

## Chapter 4: Joint Information System (JIS) and Joint Information Center (JIC)

### JOINT INFORMATION SYSTEM (JIS)

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 NGOs. It includes the plans, protocols, procedures, and structures used to provide information to:

- general public;
- disaster victims;
- affected jurisdictions;
- elected officials;
- community leaders;
- private sector;
- media;
- NGOs (e.g., American Red Cross);
- response and recovery organizations (e.g., urban search and rescue, utilities);
- volunteer groups (e.g., CERT, VOAD);
- international interests (e.g., international media and donations); and
- other impacted groups.

Federal, State, tribal, local, and voluntary agencies, private sector PIOs, and established JICs are critical supporting elements of the JIS. Key elements include the following:

- gathering, verifying, coordinating, and disseminating consistent messages;
- interagency coordination and integration;
- support for decision-makers; and
- flexibility, modularity, and adaptability.

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.

### JOINT INFORMATION CENTER (JIC)

To ensure coordination of public information during incidents that involve multiple agencies and/or jurisdictions, the IC/UC may use a JIC to support the gathering, verification, coordination, and dissemination of accurate, accessible, and timely information. The JIC is a central location that facilitates operation of the JIS. In the early stages of response to an incident, the PIO shall consult with the IC/UC regarding

the opening of a JIC. The IC/UC shall retain authority to order the opening of a JIC, although the lead PIO may recommend when it is appropriate.

JICs are established:

- at the direction of the IC/UC at various levels of government;
- at pre-determined or incident-specific sites; and
- as components of Federal, State, tribal, or local Multiagency Coordination Systems (MACS).

JICs may be staffed:

- by representatives from all agencies and jurisdictions involved in the response and recovery operation; and
- through intrastate and interstate mutual aid agreements such as EMAC. EMAC could be a supplemental source or vehicle for bringing trained personnel together to support a JIC.

The JIC should be located close to the best sources of information, such as an EOC, without compromising safety or security of the personnel staffing the facility. A single JIC location is preferable, but the system is flexible and adaptable enough to accommodate virtual or multiple JIC locations, as required. The following table (table 2) provides a description of different types of JICs:

**Table 2—Types of Joint Information Centers (JICs)**

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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.

**COMMON ROLES AND FUNCTIONS**

The following roles and functions are common components of a JIC.

**Lead PIO:**

- responsible for managing the JIC;
- serves as advisor to IC/UC;
- provides overall communication policy direction;
- recommends and develops strategy for messages, briefings, and news releases;
- obtains approval from those in authority before releases are made; and
- conducts JIS/JIC briefings (live or virtual) to update staff regarding Incident Command activities.

### **Information Gathering:**

- Response Partners – Coordination with supporting response agencies and their PIOs at EOCs, incident command posts, and other locations to gather information on the incident.
- Media Monitoring Analysis/Rapid Response – Entails reviewing media reports for accuracy, content, and possible response.
- Research and Writing:
  - Products – Writing materials such as media releases, fact sheets, flyers, etc.
  - Graphics Support – Entails designing layouts, developing PowerPoint presentations, and creating graphics for a range of materials (e.g., newsletters, flyers, etc.).
- Audio-Visual:
  - Broadcast Operations – Entails developing video documentation, special productions, remote live interview feeds, and logistical support of public meetings and presentations.
  - Photo Video – Entails providing still photography documentation to support print and internet media needs, and video documentation to support broadcast media needs. Also includes collecting materials for agency archives.

### **Information Dissemination:**

- Briefing/Special Events – Entails handling events such as news conferences, media briefings, VIP visits, and tours for senior officials of affected areas.
- Media Relations:
  - News Desk – Serves as the primary point of contact for the media.
  - Spokesperson – Prepares and conducts regular news briefings and conferences.
- Web Support – Entails creating and maintaining web pages and blogs containing information about the incident for use by the public and the media.
- Public Inquiries – Entails responding to questions from citizens, making referrals, and developing a log of telephone calls, e-mails, etc., containing names, addresses, the type of calls, and any necessary follow up actions.

### **Operations Support:**

- Special Needs/Multilingual – Entails providing language translation and other services to ensure appropriate and timely information reaches those in the affected areas with special needs.
- Facility Support – Coordinates with the JIC Facility Liaison to maintain and support the JIC operations concerning the facility and resources.

### **Liaison:**

Provides a coordinated two-way communication link with key program areas and other entities involved in the response and recovery operation (e.g., elected officials, community leaders, VIPs, and other governmental and NGO support agencies).

The following diagrams (figure 2) are examples of what JIC organizations look like at various stages of an escalating incident. They are scalable and flexible; certain functions may not be needed for every type of incident or planned event. Each box represents a function to be performed. One person may do many functions, or one function may be staffed by many people, depending upon the scope of the incident.

**Figure 2—Sample Joint Information Center (JIC) Organizations and Functions**

**Initial Response or Local Incidents**

