

Lesson Overview

Because public information is critical to domestic incident management, it is imperative to establish Public Information Systems and protocols for communicating timely and accurate information to the public during emergency situations. This lesson describes the principles needed to support effective emergency Public Information Systems.

The Public Information lesson introduces you to the Public Information Systems required by NIMS.

Public Information During Domestic Incidents

Under ICS, the PIO is a key member of the command staff. The PIO advises the Incident Command on all public information matters related to the management of the incident, including media and public inquiries, emergency public information and warnings, rumor monitoring and control, media monitoring, and other functions required to coordinate, clear with proper authorities, and disseminate accurate and timely information related to the incident.

The PIO establishes and operates within the parameters established for the Joint Information System—or JIS.

The JIS provides an organized, integrated, and coordinated mechanism for providing information to the public during an emergency.

The JIS includes plans, protocols, and structures used to provide information to the public. It encompasses all public information related to the incident.

Key elements of a JIS include interagency coordination and integration, developing and delivering coordinated messages, and support for decisionmakers.

The PIO, using the JIS, ensures that decisionmakers—and the public—are fully informed throughout a domestic incident response.

Coordination of Public Information

During emergencies, the public may receive information from a variety of sources. Part of the PIO's job is ensuring that the information that the public receives is accurate, coordinated, timely, and easy to understand.

One way to ensure the coordination of public information is by establishing a Joint Information Center (JIC). Using the JIC as a central location, information can be coordinated and integrated across jurisdictions and agencies, and among all government partners, the private sector, and nongovernmental agencies.

The JIC

A JIC is the physical location where public information staff involved in incident management activities can collocate to perform critical emergency information, crisis communications, and public affairs functions.

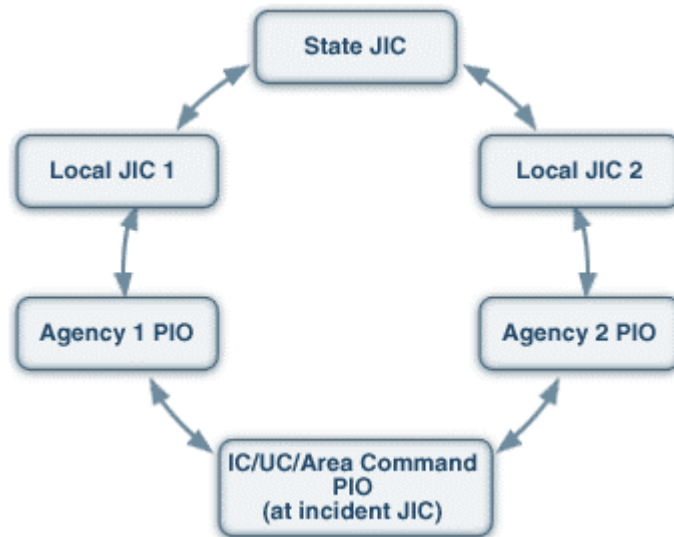
JICs provide the organizational structure for coordinating and disseminating official information.

Organizations Retain Their Independence

Incident Commanders and Multiagency Coordination Entities are responsible for establishing and overseeing JICs, including processes for coordinating and clearing public communications. In the case of a Unified Command, those contributing to joint public information management do not lose their individual identities or responsibilities. Rather, each entity contributes to the overall unified message.

Levels of JICs

JICs may be established at various levels of government. All JICs must communicate and coordinate with each other on an ongoing basis using established JIS protocols. When multiple JICs are established, information must be coordinated among them to ensure that a consistent message is disseminated to the public.



JIC Characteristics

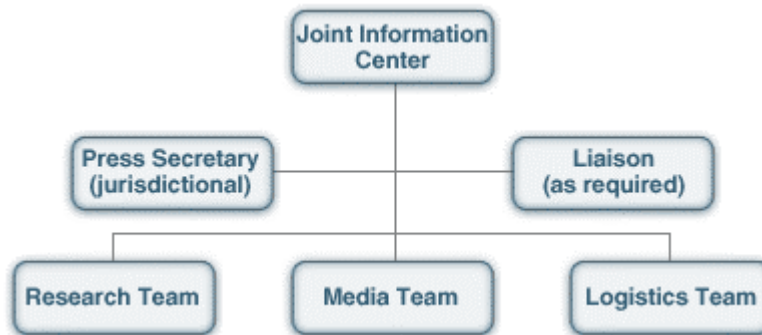
JICs have several characteristics in common:

- The JIC includes representatives of all players in managing the response. This may include jurisdictions, agencies, private entities, and nongovernmental organizations.
- Each JIC must have procedures and protocols for communicating and coordinating effectively with other JICs, and with the appropriate components of the ICS organization.

A single JIC location is preferable, but the JIS should be flexible enough to accommodate multiple JICs when the circumstances of the incident require.

JIC Organization

A typical JIC organization is shown below.



Additional functions may be added as necessary to meet the public information needs of the incident.