

UF CEMP Support Group Annex: Public Information Group

I. Emergency Operations Team (EOT) Departments

- Strategic Communications & Marketing

II. Introduction

A. Purpose

This Support Group Annex further details key functions and expands upon the responsibilities and actions of the Public Information Group and the associated department described in the University of Florida (UF) Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) Base Plan.

B. Scope

This Annex will be utilized during emergency operations in conjunction with the CEMP Base Plan and carried out by the departments specified above. It applies to the entire university enterprise.

III. Concept of Operations

The Emergency Operations Team (EOT) is charged with cooperatively addressing imminent threats and hazards, supporting incident command or on-scene personnel during complex incidents, and staffing the University Emergency Operations Center (EOC) when activated. The Team will exchange and consolidate information, support institutional decision making, and coordinate resources. Within the EOT structure, the Public Information Group has broad authority to address issues affecting public messaging and communications. Their area of responsibility will include and expand upon their standard university roles and will require coordination with internal and external stakeholders.

IV. Organization

The university’s emergency management structure is fully detailed in the CEMP Base Plan. The Emergency Operations Team (EOT) is comprised of eight Support Groups primarily composed of representatives from identified university departments. These groups are organized around key functions to facilitate information and resources, and coordinate actions within these shared areas to manage unified operations for the university. The groups do not have designated leaders, and representatives report to the EOC Director and University Administrator for their EOT roles.

Each designated department or partner is responsible for assigning primary and alternate representatives to the EOT. Those representatives will actively participate in planning, trainings, exercises, communications, EOC activations, after-action reviews, and other EOT activities. Additionally, these departments are responsible for developing and maintaining any internal plans, procedures, and guidance documents needed in order to carry out their assigned responsibilities.

V. Assignment of Responsibilities

Upon activation, the Public Information Group is responsible for addressing the communications needs of university through tasks including, but not limited to the following:

- 1) Staff and support the Public Information Group and Emergency Operations Team (EOT) when activated by the University Administrator, EOC Director, or their designees – *All listed departments***
 - Staff the EOC when activated, including the potential for 24/7 operations.
 - Fulfill requests and mission tasking for support group issues and resources.
 - Provide updates to the EOT throughout the activation.
 - Maintain records of decisions and activities throughout the emergency.
 - Document expenses related to the emergency for FEMA reimbursement.
 - Plan for and implement demobilization procedures for activated resources.

- 2) Disseminate appropriate information to the university and external communities before, during, and after an emergency – *Strategic Communications & Marketing***
 - Develop and distribute messaging in coordination with other stakeholders regarding preparedness actions, current university status, changes to operations, and recovery information.
 - Coordinate with communications contacts within university colleges and departments to facilitate unified messaging.
 - Provide regular and accessible updates throughout the incident.
 - Assist public safety areas with sending and monitoring of UF Alerts during long-duration incidents.

- 3) Monitor media, including social media, public discourse, and feedback to address concerns, enhance messaging, and gather incident information – *Strategic Communications & Marketing***
 - Establish monitoring process during an incident
 - Activating the Strategic Communications & Marketing Social Media Task Force during critical incidents for ongoing, expanded monitoring.
 - Share gathered information with appropriate stakeholders.
 - Respond appropriately to media coverage, social media postings, and other sources to address accuracy of information.

- 4) Establish and maintain a Joint Information Center (JIC), physical or virtual, if warranted by the incident – *Strategic Communications & Marketing***
 - Facilitate information to, and requests from, media.
 - Prepare and release media updates.
 - Coordinate requests for media interviews and live media briefings.
 - Manage JIC operations to support university and media needs, including credentialing, staging locations, and infrastructure.
 - Designate a lead UF Public Information Officer (PIO) and/or spokesperson.
 - Coordinate with internal and external PIOs regarding common messaging.

- 5) Update senior government officials at the local, state, and federal level regarding the incident status and associated university actions – *Strategic Communications & Marketing***
- Brief Board of Trustees, Board of Governors, Governor’s Office, and other government officials as needed in coordination with the Policy Group.
 - Serve as point of contact for inquiries and requests from senior government officials and their staffs.
- 6) Activate and manage the UF hotline number (866-UF FACTS), incident update webpage(s), and other appropriate mediums providing ongoing information regarding the emergency – *Strategic Communications & Marketing***
- Record UF hotline messaging or direct number to internal or vendor-provided call center. If a call center is activated, provide scripted information for answering calls.
 - Maintain current information and guidance on the incident update webpage(s).
 - Monitor call volume and web traffic to appropriately address demand.
 - Develop FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) to address common questions and concerns from the university community and public.