

Hampton 311 Customer Call Center

EOC & 311 Liaison Reference Guide

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General Information

During unusual and emergency events, Hampton, Virginia, must keep the public informed. In Hampton's Emergency Operation Plan 2001, emergency public information is located in Annex C of the plan. The public information officer (PIO) position is responsible for:

- Increasing public awareness of actual or potential hazards and providing active channels for informing and advising the public on the appropriate actions to take before, during, and after emergencies.
- Providing effective collection and dissemination of information to control rumors and to minimize improper public responses.

Public information is coordinated through the designated emergency management official. During emergency operations, PIOs from the departments of public communications, police, and fire and rescue come directly under the emergency management organization.

Emergency Operation Center (EOC) and 311 Liaison Positions

The EOC liaison position(s) are necessary for the efficient and timely collection and dissemination of public information during unusual events requiring the activation of EOC. It is necessary for liaisons to participate in ongoing training pertaining to EOC and 311 call center functions and responsibilities during emergency operations.

City employees will staff two liaison positions during standard EOC operation (one in the 311 call center, and one in the EOC), with a third position in EOC during the peak hours of an event. In case of a large-scale operation, listed departments have the responsibility of staffing additional liaison positions

to coordinate operation of the PIO information phone lines. These information lines will be staffed continuously when activated. Departments will ensure that sufficient personnel are available to maintain operations.

Responsibilities

Liaison in EOC (one position minimum, two during peak of event):

1. Work directly with PIO and emergency management coordinator to ensure information is communicated between EOC and 311.
2. Work directly with emergency management coordinator to ensure proper internal EOC communication is maintained.
3. Maintain maps, charts, and status boards in EOC with up-to-date information.
4. Work with GIS representative, when activated, to ensure event and damage information is accurately displayed and available for damage assessment teams.
5. Set up public information lines if needed and conduct recall of public information line staff.
6. Assist PIO as needed with media and briefings.
7. Monitor local media for accuracy of information.
8. Assist administrative staff support with EOC message logging as necessary.
9. Conduct duties assigned for public information line if activated.

Liaison in the 311 call center (1 position):

1. Work directly with 311 supervisors to ensure that information is communicated between 311 and EOC, including:
 - Updated news releases
 - Media reports
 - Other event-related information

2. Maintain maps, charts, and status board in 311 with such up-to-date information as:
 - Street closings
 - Flooding
 - Trees and power lines down
 - Power outages
 - Evacuation issues
 - Gather other event-related information as needed
3. Ensure call trends, rumors, and call volumes are monitored in 311 and passed to EOC liaison and PIO.
4. Work with EOC liaison to answer caller questions when 311 does not have information; provide follow-up answer to the caller in a reasonable period of time.
5. Monitor local media for accuracy and for such updated information as:
 - Weather advisories
 - Event information
6. Assist in call-taking functions if needed.
7. Assist in maintaining contact with various departments, groups, or agencies as needed.
8. Assist 311 supervisors in coordinating food and equipment supplies for call center staff.

EOC Liaison Training Outline

The EOC liaison will primarily exchange information with the 311 liaison at the 311 call center using e-mail (Microsoft Outlook) as the preferred form of communication and fax transmission as the second or alternate form of communication.

The 311 call center and/or public information phone lines will be staffed to provide a response to numerous phone calls from the public requesting information about the status of the emergency and of affected individuals. The phone lines (if activated) will be staffed to provide support to the EOC's PIO and for handling calls of a unique nature.

PIOs and the office of emergency management will be responsible for maintaining a list of trained staff from departments who will serve as liaisons between the 311 call center and the PIOs. These departments are responsible: conventions and tourism, economic development, youth coalition, unity commission, neighborhood office, public library, planning, public works, police, and fire.

The public information phones (if activated) may be used in the event of an unusual incident resulting in an overload to the 311 call center or for such specific purposes as notification or call-up of volunteers and notifying relatives of family members who are deceased, injured, or missing. This operation should be coordinated with the EOC, the hospital, the police divi-

sion, health department, and other parties involved.

EOC liaison is responsible for but not limited to the following:

Monitoring television stations by direct viewing or by the Roosevelt system on a personal computer.

- Look for incorrect or incomplete information
- Unsubstantiated rumors

Assimilating information from

- 311 call center liaison
- E-mail from EOC personnel
- EOC coordinator
- Television
- News releases from other cities

Situations the Staff Members Are Likely to Encounter

Rumors, trends, and misinformation. On occasion, staff members may be notified of rumors or suspected rumors that various sources are learning from the public or media. A rumor is defined when two or more individuals have called, asking about something known or suspected to be misinformation.

Trends are when several calls from the public have similar questions on such particular issues as locations of ice distribution, if there is a "boil water" order; shelter openings, and so forth. These questions that appear to be "trends" could mean that the PIO needs to distribute information and inform residents.

Your job:

- E-mail this info to the PIO and emergency management coordinator.
- Should rumors persist, keep the PIO and emergency management coordinator informed.
- Trends should also be identified and forwarded to the PIO and emergency management coordinator to obtain factual answers for the public.

Requests for Assistance. On occasion, staff members may be notified of a non-emergency, special-assistance request from a resident.

Your job:

- E-mail this info to the PIO and emergency management coordinator, as well as the department that can remedy the situation. If you are not sure which department this is, discuss with the PIO or EMC.
- Monitor the progress of the EOC department that is meeting this need, including status of getting back to the citizen with information.

Other Community Input. On occasion, you may be the recipient of other information coming from the community that is not a rumor, misinformation, or

request for assistance. This information, however, would still be important for the EOC to know about, including the number of people who may have shown up at a food station, the areas in the city where power is being restored, and the areas of the city where traffic lights are functioning.

Your job:

E-mail this information to the PIO and Emergency Management Coordinator.

Working with Community Liaisons. During a sustained major emergency, information coming into the EOC from our neighborhoods can be critical. In that context, neighborhood commissioners have been given the opportunity to serve as community liaisons during an emergency. In this voluntary role, these individuals can serve as an important set of eyes and ears for the city by informing the city of:

- Overarching needs their district may be experiencing.
- Rumors and misinformation that may be spreading.
- Prevalent questions among residents.

These community liaisons will identify themselves as neighborhood commissioners and share information with the 311 call center at these times: 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. and 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. The 311 personnel will receive information from the community liaisons; 311 personnel will assemble the information and provide it to the 311 liaisons; and 311 liaisons will provide information to the EOC liaisons by e-mail by 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. daily during an emergency.

Your job:

E-mail this information to the PIO and emergency management coordinator.

311 Liaison Training Outline

To be effective in the 311 call center, EOC liaisons will need to have periodic training in the call center.

Training will familiarize liaisons with software programs, equipment, physical location, and 311 staff members. Here is the basic outline of what a liaison will need to be familiar with and train on.

- Intranet and Internet use
- Outlook/E-mail (EOC 311 liaison e-mail address is 311eoc@hampton.gov)
- Map/Geography
 - ▶ GIS
 - ▶ Reading maps
- Call Center Orientation
 - ▶ Physical layout and equipment location
 - ▶ 311 phone system

- ▶ Frequently asked questions (FAQ software program)
- ▶ Forms for call tracking during EOC operations.

Outlook E-mail

E-mail is our primary method of communicating information. Staff will have direct communication with the entire 311 staff through e-mail. It is also the primary link to your counterpart in the EOC operations center and any information coming out of the EOC. E-mail must be monitored closely and all correspondence must be managed using folders for easy retrieval and reference.

Cheat Sheets

During major events the call center uses a cheat sheet to summarize information. This sheet is dated, timed, and color coded to help distinguish the most current and up-to-date information. These sheets are an extremely useful tool to pass on to staff relief.

Bulletin Board

The call center uses a bulletin board feature in the 311 software. If/when necessary, EOC liaisons will be shown this feature so they may add and update information as well.

EOC Pass-on Sheet

This form is used to jot down particular items of interest that you may need to pass on to your relief—much like a reminder. A copy and sample follows.

Various Information Tools

The EOC liaison workstation will have access to various information, such as phone number listings, employee listings, utility emergency phone numbers, and other related information. Some are electronically stored on the PC and others are in emergency listing handbooks at the workstation.

What to Bring

When the EOC is activated and liaisons have been given their shift assignments, it is always good practice to get yourself ready for the possibility of staying longer than anticipated. This is especially true during the first two or three shifts during an event. Here is a list of suggested items to bring if you are assigned the first few shifts of an event.

- Change of clothes
- Personal hygiene items, including toothbrush and toothpaste
- Snacks or lunch – just in case
- Book or magazine for break times.