

INFORMATION OFFICER (IO) JOB AID

Overview

Position: Information Officer

Personnel selected for this position should possess extensive management experience and have demonstrated skills in interacting with the public and media. Prior public affairs, crisis response, or ICS experience is desirable. Personnel should be assigned to this position based on skills and ability versus rank in the organization.

Section: Command Section

Mission:

To provide the media with a main on-site contact to ensure that accurate, timely and consistent information is being provided on the emergency situation and response activities. Key goals include:

- Gather incident data
 - Inform the public and the community
 - Analyze public perceptions
 - Demobilize the Section/unit demobilized
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Duties:

- ❑ Obtain briefing and situation information from Incident Commander.
- ❑ Advise IC and section chiefs of requirements for an information center.
- ❑ Meet with responsible party and lead federal agency information officers regarding establishment of a joint information center, and the coordination of unified media releases.
- ❑ Assume interim media functions until an information center is fully operational.
- ❑ Liaise with Incident Commander and section chiefs to obtain current information on the situation.
- ❑ Assume supporting role of information center; and liaise with communications officers of other participating agencies.
- ❑ Liaise with Incident Commander to determine any constraints on media releases and/or approval for prepared releases.
- ❑ Maintain unit log (ICS 214).

References

Below is a list of references that may be required while using this job aid:

- Oil Spill Field Operations Guide (ICS OS-420-1)
- NRT Joint Information Center Manual
- NIIMS Position Task Book for IO (NFES 2306)

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Overview (cont'd)

Materials

Ensure that these materials are available to the Information Officer during an incident, if not already provided in a unit or section specific support kit.

- NRT Joint Information Center Manual
- Field Operations Guide
- ICS Forms Catalog
- Local telephone directory
- Pens/pencils/note paper/stapler/Post-it Notes, etc.
- Blank roster for assisting/cooperating agency and agency representative information
- Blank roster for stakeholder group and point of contact information
- Portable computer, loaded with database of area stakeholder / political entities
- Internet capabilities
- Computer printer
- Two fax machines
- Power strips with surge protector
- 8 phones/phone lines
- Associated Press Stylebook
- Dictionary
- Dry erase boards or 3 flip charts
- Poster printer or access to one

General Information

Use clear text and ICS terminology (no codes) in all radio transmissions.

All radio communications to Incident Communications Center will be addressed: "(Incident Name) Communications"

Initial Actions

General Tasks

Below are responsibilities for the person who is first assigned as the Information Officer.

STEP	ACTION	✓
1.	Receive assignment	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Upon arrival at the incident, check-in at designated check-in locations. Check-in locations may be found at: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incident Command Post• Base or Camps• Staging Areas• Helibases• Division supervisors (for direct line assignments)	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Receive briefing from Incident Commander <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Size and complexity of incident• Expectations of the IC• Incident objectives• Agencies/organizations/stakeholders involved• Political subdivisions• Incident activities/situation• Special concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Begin/maintain Unit Activity Log (ICS 214)	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Acquire work materials listed on page 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Complete forms and reports required of the assigned position and send material through supervisor to Documentation Unit	<input type="checkbox"/>

Initial Information Officer

Establish Initial Organization

The initial IO should use the job aid below to prepare for media and other inquiries early in the incident.

STEP	ACTION	✓
1.	Establish a dedicated phone line for inquiries from the media	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Gather basic facts about the crisis – who, what, where, and when	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Use this information to answer inquiries	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Activate the following positions as needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inquiries Assistant• Incident Data Assistant• News Release Assistant	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Select a location for the Joint Information Center. The location should meet the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enough space for 12 people to work• A minimum of eight AC outlets or power strips used within fire codes• Access to a copier• Located close to the Incident Command Post	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Call for more assistance, preferably people trained in Joint Information Center and Incident Command System operations. Make requests for additional resources through the Logistics Section	<input type="checkbox"/>

Assistant to the IO

Inquiries Assistant The first person assigned to assist the Initial IO will respond to telephone requests for information.

STEP	ACTION	✓
1.	Use the dedicated phone to answer calls from the media	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Record names and phone numbers of who called	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Use approved news release and information from Incident Data Assistant to answer media calls	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	If a question is asked that you cannot answer, write down the question, who asked it and their number, so it can be answered later	<input type="checkbox"/>

Incident Data Assistant

The second person assigned to assist the Initial IO will gather incident data.

STEP	ACTION	✓
1.	Gather information about the incident	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Provide this information to the assistants handling inquiries and written news releases	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Assistant to the IO (Cont'd)

News Release Assistant

The third person assigned to assist the Initial IO will prepare written news releases.

STEP	ACTION	✓
1.	Assemble the facts into two or three sentences that answer: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• who• what• when• where	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	List the remaining facts and information in bullet form <i>Example: What agencies are responding? Type and amount of equipment?</i> NOTE: The release should be only one page in length. If there is a need for additional information about specific topics, then a separate fact sheet should be done.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Spell check and edit the release and give it to the IO for approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Give approved release to Inquiries Assistant and Incident Commander	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Fax to media and other requestors	<input type="checkbox"/>

Joint Information Center (JIC) Established

General Tasks

This job aid is for the Information Officer who is appointed by the Unified Command to establish and manage a Joint Information Center.

STEP	ACTION	✓
1.	Select the most experienced person to be the Information Officer, when experienced help arrives	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Receive debrief from Initial Information Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Relieve Initial Information Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Appoint most experienced assistant as JIC Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Appoint an experienced assistant as Internal Unit Leader	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Appoint an experienced assistant as External Unit Leader	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Use the Joint Information Center Manual to ensure all Information Officer responsibilities are being performed	<input type="checkbox"/>

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graph TD
    A[Gather incident data] --> B[Inform the public]
    B --> C[Analyze public perception]
    C --> A
    
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Informed Public and Community

Speaker Preparation This job aid is for the IO (or one of the IO's assistants) to prepare personnel for speaking to the general public and media during phone interviews, on-camera interviews, news conferences, or town meetings.

STEP	ACTION	✓
1.	<p>Prepare a statement of commitment, empathy or concern to use as an introduction.</p> <p>Put yourself into the shoes of your audience and address the issues about which they are most concerned.</p> <p><i>Example: "As you know we are faced with a challenging safety, environmental, economic event. All the involved parties, under the coordination of the U.S. Coast Guard, are committed to working together to expeditiously resolve this incident. Public safety for both the local citizens as well as the cleanup workers . . . , " etc.</i></p> <p>NOTE: From this point on, sentences should be short – 7 to 12 words in length.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	<p>Prepare two to three key messages you want to address and incorporate them into a bridge between Step 1 and the body of your statement.</p> <p><i>Example: "We are removing oil from the environment, protecting sensitive areas and rehabilitating oiled wildlife."</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Informed Public and Community (cont'd)

Speaker Preparation (cont'd) The job aid used to prepare personnel for speaking appearances is continued below.

STEP	ACTION	✓
3.	Repeat your first key message and state two to four facts that support it <i>Example: "We are removing oil from the environment. Our skimmers on the water have removed over 500 gallons today. Workers with sorbent pads are combing the beaches. In total, we've collected more than 1 million gallons."</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Repeat Step 3 for other key messages you may have prepared	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Write a bridge between the body of your statement and your conclusion – repeat your one to three key messages again; should be similar or exactly the same as the bridge in Step 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	State future actions as a conclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Note: The public remembers what you looked like and how well you spoke. What you said has the least impact. Physical presence: 60%; Voice, how you speak: 30%; Words, what you said: 10%. Your presence has a great effect on how the public receives your presentation.		

Worksheet for Information Officer

Speaker Preparation Job Aid

All written responses for steps 1 - 6 from page one should be put on this sheet.

1. Statement _____

2. Key Message(s) _____

3. – 4. Key Message(s) with Supporting Facts _____

5. Repeat Key Message(s) _____

6. Future Actions _____

Section/Unit Demobilized

Tasks

Below are demobilization responsibilities applicable to all personnel assigned to this section/unit.

STEP	ACTION	✓
1.	Receive Demobilization Plan from Demobilization Unit Leader/Planning Section Chief	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Brief subordinates regarding demobilization Debrief appropriate personnel prior to departing incident <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incident Commander• Planning Section Chief• Logistics Section Chief• Agency representatives	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Supervise demobilization of unit, including storage of supplies	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Provide Supply Unit Leader with a list of supplies to be replenished	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Forward all Section/Unit documentation to Documentation Unit	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Complete Check-out Sheet	<input type="checkbox"/>

Information Exchange Matrix

Information Exchange Matrix

Inputs/Outputs Below is an input/output matrix to assist the Information Officer in exchanging information with other ICS positions.

MEET With:	WHEN:	IO OBTAINS:	IO PROVIDES:
Incident Commander	Immediately after check-in Command Staff meeting As needed for news release authority	Initial incident data Appointment of best person to be IO Command messages(s) News release authority	Level of public interest Public information strategy Speaker preparation News releases, fact sheets, video, photos and news clips Interview, news brief and town meeting schedules
Planning Section Chief	Planning Meeting	Incident situation status data continuously Daily meeting schedule Copy of the IAP	Interview, news brief and town meeting schedules
Demobilization Unit Leader	Standing down Joint Information Center		Unit Log (ICS 214)
Operations Section Chief	Operations Briefing As needed	Incident situation data Air/vessel transportation for JIC personnel, media, community and distinguished visitors to incident site	News releases, fact sheets, video, photos and news clips Names of people needing air/vessel transportation

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Information Exchange Matrix (cont'd)

MEET With:	WHEN:	IO OBTAINS:	IO PROVIDES:
Safety Officer	Initial incident brief Command Staff meeting Operations Briefing JIC personnel, media, community and distinguished visitors need access to incident site	Briefing for JIC personnel, media, community and distinguished visitors Personal protective equipment when going on-site	News releases, fact sheets, video, photos and news clips Roster of on-site visitors escorted by JIC personnel Escorts for media, community and distinguished visitors to incident site
Liaison Officer	Command Staff meeting Operations Briefing Planning Meeting As needed	Names and numbers of additional agencies, organizations and stakeholders to be added to JIC dissemination list	News releases, fact sheets, video, photos and news clips Assist with distinguished visitor escorts Names of additional agencies, organizations and stake holders for incorporation into incident
Situation Unit Leader	Planning Meeting	Future projections for incident.	

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Information Exchange Matrix (cont'd)

MEET With:	WHEN:	IO OBTAINS:	IO PROVIDES:
Logistics Section Chief	Operations Briefing As needed	JIC materials (refer to IO job aid) Specialized clothing Enough space for at least 12 people to work Contract assistance for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper, television and radio, clipping service • Procurement, film processing, video dubbing service, and audio visual support 	News releases, fact sheets, video, photos and news clips
Finance/Admin Section Chief	Operations brief As needed	Travel order numbers and accounting data	News releases, fact sheets, video, photos and news clips
Response Personnel	Initial brief Operations brief As needed	Spokespeople at news conference, town meetings and individual interviews with media	Speaker preparation News releases, fact sheets, video, photos and news clips