

# UF CEMP Support Group Annex: Public Information Group

## Lead Representatives

University Relations

## Supporting Departments

IFAS Information and Communication Services

UF Communications Network

UF Health Communications

## External Partners

FEI Crisis Management

Media Outlets

## I. Introduction

### A. Purpose

This Support Group Annex to the University of Florida (UF) Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) establishes actions UF departments must take in support of coordinating and executing emergency management activities that address public information services required during or after an emergency. This includes maintaining normal/daily operational support services and providing any additional support services needed as a result of the emergency.

### B. Scope

This Support Group Annex to the University's CEMP identifies actions for activation, initial response, ongoing response, and recovery operations for lead and supporting departments in the Public Information Group and external partners that may support the Public Information Group during an emergency. This Support Group Annex is an integral component of the CEMP, and as such, shall be implemented as a standard operating guide for UF departments supporting the emergency management activities from within the University EOC. This Support Group Annex supports activities described in the CEMP Base Plan but does not supersede the Base Plan. Actions described in this Support Annex can be applied to any emergency at UF; actions outlined in the Incident Action Plan (IAP), created during the emergency response, will describe additional details of the response depending on the specifics of the emergency.

In order to streamline coordination with external agencies, this Support Group Annex is intended to be consistent with the State of Florida CEMP, the Alachua County CEMP, and federal and higher education standards for emergency management.

This Support Group Annex applies to all UF departments assigned herein, with coordination from other departments at UF as well as external partners. This Support Group specifically describes activities that fall within the public information operations of the University.

## II. Organization

## **A. Emergency Management Structure**

The Department assigned as the lead representative in this Support Group Annex will provide a representative to serve in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). This representative will coordinate tasks detailed in this Support Group Annex and contact additional resources to perform tasks as necessary. The Public Information Group representatives in the EOC will report on the status of the Public Information Group tasks to the Emergency Management Group, on a regular basis and as required.

The Public Information Group reports directly to the Emergency Management Group under the EOC organizational chart. The Emergency Management Group will work with all Support Groups to ensure appropriate tasking and response actions take place. The Public Information Group will pursue response actions according to this Annex and as directed by the Emergency Management Group, which reports directly to the University Administrator filled by the Assistant Vice President for Public and Environmental Safety or designee. The Assistant Vice President for Public and Environmental Safety will serve as a liaison between the EOC and the Policy Group, and will relay Policy Group decisions to the Support Groups represented in the EOC as necessary.

## **B. Coordination with other support groups**

Through the Public Information Group representative in the EOC, the Public Information Group will coordinate with all other Support Groups that have been activated to respond. The Emergency Management Group will serve as the coordination point for all Support Groups in the EOC. However, Support Groups may coordinate directly with other Support Groups as necessary, as long as they keep the Emergency Management Group informed on actions performed and the status of the response and related tasks for their respective group.

## **III. Concept of Operations**

### **A. General**

The Public Information Group is responsible for managing the dissemination of information and communications throughout an emergency. This Support Group applies to all members of the UF community, but may be scaled to account for particular groups or sectors of the UF community. In general, all tasks related to disseminating communications and information about the emergency during and after an emergency will come through the Public Information Group. The Public Information Group will work with other Support Groups as necessary to perform the actions and tasks associated with ensuring that the University community remains informed about the emergency. This may include continuing day-to-day support operations or enhancing services and/or operations as a result of the emergency.

This Support Group Annex describes the main tasks that the Public Information Group will perform during the response to and recovery from an emergency. The Primary Tasks, and Actions associated with completing those tasks, are detailed in the remainder of this Support Group Annex. This Support Group Annex is designed to serve as a guide for Public Information Group response and recovery tasks and should remain flexible and scalable depending on the emergency. Response and recovery tasks are

not limited to those described in this Support Group Annex, as additional Public Information Group tasks may arise as a result of the specifics of the emergency at hand.

## B. Primary Tasks

The primary tasks coordinated by the Public Information Group in an emergency include:

1. Disseminate appropriate information to the University and external communities before, during, and after an emergency.
2. Coordinate with other Support Groups and the Policy Group to develop, disseminate, and monitor public information messages for the University.
3. Facilitate information to and requests from media outlets as needed; establish and maintain a Joint Information Center (JIC) if needed.
4. Reach out to and communicate with local, state, federal, and other government entities about the emergency.
5. Activate and manage emergency communications teams according to the UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan.
6. Provide for rumor control including use of UF hotline number (866-UF FACTS) and establishing a call center to answer questions.

Each task, its associated actions, and departmental responsibilities are described in the next section.

## IV. Actions and Responsibilities

The following tables detail steps that need to be taken to complete the major tasks associated with providing public information services during and after an emergency. The tables assign these steps to lead and supporting departments assigned to the Public Information Group.

<b>Task #1: Disseminate appropriate information to the University and external communities before, during, and after an emergency.</b>	
<b>Initial Response Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>
Activate the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> and contact Emergency Communications teams, as appropriate.	University Relations
Validate emergency notification messages have been distributed and follow-up with additional messages as appropriate.	University Relations (In coordination with the Emergency Management Group and the Public Safety Group)

Coordinate with communications contacts in the area impacted by the emergency and other appropriate stakeholders.	University Relations
Designate a lead UF Public Information Officer (PIO) for the emergency.	University Relations
Designate a lead spokesperson for the University.	University Relations
Assign a University EOC representative for the Public Information Group.	University Relations
Inform University operators regarding the directing of calls related to the emergency.	University Relations
Identify a medium of record for the emergency according to the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> .	University Relations
<b>Ongoing Response Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>
Provide continuing information as appropriate and consider establishing a schedule for updates. Employ all mediums available and appropriate.	University Relations
Follow procedures contained in the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> .	University Relations
Keep the UF News Bureau staff informed of emergency response including any changes to their roles and responsibilities.	University Relations
<b>Recovery Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>
Disseminate messages concerning “all clear,” operations, returning to normal schedules, and other status updates.	University Relations
Demobilize resources deployed including staff, the JIC, and the call center when these services are no longer needed.	University Relations

Collect and maintain records pertaining to the public information and communications associated with the emergency.	University Relations
Debrief according to the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> .	University Relations

**Task #2: Coordinate with other Support Groups and Policy Group to develop, disseminate, and monitor public information messages for the University.**

**Initial Response Actions**

Actions	Responsible Department(s)
Liaise with Policy Group and other appropriate stakeholders to gather information for messages related to the emergency.	University Relations (In coordination with the Policy Group)
Coordinate with other Support Groups to gather pertinent information for messages related to the emergency.	University Relations (In coordination with Support Groups)
Gain appropriate approvals on messages prior to distribution.	University Relations

**Ongoing Response Actions**

Actions	Responsible Department(s)
Continue development and dissemination of messages based upon coordination of information with Support Groups, the Policy Group, and other appropriate stakeholders.	University Relations (In coordination with the Policy Group and other Support Groups)
Monitor sources, including news outlets and social media, for effective delivery of UF messages and respond appropriately.	University Relations
Update the Emergency Management Group on messages and information being distributed.	University Relations
Coordinate with local PIOs regarding common messages. (Contact list located in the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> .)	University Relations

**Recovery Actions**

Actions	Responsible Department(s)
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Provide messages on UF recovery efforts in coordination with Support Groups, Policy Group and other appropriate stakeholders.	University Relations (In coordination with the Policy Group and other Support Groups)
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**Task #3: Facilitate information to and requests from media outlets as needed; establish and maintain a Joint Information Center (JIC) if needed.**

**Initial Response Actions**

Actions	Responsible Department(s)
Prepare and release media briefings as appropriate. (Sample media briefings and media contact lists are included in <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> .)	University Relations
Respond to media requests for information and interviews. Consider holding live media briefings.	University Relations
Establish and maintain a JIC as appropriate based upon the size and scope of emergency.	University Relations
Determine and operate a media staging area considering the locations of the JIC, the emergency, and on-going operations.	University Relations

**Ongoing Response Actions**

Actions	Responsible Department(s)
Continue to release and conduct media briefings on a regular basis according to the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> .	University Relations
Evaluate JIC and media staging operations and maintain as appropriate.	University Relations

<p>Employ the Campus Communications Professionals Information sheet included in the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> as a guide for on-going media relations. Steps include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign a staff writer to write a brief initial statement.</li> <li>• Decide if news conferences and/or news releases are appropriate. If so, decide on a schedule and location for each.</li> <li>• Return media calls as soon as possible.</li> <li>• Be proactive with new information.</li> <li>• Assign UF photographers and videographers to cover the emergency.</li> <li>• Decide if location shooting by the media is appropriate.</li> <li>• Identify spokespersons and subject matter experts.</li> <li>• Write a fact sheet that can be used as a guide to write statements.</li> <li>• Monitor information being covered in the media.</li> <li>• Set up information files related to the situation and include media coverage in these files.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>University Relations</p>
<b>Recovery Actions</b>	
Actions	Responsible Department(s)
Reduce or eliminate regular media briefings as appropriate.	University Relations
Demobilize the JIC and media staging areas as appropriate.	University Relations

<b>Task #4: Reach out to and communicate with local, state, federal, and other government entities.</b>	
<b>Initial Response Actions</b>	
Actions	Responsible Department(s)
Inform government entities of the emergency as appropriate. (Contact lists located in the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> including Board of Trustees, the Governor’s Office, legislators and other city, county, state, and federal contacts.)	University Relations

Consider appointing a lead government liaison to facilitate information flow with government entities.	University Relations
<b>Ongoing Response Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>
Continue updating government entities as appropriate regarding emergency response and recovery operations.	University Relations
Serve as a point of contact for government entities, including providing information and coordinating site visits. Consider the appointment of a government liaison.	University Relations
Reach out to other State Universities as appropriate. (Contact list located in the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> .)	University Relations
<b>Recovery Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>
Brief constituent groups on recovery operations, including both short and long term issues such as operating schedules, damages and budgetary concerns.	University Relations
<p>Activate emergency communications teams as needed. Roles and responsibilities of each team are described in the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i>. Teams include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Message Strategy Team</li> <li>• Message Development/Delivery Team</li> <li>• Web/Social Media Team</li> <li>• Media Operations Team</li> <li>• Support Team</li> <li>• Message Monitoring Team</li> <li>• Outreach Team</li> <li>• Phone Bank Operations Team</li> <li>• Operational Support Team</li> <li>• Press Conference/Broadcast Team</li> <li>• Communicators On Call Team</li> </ul>	University Relations



Update the Emergency Management Group and University EOC regarding activation and roles of communications teams.	University Relations
<b>Ongoing Response Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>
Evaluate and maintain operation of emergency communications teams as needed according to the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> and under the guidance of the Public Information Group.	University Relations
Inform UF communications contacts throughout the University regarding activation of emergency	University Relations

<b>Task #5: Activate and manage emergency communications teams according to the UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan.</b>	
<b>Initial Response Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>
<p>Activate emergency communications teams as needed. Roles and responsibilities of each team are described in the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i>. Teams include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Message Strategy Team</li> <li>• Message Development/Delivery Team</li> <li>• Web/Social Media Team</li> <li>• Media Operations Team</li> <li>• Support Team</li> <li>• Message Monitoring Team</li> <li>• Outreach Team</li> <li>• Phone Bank Operations Team</li> <li>• Operational Support Team</li> <li>• Press Conference/Broadcast Team</li> <li>• Communicators On Call Team</li> </ul>	University Relations
Update the Emergency Management Group and University EOC regarding activation and roles of communications teams.	University Relations
<b>Ongoing Response Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>

Evaluate and maintain operation of emergency communications teams as needed according to the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> and under the guidance of the Public Information Group.	University Relations
Inform UF communications contacts throughout the University regarding activation of emergency communications teams and coordination of communications through the Public Information Group.	University Relations
<b>Recovery Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>
Demobilize emergency communications teams as appropriate and deactivate the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> .	University Relations

<b>Task #6: Provide for rumor control including use of UF hotline number (866-UF FACTS) and establishing a call center to answer questions.</b>	
<b>Initial Response Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>
Answer the UF hotline (866-UF FACTS) and provide information regarding the emergency. Consider increasing staffing as needed to accommodate calls. Transfer number to call center if activated.	University Relations
Activate internal call center or external vendor (FEI Crisis Management) as needed according to instructions in the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> .	University Relations (In coordination with the IT Group)
Update the voicemail of News Bureau staff with a message providing brief information regarding the emergency and directing callers to the call center, if activated. A sample script and instructions for voicemail is located in the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> .	University Relations
<b>Ongoing Response Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>

Evaluate and maintain the call center throughout the emergency. Monitor call volume and common questions and brief the Emergency Management Group and University EOC on information.	University Relations
Employ and update scripted information for answering calls received by the call center. Sample scripts for call center are located in the <i>UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan</i> .	University Relations
Monitor social media for rumors regarding UF and respond as appropriate.	University Relations
<b>Recovery Actions</b>	
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Department(s)</b>
Reduce staffing and demobilize the UF hotline and call center as appropriate.	University Relations

## V. References

- Emergency Notification Annex to the CEMP
- UF News Bureau Emergency Communications Plan