

## THE JIC FACILITY

The JIC facility should be located close to the best sources of information, such as an Incident Command Post or Emergency Operations Center, without compromising safety or security. Also, the facility should:

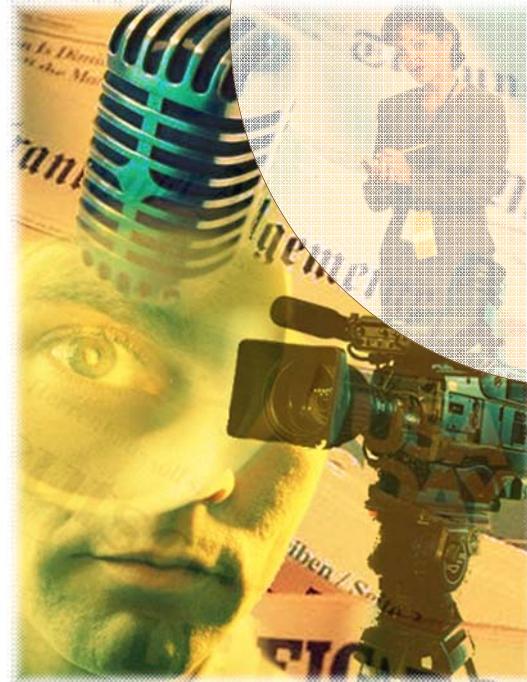
- Provide special parking for media vehicles (including satellite trucks), with signs directing the media to the JIC;
- Be designed so functional areas that must communicate frequently can do so; and
- Contain the necessary resources and equipment.

## BE READY

Start preparing now. Agreements should reflect the commitment of each partner organization to coordinate with counterparts and keep them informed. Emergency public information plans and procedures should be in place addressing a coordinated emergency public information effort centered on support for the Joint Information System/Center. Remember, it is all about getting the right information to the right people at the right time — so they can make the right decisions.

## JOINT INFORMATION SYSTEM / CENTER GUIDE

## A KEY TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION DURING A CRISIS



In any type of crisis, information can be as important as food, water and shelter. Whether the information involves saving lives, protecting property or just calming fears, the public must have accurate, timely, easy-to-understand information. An effective emergency public information program can help people make educated decisions about their safety. During a crisis response, the Joint Information System (JIS) and the Joint Information Center (JIC) are keys to providing concise and coordinated information to the public and the news media.

This guide contains material that can help you establish and operate a Joint Information Center as part of a Joint Information System. Development of an effective JIS and JIC requires extensive teamwork, coordination and partnership, often spanning organizations and jurisdictions. A JIS and JIC cannot be formed in a day when something happens — they must be built *before* disaster strikes. This guide is a quick reference to help Public Information Officers (PIO) and Public Affairs Officers (PAO) remember the key points for a successful JIS and JIC.

## WHAT IS A JOINT INFORMATION SYSTEM?

Many different organizations and jurisdictions may respond to a large-scale crisis. The response may include: local police and fire; hospitals; county and state offices; the military; federal agencies; tribal governments; health departments; volunteer organizations; the private sector; and many others. All these groups participate in the JIS, which provides a mechanism for coordinating their public information activities. And even for smaller, local incidents, the JIS remains an important, ever-present feature of any effective crisis response.

## WHAT IS A JOINT INFORMATION CENTER?

The JIC is a central location that facilitates the operation of the JIS. It is where PIOs and PAOs come to coordinate public information during a crisis. By working together in a JIC, PIOs and PAOs can reduce misinformation, maximize resource and help build public confidence in response efforts. A JIC is usually established for large-scale incidents and staffed by representatives from the affected jurisdictions. Depending upon the size and nature of the crisis, staffing can range from less than a dozen people to more than 100. For some catastrophic events covering large geographic areas, more than one JIC may be necessary. In some cases, a JIC may be set up ahead of time and activated when needed. But more often, a JIC will not be established until after a crisis has occurred. The decision to use a JIC is typically made by the Incident Commander.

Created by



Decision and Information Sciences Division  
Risk Communication Program  
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A ready reference to help you establish and operate an effective Joint Information System/Center



U.S. Army



CSEPP



Homeland Security

# THE JOINT INFORMATION CENTER IS A POWERFUL TOOL TO SUPPORT THE JOINT INFORMATION SYSTEM

## NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) was developed to create a standard, nationwide approach for managing incidents at all levels of government. The JIS/JIC structure is a critical component of NIMS, which relies upon the JIS and the JIC to integrate the emergency public information activities of federal, state and local responders.

## WHO'S WHO IN THE JIC

Like NIMS, the model JIC structure at right uses Incident Command System (ICS) principles. The model is designed to be scaleable and function-based to work in a variety of crises. Each box on the organization chart represents a function to be performed. One person may do many functions or one function may be staffed by many people, depending upon the size and scope of the incident. The model also provides a clear "chain of command" within the JIC to minimize confusion and enhance information flow.

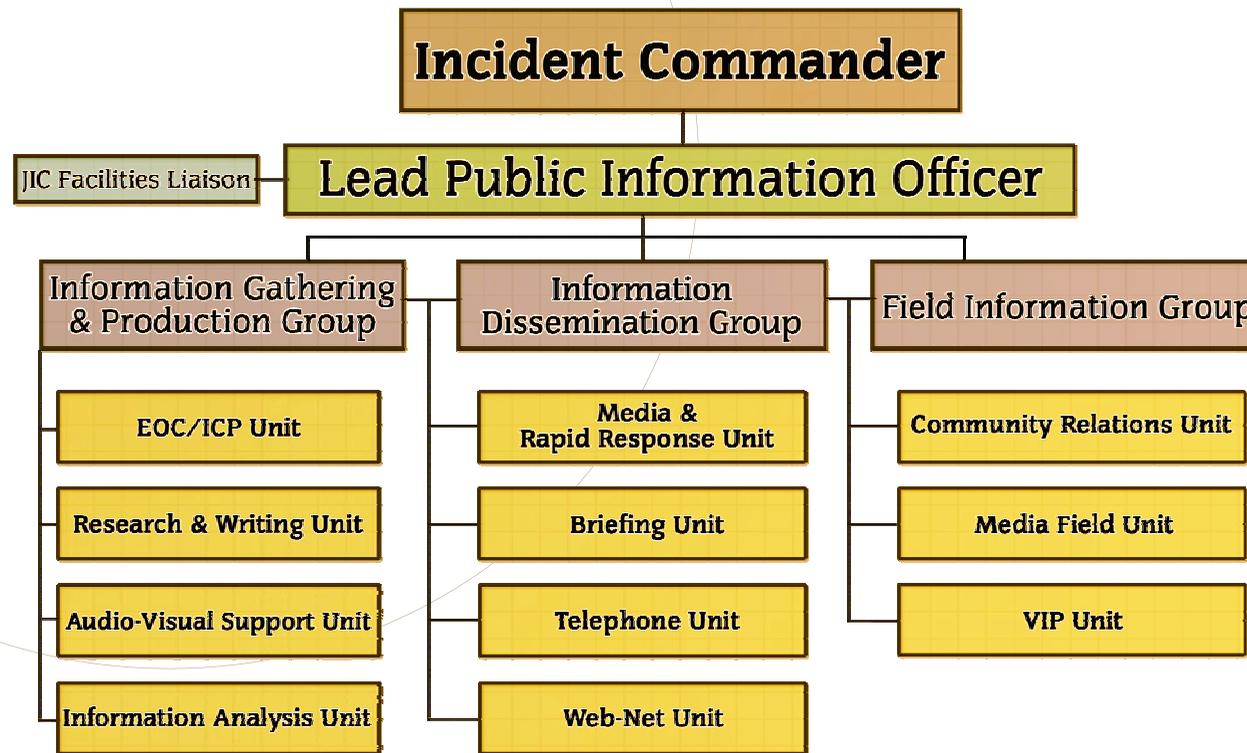
**Lead Public Information Officer** — comes from the agency in charge of handling the crisis and reports to the Incident Commander. This is a management position; the Lead PIO should provide overall direction and should not be involved in operational details. The Lead PIO can have assistant PIOs. PIOs representing other agencies do not report to the Lead PIO but they do coordinate and provide support.

**JIC Facilities Liaison** — responsible for the JIC facility and its operation. The JIC Facilities Liaison keeps the JIC running from a logistical standpoint and provides support to the Lead PIO, agency public information staff, group leaders, and all functional areas of the JIC.

## WHAT MAKES A JIS/JIC GO?

The JIC is designed to support the JIS, and the primary function of the JIS is to keep information flowing. JIC staff should think of information as a tangible commodity. Information is the "fuel" that runs the engine of the JIC: no fuel, the JIC will not start; too much fuel and the JIC will choke. For a JIC to operate efficiently, information must flow from all directions.

# JIC Organization and Functions



**Information Gathering & Production Group** — gathers, analyzes and sorts information. This group also develops all written, print, photographic, audio, video, and web-based material for use in the JIC.

**EOC/ICP Unit** — gathers relevant, approved incident information for the JIC from the Emergency Operations Center and the Incident Command Post.

**Research & Writing Unit** — develops written material on assigned topics. Work may include research or gathering information from multiple sources.

**Audio-Visual Support Unit** — develops audio and visual support products. Staff must be skilled in graphic design, photography and videography. Coordinates with the Briefing Unit to prepare news conference visuals and handouts.

**Information Analysis Unit** — coordinates and analyzes information from multiple sources, including media coverage, Telephone Unit and Field Information Group. The unit leader is responsible for identifying misinformation and rumors circulating within the public and the media.

**Information Dissemination Group** — disseminates written and oral information to internal audiences, such as JIC staff and other agency representatives, and to external audiences, such as the public and the media.

**Media & Rapid Response Unit** — responds to media needs, including requests for information, tours, interviews, and visual material, and corrects misinformation. Information requests are forwarded to other agencies as appropriate. JIC staff working with reporters are an invaluable source of information about trends in media coverage. Rapid Response may take many forms, such as a news release, a call to a reporter or a live interview with media at the JIC.

**Briefing Unit** — responsible for preparing and conducting regular news briefings and news conferences.

**Telephone Unit** — answers calls from the public and the media. Besides the Field Information Group, this is the only unit with a direct link to the public.

**Web-Net Unit** — responsibilities include: creating web pages; posting data, images and video to web sites; handling e-mail; and monitoring web server traffic. It is important the JIC server can withstand the expected surge in traffic.

**Field Information Group** — provides face-to-face contact with the public, special interest groups, political leaders, and other VIPs, and provides interviews and other assistance to the media at field locations. This group also sends information back to the JIC and identifies issues that need to be addressed.

**Community Relations Unit** — coordinates outreach to groups of people united by a common interest, such as business owners, chambers of commerce, church groups, and shelter residents.

**Media Field Unit** — supports the Incident Commander by handling media requests at high-profile field locations where reporters gather.

**VIP Unit** — works closely with VIPs, such as elected officials. Provides regular updates to VIPs and sends information back to the JIC about VIP issues, activities and concerns.