

Checklist for PAO or PIO Duties

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

Purpose

It is inevitable that at some point, a unit of the NPS will have a large-scale emergency or disaster. Fortunately, these incidents occur infrequently for most, and even less require an outside NWCG qualified public information officer (PIO) to provide aid. Yet, during the critical beginning of an incident when that PIO arrives, it's important to have a clear delineation of duties and work that will be done by both the unit and the PIO so not to duplicate efforts and waste time.

Note:

PAO = public affairs officer: They represent the home unit and focus on branding and long-term strategy about the whole area. It's a position, either full-time or collateral duty.

PIO = public information officer: They represent the incident and focus on the messaging for the incident. It's a qualification, regardless of what the person(s) day job is.

Need

Going through a checklist, like this one, better manages workload and expectations, promotes understanding, and removes many human emotional barriers during a time of crisis. This ultimately aids in the dissemination of timely and accurate information.

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

- Who will be the Lead PIO's primary point of contact?
 - If that person is not available, then who are the next two?*
 - PIOs assigned to an incident don't have days off, so there should be a contact available fairly quickly 7-days a week.*
- Who will greet them and provide a briefing about the unit?
 - Copies of Unigrid and / or paper, area maps, any keys / access tools, local issues/concerns?*
- Does your unit have a pre-drafted Delegation of Authority letter?
 - Does it cover PIO duties?*
 - If so, who will be providing a copy to the Lead PIO?*
- Will they be writing or drafting news releases?
 - Whom do they need to contact for approval? E.g., IC, PAO, superintendent?*
 - Who is next in line if that person is not available?*
 - What is the turn-around time for a response to the PIO?*
 - Is the PIO going to be sending out news release or is someone from unit doing that?*
 - Is there an external system like GovDelivery, Constant Contact, etc?*
- Are there templates for news releases and statements?
 - Is there a local style guide?*
 - If it's an interagency incident, is there a pre-approved template?*
- Are there agency, partner, and other logos to be used?
 - Who will provide those?*
- Do you have contact lists to share?
 - Local phone list?*
 - E-mail list?*
 - Shared e-mail for news release distribution?*

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- Pre-determined media contacts?*
- Is there a desire to have a community meeting?
 - Are there predesignated or established venues?*
 - Who will contact these areas?*
 - Are there predetermined unit representatives desired to be there?*
- Are they going to post to your unit's digital platforms?
 - Who 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?*
- Are there predetermined subject matter experts that the unit has identified to speak at community meetings, news conferences, VIP / political visits?
 - If so, is there a list with contact info on it?*
 - Who makes the initial and follow-up contacts to them?*
- Is there PPE available for loan for the local / unit subject matter experts or media if needed?
 - If so, from whom / where do they get it?*
- 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?](#)
- Does your unit have an Employee Alert System?
 - Will the PIO be using it to get info out?*
 - Will the PIO need to be added to it?*
 - Who is the contact for the Employee Alert System?*
- Is there additional local staff available to help or want experience as an information officer?
 - Either formal or collateral duty?*
 - Will those staff be assigned to the incident?*
 - Who will have control over their schedule and hours?*
- What are the expectations for the PIO when the incident decreases in complexity?
 - Does your unit have a pre-drafted transition plan for PIOs?*
 - To whom does the PIO submit produced content? (such as pictures, videos, etc.)*
 - Who will be at the transition plan meeting?*
- Is there anything else the incoming PIO should know?