

Checklist for Bringing in NPS Information Officer Support

Mike Theune, Fire Communication and Education Specialist (Fire PIO)

Purpose

Incident communication is a dynamic field and many units require this type of assistance only infrequently. This “cheat sheet” will help you prepare before and during an emerging incident prior to help arriving. This will ensure a smooth arrival process, get basics hashed out early, and avoid awkward issues down the line.

Need

Many times, an NPS unit is having an emergency, such as a wildfire, and they need additional public relations / information officer support. Experience has shown they often want an NPS person due to an understanding of the agency mission and the ability to work on the NPS network, at least in the emerging phases of the incident.

Considerations – Suggestion: check off the boxes as you go.

- Who will the PIO report to: you or the Incident Commander (IC)?
 - Information Officers report to the IC per the Incident Command System.*
- Who will greet them and provide a briefing?
 - Copies of Incident Action Plan (IAP), ICS 209, burn plan, etc.? Meeting schedule? Conference calls for planning meetings, maps, etc.?*
- Have you put in an order/ request for them through dispatch and/or IROC?
 - While you can name request someone, be sure they are available first by reaching out to them.*
 - Make sure the order lists all needed devices or equipment such as: a computer (unless one is available through the unit), cell phone, camera, portable printer, radio, etc.*
 - Is a vehicle on the order / request?*
 - Do they need a special type? Like an SUV for off-payment use?*
 - It must be listed on the resource order to be authorized. A vehicle is helpful to post updates in the area, get around the park as needed, etc. Alternatively, unit may provide a government vehicle.*
- Do they need special qualifications / skillsets? Willing to accept a Trainee? Red Card? Spanish language skills? CMS skills? photography?
- Do you have a workspace for them?
 - Does it have a desk, network cable or WiFi, and phone?*
 - Printer access?*
 - Are there special building access needs - e.g., keys/codes?*
- What shifts are they going to be working?
 - Day or Night? 12-, 14-, or 16-hour shifts?*
- Where are they going to stay?
 - Park housing; incident camp; off-site hotel?*
- Will meals be provided?
 - Per-diem or camp food? Will per-diem be reduced?*
- What kind of uniforms and weather gear (e.g., cold weather) should they pack?
 - Time of year*
 - Duration of stay*
 - Job specifics (community meetings vs field operations)*
 - Flat hat?*
- Is there PPE available for loan for them and/or media?
 - If so, from whom / where do they get it from?*
- Will they be writing or drafting news releases?

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- Whom do they need to contact for approval? E.g., IC, PAO, superintendent?*
- Is there a local style guide?*
- If it's an interagency incident, is there a pre-approved template?*
- Is the PIO going to be sending out news release or is someone from park doing that?*
- Do you have contact lists to share?
 - Local phone list?*
 - E-mail list?*
 - Shared e-mail for news release distribution?*
- Are they going to post to your unit's digital platforms?
 - Whom do they need to contact for approval? E.g., IC, PAO, superintendent?*
 - InciWeb access?*
 - Social media?*
 - CMS?*
 - Who are the contacts and backup contacts in park/region who will provide access?*
- Will pre-existing unit guides be available?
 - Unit communication strategies/key messages?*
 - Pre-approved general talking points / current fact sheet?*
- Does your unit have an Employee Alert System?
 - Will they be using it to get info out?*
 - Will they need to be added to it?*
 - Who is the contact for the Employee Alert System?*
- Do you have a messaging plan for Incident within an Incident (IWI)?
 - Is it different depending on the type of IWI?*
 - Who will be the IWI contact for the PIO?*
 - [Agency Administrator's Guide to Critical Incident Management?](#)
 - [Loss of Human Life Response Handbook?](#)
- Is there additional local staff available to help or want experience as an information officer?
 - Either formal or collateral duty?*

Remote Support

- Can someone help support you remotely?
 - For example, InciWeb, social media, writing of news releases, talking points, etc?

Long-term Considerations

- Does your unit have a pre-drafted Delegation of Authority letter?
- Does your unit have a pre-drafted transition plan for PIOs?
 - *Ex: Local support for duration of incident (some responsibilities remain with the park - CMS - alerts, news releases, etc., social media, all-employee / internal updates, updates for concessionaires, researchers, volunteers, etc.? InsideNPS, regional newsletters, success stories, etc.).*
- Do you have a physical space for required incident documentation ([NWCG Records Management](#)) and [ICS Forms](#) - unit logs, crew time reports (CTRs), general messages, etc?

Resources

Through the [NPS Fire Communication and Education Program](#), a list is maintained of available staff for PIO duties along with their qualifications. Potentially available NPS PIOs can be found [on Teams](#).