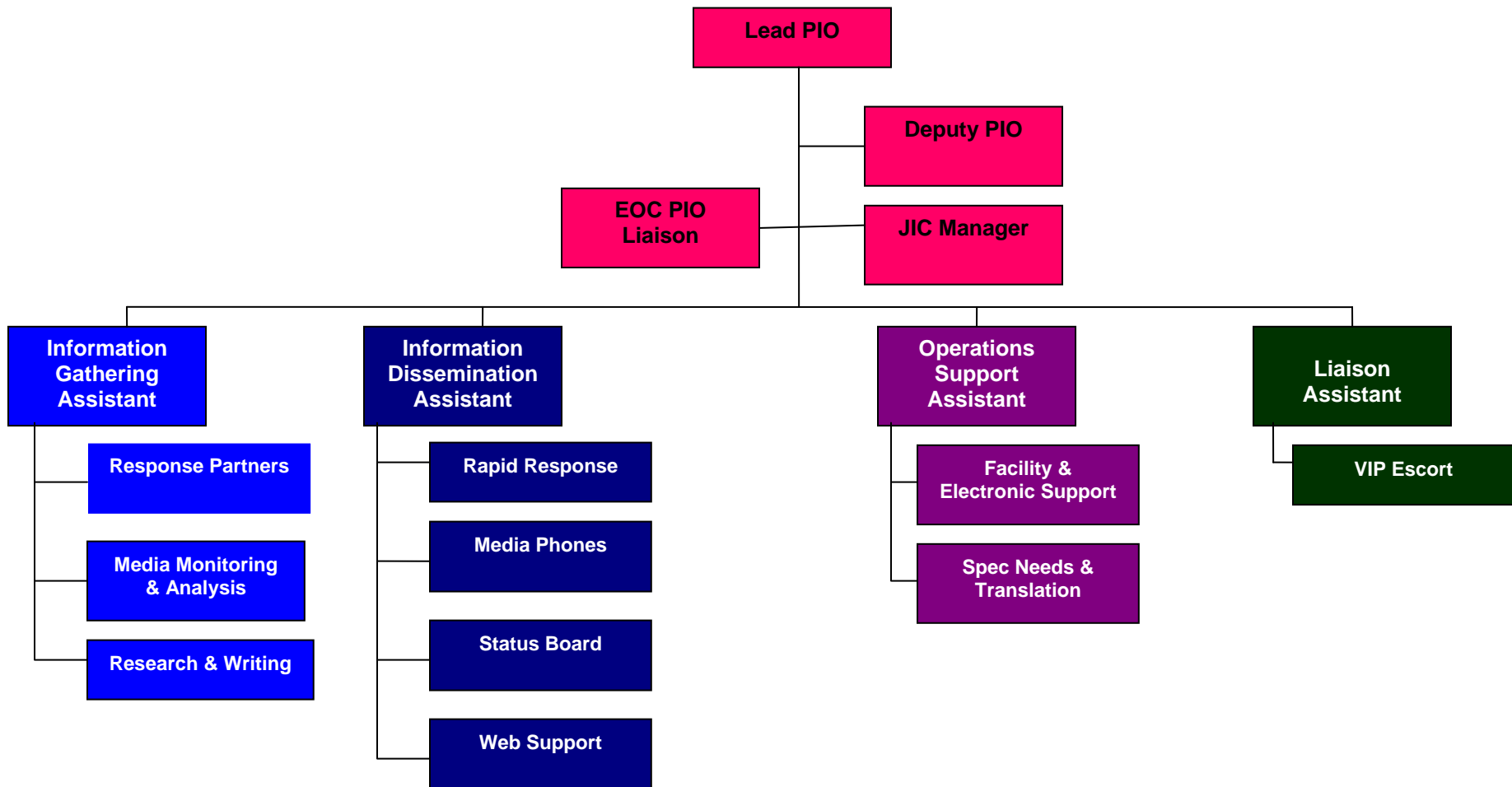
1. Initial Response – Initial Information Officer with three assistants



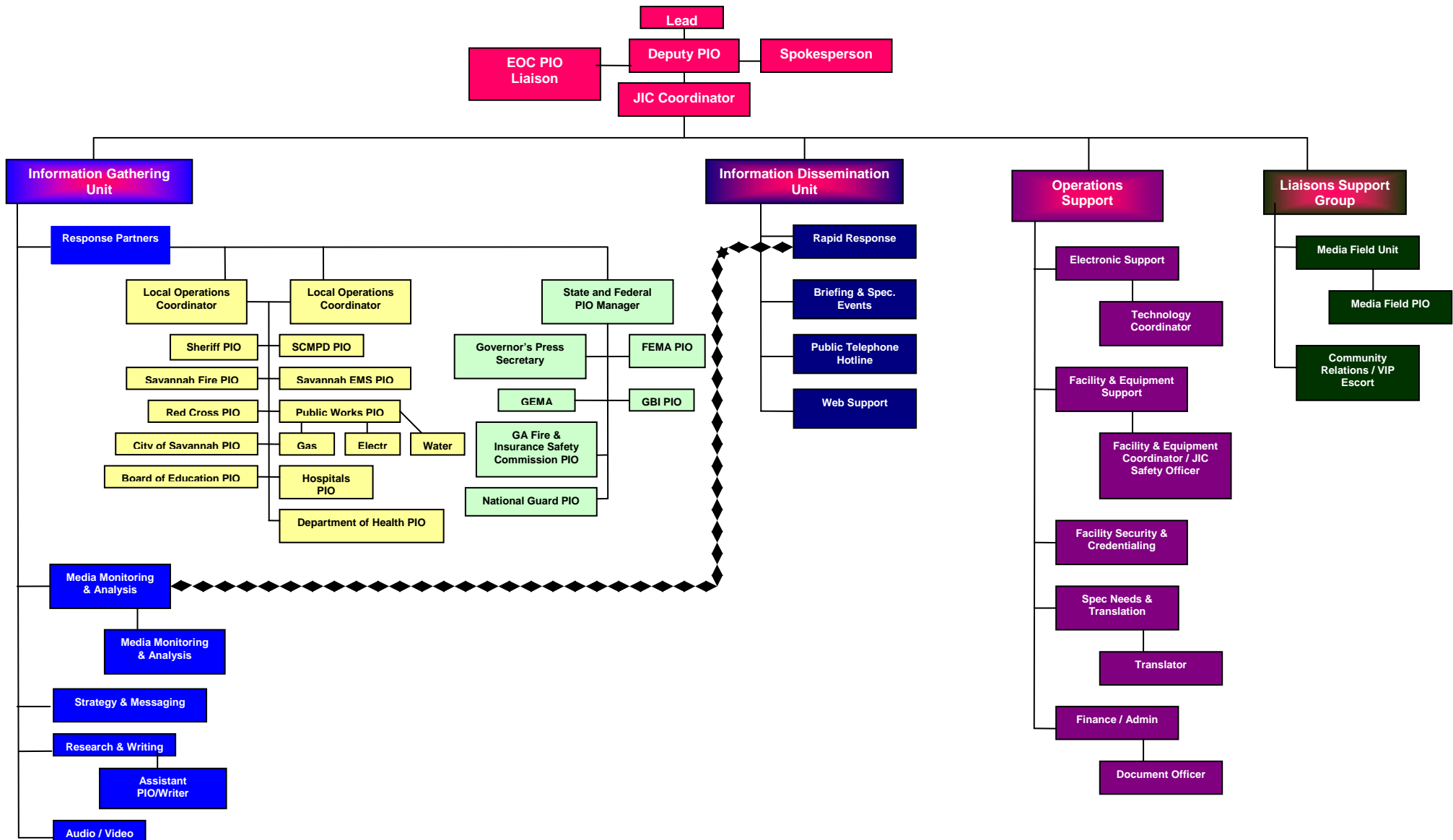
2. Small to Medium JIC: Lead Information Officer with 4-10 support PIOs



3. Medium to Large JIC: Lead Information Officer with 10 - 30 support PIOs



4. Large to Extra Large JIC: Lead Information Officer with 30-60 support PIOs



- D. JIC Activation – Spontaneous Emergencies
1. Immediately after an incident occurs, there is a high demand for information. Whether the incident is large or small, a natural disaster or accident, the media and public, as well as responders, require accurate and timely information.
 2. The responsibility of disseminating updated information is assigned to the Initial LPIO immediately after the onset of the incident.
- E. JIC Activation – Planned Emergencies (i.e. Hurricanes)
1. During hurricane season, the CEMA PIO should remain on high alert for the possibility of a Tropical Storm or Hurricane. Due to improved weather forecasts, the public is now made aware of the projected path of a hurricane five days out instead of three. This causes increased public concern and a significant increase in work volume for the CEMA Staff.
 2. Whether the tropical disturbance is forecast to turn away from or approach Savannah, the media and public, as well as responders, require accurate and timely information. The responsibility of disseminating updated information about the storm as it moves closer to Savannah is assigned to the CEMA PIO.
- F. News Conferences
1. As incidents escalate, the public and news media will require the most up to date and accurate information regarding the situation and its response. News conferences are the best way to broadly deliver important information about preparing for and responding to incidents of critical importance.
 2. Press conferences and media events offer the potential for reaching many reporters from newspapers as well as television and radio stations at a single event.
- G. Misinformation and Rumor Control
1. The JIC serves as the single authoritative source for public information. In any situation involving the dissemination of information to many people, misinformation and rumors may occur.
 2. The public information staff will handle and monitor incoming queries, which will assist in rumor control.

- a. The JIC will serve as the primary source of information to the media and public.
- b. Media monitoring staff should monitor and document all media coverage, including Internet coverage. Rumors and misinformation should be recorded and reported immediately to the appropriate Unit Lead worker via the appropriate routing form.
- c. The Public Telephone Hotline Unit will relay rumors and misinformation to the Information Dissemination Group Lead. The Information Dissemination Lead will inform the Information Gathering Group Lead and JIC Coordinator of the rumors. The JIC Coordinator will keep the LPIO informed.
- d. The Information Production Group's Information Strategy and Messaging Unit will investigate the rumor and recommend how to respond.
- e. Rumor response will be carried out by the Information Dissemination Group or the LPIO, if necessary. The response may take the form of a news release, media briefing, live interview or personal contact with a reporter, or in another appropriate manner.
- f. The Information Dissemination Group will post the rumor response in the JIC and EOC as well as relay the information to the LPIO. The Public Telephone Hotline Unit Lead will keep the hotline staff informed.

H. Deactivation

1. The LPIO, with the concurrence of the participating agencies, will determine when to deactivate the JIC. The Information Dissemination Group Lead will issue a news release stating the JIC is no longer operational and refer media inquiries to the appropriate agencies. However, information regarding the incident may continue to be released through the JIS.
2. The Operations Support Group will lead the JIC staff in deactivation. At minimum, staff will:
 - a. Ensure all equipment and facilities are returned to pre-emergency status.

- b. Ensure all generated information is given to the appropriate Group Lead for documentation.
- c. Assist the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Manager with the evaluation of response actions and ensure the following are addressed:
 - 1) Inoperable equipment
 - 2) Procedural inadequacy
 - 3) Clarity of policies
 - 4) Notification difficulties
 - 5) Other lessons learned
- 3. After deactivation, JIC staff will evaluate JIC operations and submit recommendations to the CEMA PIO.
- I. Exercise and Training: The External Affairs Coordination Appendix with the Joint Information Center Tab is the primary County plan for critical incident communications with the public and will be used for all interagency exercises.

VI. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. CEMA Director: In the event of EOC activation, the Director will make notifications to County Commissioners as required, the County Manager, and appropriate County Department Heads. The CEMA Director serves as a liaison and advisor to the Command Policy Group. His role is to serve as the EOC Manager, oversee EOC functions, collect incident-related forecasts and/or information and relay information, along with his professional recommendations, to the Command Policy Group for decisions and declarations. The Director also has signature authority and responsibility to issues and/or requests through the County and the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA). During times of community crisis or major events, the CEMA Director may serve as the lead spokesperson to the community and primary subject matter expert in relation to the County's emergency management function.
- B. CEMA Assistant Director: The CEMA Assistant Director (AD) provides the leadership role across EOC functional elements. He/she takes recommendations from the CEMA Duty Officer (DO) and determines EOC activations, operations and terminations through consultation with the CEMA Director. In the event activation of the EOC is ordered, the AD will make notifications to CEMA Staff and the GEMA Area V Field

Coordinator. The AD's primary role is to serve as the EOC Operations Section Chief and Assistant EOC Manager. He/She will take the responsibilities of the CEMA Director when required.

- C. CEMA Duty Officer: The CEMA DO serves as the Agency's 24-hour crisis monitor for the County. The DO reports incident-related information to the AD and makes recommendations regarding activation of the EOC. The AD may determine an EOC activation is necessary through consultation with the CEMA Director. In the event activation of the EOC is ordered, the DO will have primary responsibility to initiate notification to EOC Support Staff and the EOC Partial Activation Team. Once notifications are made, the DO is responsible for preparing the EOC for activation. The DO will serve as the initial EOC Operations Section Chief until directed otherwise.
- D. CEMA Staff: CEMA Staff who are not serving as the on-call Duty Officer are subject to short-notification activation for all emergencies, disasters and catastrophes. Once notified, they are to report to the designated EOC and assume their roles within the EOC staffing matrix. CEMA staff will function within the Command and General Staff roles of the EOC as designated in this EOC Staff Manual. Personnel must be properly credentialed and badged while inside the EOC.
- E. CEMA Volunteers: CEMA Volunteers perform vital functions during EOC activations. They fill necessary roles within the EOC to ensure effective management, communication, and operation of an incident. After check-in, volunteers report to CEMA staff members within the EOC and take directives/assignments from CEMA staff based on need. Volunteers serve in roles such as phone operations, documentation, and courier/runner during EOC activations. They may also work in Functional or Support Staff positions within the EOC. Personnel must be properly credentialed and badged while inside the EOC.
- F. EOC Functional Staff: The EOC Functional Staff is comprised of all personnel working within the EOC to support activation, operations, demobilization, and deactivation. These staff members work within the EOC Command structure and are assigned roles in the Command Staff, General Staff, Planning, Operations, Logistics, or Finance/Administration Section of the EOC. Most of the functional staff is comprised of Emergency Support Function partners, volunteers, and partner organizations working toward the common goal of managing an incident. Functional Staff work under the direction, coordination, and/or support of the CEMA Staff. Personnel must be properly credentialed and badged while inside the EOC.

VII. TAB MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

- A. CEMA is the executive agent for Annex management and maintenance. The Annexes will be updated periodically as required to incorporate new directives and changes based on lessons learned from exercises and actual events. This section establishes procedures for interim changes and full updates of the Annexes.
- B. Types of Changes: Changes include additions of new or supplementary material and deletions. No proposed change should contradict or override authorities or other plans contained in statute, order, or regulation.
- C. Coordination and Approval: Any department or agency with assigned responsibilities within the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) Annexes may propose a change to the plan. CEMA is responsible for coordinating all proposed modifications to the Annexes with primary and support agencies and other stakeholders, as required. CEMA will coordinate review and approval for proposed modifications as required.
- D. Notice of Change: After coordination has been accomplished, including receipt of the necessary signed approval supporting the final change language, CEMA will issue an official Notice of Change. The notice will specify the date, number, subject, purpose, background, and action required, and provide the change language on one or more numbered and dated insert pages that will replace the modified pages in the EOP. Once published, the modifications will be considered part of the EOP for operational purposes pending a formal revision and re-issuance of the entire document. Interim changes can be further modified or updated using the above process.
- E. Distribution: CEMA will distribute the Notice of Change to all participating agencies. Notice of Change to other organizations will be provided upon request. Re-issuance of the individual annexes or the entire EOP Plan will take place as required. Working toward continuous improvement, CEMA is responsible for an annual review and update of the EOP plan to include related annexes, and a complete revision every four years (or more frequently if the County Commission or GEMA deems necessary). The review and update will consider lessons learned and best practices identified during exercises and responses to actual events, and incorporate new information technologies. CEMA will distribute revised EOP Annex documents for the purpose of interagency review and concurrence.

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EXHIBIT 1
EMERGENCY INFORMATION PRIORITIES

1. Chatham County is susceptible to hazards that range from small emergencies to large-scale, catastrophic incidents. Not only are residents susceptible to naturally occurring disasters such as hurricanes and flooding, they are also susceptible to man-made disasters such as hazardous materials spills and acts of terrorism. Some disasters can be forecast (i.e. hurricanes) while others are spontaneous (i.e. Refinery explosion) that require extremely quick response from local and state agencies.

2. As a PIO, there is certain information that must be distributed immediately for the care and well-being of the affected community:
 - a. Emergency Information Priorities
 - 1) Description of the disaster
 - 2) Time period involved
 - 3) What actions to take if evacuation is ordered
 - 4) Affected/contaminated areas to avoid and areas closed to traffic
 - 5) How to improvise a shelter
 - 6) What actions to take if in-place sheltering is ordered
 - 7) Location of shelters and routes to take
 - 8) How to obtain transportation to shelters
 - 9) How to shut off utilities
 - 10) Number to call for medical care and rescue services
 - 11) Medical measures the public can take before help arrives
 - 12) Procedures to take to protect property and livestock
 - 13) Status of schools and children (i.e. Are children retained in school or have they been sent elsewhere? Should they be picked up?)

- b. Also as a PIO, there is certain information that must be distributed immediately to the emergency response community:
3. Status Update Priorities
- a. Number of deaths and injuries
 - b. Amount of public and private property damage as well as agricultural damage
 - c. Number of persons evacuated
 - d. Number of persons in public shelters
 - e. Number of homes without power
 - f. Response efforts undertaken by government and private agencies
 - g. Status of emergency declaration, Governor's Proclamation, Presidential Declaration
 - h. Establishment of Emergency Information/Citizen's Information Hotline telephone number
 - i. Time before utilities will be restored
 - j. Essential services available
 - k. Time before evacuated persons can return home
 - l. How long in-place sheltering will be needed
 - m. Agricultural information (i.e. sources of feed, monetary assistance, etc.)
 - n. Disaster assistance available and how to apply (monetary, temporary housing, food, etc.)
 - o. Response efforts of volunteers and telephone number for people to call volunteering assistance
 - p. Telephone number for Missing Person Information Center
 - q. Temporary morgues and victim identification measures being taken.