



Emergency Support Function 15 (External Affairs) Annex
to Georgia Emergency Operations Plan

2023

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Record of Change

Change #	Date	Part Affected	Date Posted	Who Posted
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Record of Distribution

Plan #	Office/Department	Representative	Signature
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 External Affairs supports the Georgia Emergency Operations Plan (GEOP) and the National Response Framework ESF-15 External Affairs. The purpose of this ESF is to provide information in a clear, concise, and accurate manner on actions taken by local and state governments and actions to be taken by the public.

1.2 Scope

The Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS) is responsible for external affairs during all phases of emergency management.

ESF-15 provides GEMA/HS with a single point to collect and disseminate information statewide. All primary state agencies or organizations with ESF responsibilities will provide information to and assist with this function during an emergency or disaster.

Before, during, and after an emergency or disaster, the public will be apprised through reports to the news media, the GEMA/HS website, and social media sites. State services and assistance shall include the delineation of emergency responsibilities and actions to provide the public with essential information and documentation by written, verbal or photographic means.

Every effort shall be made to prevent and counter rumors and inaccurate information. Likewise, the appropriate local, state and Congressional elected officials will be notified on the status of response and recovery activities and assisted with constituent inquiries directed to their offices

GEMA/HS assumes primary coordination responsibility for ESF-15 and will ensure GEMA/HS is represented and actively participating as necessary in all prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities as they relate to emergency management external affairs.

2.0 Concept of the Operation

2.1 General

GEMA/HS will coordinate overall information and external affairs activities for state agencies and organizations when the GEOP and/or State Operations Center (SOC) are activated.

The GEMA/HS Director or designee(s), through External Affairs, is responsible for informing the public of emergency and disaster information in the State. Assistance will be provided by public information officers of other state agencies or organizations.

ESF-15 will inform the Governor's Press Secretary of events on a continuing and timely basis.

Either ESF-15 will request qualified personnel from other state agencies to assist as media representative escorts at the emergency site or at the SOC. State agencies and

organizations will provide public information personnel and equipment resources when requested.

A coordinated effort to report and document the emergency or disaster will be conducted at the SOC and scene.

Situation briefings, press conferences, taped messages, photography, news accounts, injury and fatality statistics and other information will be provided to the news media.

ESF-15 will provide information and briefings for state and federal agencies and will coordinate state and local information and news releases.

ESF-15 will post disaster related information on the agency's website: <https://gema.georgia.gov>; the GEMA/HS Facebook page, and Twitter account.

ESF-15 will develop plans to coordinate with major state level news media for emergency operations before, during and after an emergency or disaster.

ESF-15 will coordinate with all state agency Public Information Offices and develop a coordinated state news policy.

ESF-15 will supplement efforts of the local Emergency Management Agencies (EMAs) that do not have emergency public information capability.

ESF-15 will establish and staff a state Joint Information Center (JIC) and/or Joint Information System.

ESF-15 will continue dissemination of accurate/timely information to counteract misinformation and public unrest.

2.2 Plan Activation

Any threat or incident requiring the activation of this ESF may be detected from a variety of sources. When any ESF-15 primary or support partner is apprised of a threat or incident, they will contact GEMA/HS External Affairs with pertinent information.

During an emergency or disaster, the ESF-15 Coordinator will serve as the principle point of contact for operations associated with external affairs. The ESF Coordinator will oversee all ESF-15 operations and reports to the SOC Event Manager. If a disaster warrants SOC activation, some or all ESF-15 may be activated. The scope, scale, and magnitude of the threat/incident will dictate which primary agencies will assign personnel to the SOC, and the relevant support agencies that will be requested for support.

Resource requirements will be primarily determined by affected County EMA Directors, working in concert with assigned GEMA/HS Field Coordinators, and the emergency coordinators of affected State agencies. Resource Requests flow from the County EMA Director (or the GEMA/HS Field Coordinator acting on his/her behalf) or State agency to the SOC. Existing State resources, intrastate mutual aid, donations, Voluntary Agencies Active in Disasters, Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) and non-government organizations (NGOs) provide the initial source of personnel, vehicles, equipment, supplies, and services to fulfill resource requests. Resource Requests that exceed the capability of these sources may be fulfilled through State

purchasing and contracting, interstate mutual aid, EMAC, or federal government assistance.

The ESF-15 Coordinator serves as the point of contact for requests for external affairs assistance that are received by the SOC and is responsible for delegating mission assignments to the appropriate ESF-15 partner agency. The partner agency ensures mission assignment completion through direct support or by delegation to the appropriate support agency.

3.0 Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities

The ESF-15 Coordinator is the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency.

The GEOP contains information on the provision of assets and resources through the EMAC, private-sector or NGO procurement procedures, and requests for assistance to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

3.1 ESF Coordinator

The Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency serves as the coordinator for ESF-15 and will assume primary responsibility for coordination among ESF-15 primary and support agencies.

3.2 Primary Agency Assignment of Responsibilities

Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency

- Coordinates with appropriate agencies and organizations to ensure operational readiness.
- Develops and maintains Standard Operating Procedures.
- Provides overall guidance concerning external affairs and public information.
- Participates in and/or conducts exercises and tests.

3.3 Support Agency Assignment of Responsibilities

Georgia Office of Governor

- Provide authorization and structure for implementation of ESF-15 procedures.

American Red Cross

- Assist and advise in areas of mass care and sheltering.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Association County Commissioners of Georgia

- Provide notification to county governments of pertinent activities and messaging.

Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia

- Provide office equipment and space.
- Provide Public Information Officers (PIOs).
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Bureau of Investigation

- Assist and advise in areas of law enforcement and mass fatalities.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

- Assist and advise in areas of criminal justice.

Georgia Department of Administrative Services

- Assist and advise in areas of procurement.

Georgia Department of Agriculture

- Assist and advise in areas of agriculture and fuel distribution.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Department of Banking and Finance

- Provide liaison to assist and advise with banking and financial services.

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

- Provide PIOs.
- Assist and advise in areas of housing and community affairs.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Department of Community Health

- Provide PIOs.
- Assist and advise in areas of community health and health care regulations.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Department of Defense

- Provide air and ground transportation.
- Provide office, communications, and photographic/video/audio equipment.
- Provide PIOs.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Department of Education

- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Department of Human Services

- Assist and advise in areas of mass care, sheltering, public health and social assistance programs.
- Provide PIOs.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Department of Labor

- Provide PIOs.
- Assist and advise in areas of labor, job training and unemployment assistance.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

- Assist and advise in areas of environmental health physics, wildlife, floodplain management, water, and wastewater systems and facilities.
- Provide public information officers.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Department of Public Health

- Assist and advise on messaging to the public in areas of public health.
- Provide PIOs.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Department of Public Safety

- Provide air and ground transportation.
- Assist and advise in areas of public safety and transportation routes.
- Provide PIOs.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Department of Transportation

- Provide air transportation.
- Assist and advise in areas of transportation routes.
- Provide PIOs.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Environmental Finance Authority

- Provide a liaison to assist and advise in energy and fuel distribution.

Georgia Forestry Commission

- Assist and advise in areas of forestry and firefighting.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Municipal Association

- Provide notification to city governments of pertinent activities and messaging.

Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council

- Provide PIOs.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Public Broadcasting

- Provide equipment, facilities, and personnel necessary to broadcast from the SOC.

Georgia Public Safety Training Center

- Provide office equipment and space.
- Provide PIOs.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Public Service Commission

- Assist and advise in areas of utility infrastructure, emergency repair status reports and restoration plans.
- Provide access to subject matter experts.

Georgia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

- Provide a liaison to assist and advise with volunteer organizations activities.

Technical College System of Georgia

- Provide office equipment and meeting space.
- Provide PIOs.

4.0 Direction, Control, and Coordination

4.1 Information Collection and Dissemination

ESF-15 will report all activities to the ESF-5 Planning Unit for inclusion in the development of incident action plans and situational reports.

In addition to the SOC, ESF-15 may provide personnel to field operations established in Georgia, including but not limited to: Joint Field Offices, JIC, Disaster Recovery Centers, and any other incident facility established to meet operational demands for each incident requiring the activation of the GEOP.

4.2 Communications and Documentation

The GEMA/HS Planning Section has provided standard operating guide development templates and planning assistance to all ESF's listed in the GEOP. All ESF's will strive to develop operationally ready Standard Operating Guides (SOGs) for inclusion in the GEOP. ESF-15 will meet as necessary to develop, review and refine SOGs that discuss specific operational processes and procedures.

4.3 Administration, Finance, and Logistics

In conjunction with ESF-7 Logistics, ESF-15 will develop, review, refine and maintain lists of all resources currently available and under the control of the primary or support agencies listed in this plan. The development of these lists may be completed by several organizations and professional groups, which currently operate within this ESF. These resource lists should be compliant with the resource typing standards outlined in the National Incident Management System.

Coordination of EMAC Request

The Emergency Management Assistance Compact is a national mutual aid agreement between the 50 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia. It is based on 13 Articles which have been enacted into state law by each state. In Georgia, EMAC is addressed in the O.C.G.A., Title 38, Chapter 3, Article 5.

States may only request assistance via EMAC when their Governor has declared a state of emergency. EMAC requires that the state requesting assistance reimburse the state that provides the assistance. The Director of GEMA/HS is the EMAC Authorized

Representative (AR) for the State of Georgia. The AR is tasked with the authority to commit and accept resources through EMAC partnerships. The AR may delegate this authority to the Logistics Section Chief, Deputy Logistics Section Chief, and Finance Section Chief of GEMA/HS. The GEMA/HS Logistics Section Chief is the Designated Contact (DC) for EMAC. In the absence of the Logistics Section Chief, the agency has identified alternate Designated Contacts. The DC is commonly referred to as the EMAC Coordinator. The DC coordinates EMAC operations and prepares the official EMAC Request for Assistance (commonly referred to as the REQ-A). When completed, the REQ-A becomes a contract between the requesting and assisting states for the provision of assistance in accordance with EMAC. When the SOC is activated, the Logistics Section Mutual Aid Unit coordinates and manages EMAC missions. This unit will be initially staffed with GEMA/HS personnel but will likely be augmented by trained EMAC personnel from other states as soon as possible. This unit is also referred to as an EMAC "A" Team.

When the SOC is activated, the ESF-15 will coordinate all applicable EMAC requests with the GEMA/HS EMAC DC or the SOC Logistics Section Mutual Aid Unit. No resource (personnel or equipment) may deploy to another state via EMAC until the REQ-A has been approved and signed by the ARs of the requesting and assisting states, and they have been provided a copy of the REQ-A, have been briefed and prepared for the mission. To facilitate obtaining any assistance Georgia may need via EMAC, state ESFs should identify their shortfalls in capability and where resources may be obtained to provide this capability. This may be accomplished via informal coordination with sister agencies in other states to determine if the needed resource is available for potential deployment to Georgia, its location, and the point of contact for the resource. Such information is critical in expediting a request for assistance via EMAC. For more information on EMAC, contact the GEMA/HS EMAC Designated Contact at 404-635-7200.

5.0 Plan Evaluation, Maintenance and Revision

5.1 Evaluation

GEMA/HS conducts all exercises within the structure provided by the Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP). ESF-15 will participate in all exercise activities when applicable and will follow the HSEEP process to include active participation in planning and evaluation meetings, workshops and conferences.

GEMA/HS systematically coordinates and conducts event debriefings and compiles after action reports for any incident that calls for the activation of all or any portion of the GEOP. ESF-15 shall participate in this process when applicable. After Action Reports will document areas for improvement, resource shortfalls and corrective action planning requirements which will be incorporated into the GEOP, its annexes or ESF SOGs when applicable.

5.2 Maintenance and Revision

This ESF Annex will be reviewed every two years and updated as required. In addition, the document shall be evaluated for recommended revisions and corrective measures as an integral part of the Agency Exercise or Event After Action Reports / Improvement Plans, as well as internal reviews that will follow the issuance of any Governor Executive Order or passage of legislation impacting the Agency.

6.0 Authorities and References

The authority for the Georgia Emergency Operations Plan is based on Official Code of Georgia, Title 38, Section 3, Articles 1 through 3, known as the Georgia Emergency Management Act of 1981, and is compliant with the National Incident Management System and supports the National Response Framework.

O.C.G.A. § 38-3-1, to § 38-3-10, establishes legal authority for development and maintenance of Georgia's Emergency Management Program and organization, and defines the emergency powers, authorities, and responsibilities of the Governor and Director of GEMA/HS. Moreover, the State's Emergency Services and Disaster Laws require that state and local governments develop and maintain current Emergency Operations Plans to be prepared for a variety of natural and human caused hazards. Executive Orders by the Governor supplement the laws and establish specific planning initiatives and requirements.