

PUBLIC INFORMATION ANNEX K

K1. Purpose, Situation, and Assumptions

K1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Public Information Functional Annex is to guide and coordinate agencies and organizations in providing information to the public during a disaster, emergency, or incident within Park County. Public information is an essential part of any emergency situation, as the lack of information can lead to confusion, instability, and anxiety. Timely public information can also reduce the impacts of a disaster by allowing individuals to understand the resources available to them (or not available to them) and make educated decisions that can ultimately save lives and property. The coordination of information between agencies and local officials and unified statements can also improve the accuracy of the information, build confidence, and reduce confusion for the public.

K1.2 Situation Overview

The [Base Plan, Table 1.3B](#) shows the jurisdictions, geographic areas, and populations within Park County. Depending on the incident, all or a subset of the populations may be targeted with information.

The local news media outlets for Park County are shown in Table K1.2A. Note that most of these outlets also have an internet component.

Table K1.2A Local News Media Outlets

Name	Type	Coverage
Livingston Enterprise	Newspaper	Greater Livingston Area
Bozeman Daily Chronicle	Newspaper	Greater Bozeman Area
Billings Gazette	Newspaper	Greater Billings Area
KTVQ, Channel 2	Television	Greater Billings Area
KULR, Channel 8	Television	Greater Billings Area
KPRK, 1340 AM	Radio	Greater Livingston Area
KOZB, 97.5 FM	Radio	Greater Livingston Area
KOBB, 93.7 FM	Radio	Greater Bozeman Area
KMMS, 95.1 FM	Radio	Greater Bozeman Area
KISN, 96.7 FM	Radio	Greater Bozeman Area
KCMM, 99.1 FM	Radio	Greater Belgrade Area
KBOZ, 99.9 FM	Radio	Greater Bozeman Area
KXLB, 100.7 FM	Radio	Greater Bozeman Area
KBMC, 102.1	Radio	Greater Bozeman Area
KGWV, 640 AM	Radio	Greater Belgrade Area

Table K1.2A Local News Media Outlets (continued)

Name	Type	Coverage
KBOZ, 1090 AM	Radio	Greater Bozeman Area
KOBZ, 1230 AM	Radio	Greater Bozeman Area
KMMS, 1450 AM	Radio	Greater Bozeman Area
KEMC, 88.5, 90.5, 91.1, and 103.9 FM	Radio	Yellowstone Public Radio

K1.3 Planning Assumptions

- The public has a need or strong desire for information regarding an incident within Park County.
- Information provided to the public will potentially reduce impacts caused by or related to the incident.

K2. Concept of Operations

The decision points that follow are the responsibility of incident management. Note that not all decision points may be necessary and some decision points may be combined during rapidly escalating situations.

- Decision Point: *Public information is needed for an incident involving a single agency.*

In a localized incident involving a single agency or department, public information may be developed and released by the Incident Commander or a designated Public Information Officer (PIO). Agency policies and procedures for releasing public information should be followed.

- Decision Point: *Public information is needed for an incident involving multiple agencies within a single jurisdiction.*

During incidents in a single jurisdiction involving multiple agencies or departments within that jurisdiction and possibly mutual aid from other jurisdictions, a Public Information Officer should be designated. This Public Information Officer may be the Incident Commander, Principal Executive Officer, or another assigned individual. Responders and others involved in the incident should refrain from speaking to the media or issuing statements unless authorized by or in coordination with the Public Information Officer.

- Decision Point: *Public information is needed for an incident involving multiple agencies in more than one jurisdiction.*

Depending on the extent of the incident, a Joint Information Center may be needed. A Joint Information Center (JIC) allows multiple agencies and jurisdictions to come together, often with more than one Public Information Officer, to provide clear, consistent, and coordinated information to the public. Each jurisdiction, incident, and/or agency may have its own Public Information Officer, but these officers work together to avoid releasing conflicting, confusing, or incorrect information.

If just one Public Information Officer is assigned, this individual will often need to work with other incident management staff and organizations involved, including Principal Executive Officers, to form a clear understanding of the incident, develop public information statements, and answer questions from the media and the public. All others should refrain from speaking to the media or issuing statements unless authorized by or in coordination with the Public Information Officer.

- Decision Point: *Public information statement(s) are needed.*

The types of questions public information statements should strive to answer include:

- What happened, is happening, or is going to happen?
- What type of response is occurring?
- Are there any continuing threats to my safety or property?
- What actions can, should, or must I take and for how long?
- What should I not do?
- Where can I go for additional or future information?

The other annexes also contain additional recommendations for public information, specific to that particular function or hazard.

- Decision Point: *Public information needs to be disseminated.*

Outlets for public information include:

- Television
- Radio
- Newspaper
- Electronic (often a component of the outlets listed above, but many agencies have websites, networking, news feeds, email distribution lists, text messaging, etc.)
- Telephone / Reverse calling through 911 dispatch
- NOAA weather radio
- Signage
- Loud speakers
- Face-to-face
- Telephone hotline
- Trailer mounted radio transmitters (via mutual aid)

See the [Special Needs Annex](#) for additional information regarding providing public information to those with special needs such as visual, hearing, language, and cognitive impairments.

Options for releasing the information can be through press conferences/briefings, distribution of written statements, media interviews, or a combination thereof. Releases should be made on a regular and consistent basis, if possible. More urgent messages may be disseminated through the Emergency Alert System (EAS), signage, telephone calls, and responders. See the [Warning Annex](#) for more information on the dissemination of public warnings and calls for immediate action.

When the safety, privacy, and investigation concerns are met, the media should be given access to the incident area. Media tours of the Incident Command Post and/or Emergency Operations Center may be provided when accompanied by a Public Information Officer and the impact to operations is minimal.

K3. Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities

The responsibilities listed here are specific to this function. Note that all entities, whether listed or not, are also responsible for their basic disaster and emergency responsibilities as outlined in the [Base Plan, Section 3.2](#), as applicable.

The following entities are not specific to jurisdiction. Therefore, in an emergency, the jurisdiction(s) affected will have the responsibility for these roles, and other non-affected jurisdictions may also be involved through mutual aid.

All Entities

- When acting as Incident Command, assign a Public Information Officer (PIO), if needed.
- Provide information to Incident Command or the PIO, as requested, and be sure to clarify if any information is not to be made public.
- Do not provide information to the media unless authorized to do so.
- Refer incident-related media inquiries to the PIO whenever possible.

Principal Executive Officers / Local Elected Officials

- In coordination with the Public Information Officer, provide information to the media.

Disaster and Emergency Services

- Maintain emergency contact information for key media outlets.
- Establish a Joint Information Center, if needed.
- Establish a public information hotline, if needed.

Coroner

- Release public information regarding incident fatalities.

Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD)

- Staff emergency hotlines providing public information, such as 2-1-1 or a locally established call center.

Other Entities

- Perform other duties as needed and assigned.

K4. Direction, Control, and Coordination

Nearly all activations of this plan will include some element of public information. The Public Information Officer (PIO), if established, is a Command Staff position. Otherwise, the public information function is handled directly by the Incident Commander or Unified Command. Additional information on the direction and control function can be found in the [Direction and Control Annex](#) and [Base Plan, Section 4](#).

Other local plans related to this annex (horizontal coordination) include:

- Park County Pandemic Plan

K5. Information Collection and Dissemination

K5.1 Information Collection for Planning

Table K5.1A lists the key information needed and possible sources for public information activities.

Table K5.1A Possible Information Sources

<i>Information Type</i>	<i>Source</i>
Overall incident information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incident Command / Unified Command - Planning Section - Emergency Operations Center
Information specific to operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operations Section
Information related to other agency operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaison Officer and/or Partner Agencies
Media preferences regarding timing of releases, conferences, points of contact, etc. (this may be a secondary concern depending on the urgency of the messages/statements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media outlets (television, radio, newspaper)

K5.2 Public Information

Public information should be reviewed and approved by Incident Command, Unified Command, and/or Principal Executive Officers and coordinated with other agencies and/or Public Information Officers before dissemination using the methods described in [Section K2, Concept of Operations](#).

K6. Communications

See the [Communications Annex](#) for more details on emergency communications in Park County.

Note that information broadcast over public safety radio, particularly operational communications, may not be cleared for public release and will need to be verified and approved before being released to the public. Avoid assumptions based on radio transmissions and other operational conversations.

K7. Administration, Finance, and Logistics

K7.1 Finance/Administration

For additional information on the Finance/Administration function, particularly the importance of recordkeeping, see the [Base Plan, Section 7.1](#).

K7.2 Logistics

For additional information on disaster and emergency logistics, see the [Base Plan, Section 7.2](#).

K8. Plan Development and Maintenance

See the [Base Plan, Section 8](#) for additional information on annex development, review, revision, and exercise.

K9. Authorities and References

K9.1 Authorities / References

None.

K9.2 Acronyms

See the [Base Plan, Section 9.4](#) for the list of acronyms used in this plan.

K10. Attachments

None.