

Professional Standard: Certified Public Information Officer Capabilities

Authority

This standard was approved by the AFAC Council on 30 April 2018.

Context

This document is a high-level outline of capabilities that can be observed in practice. These are capabilities expected of personnel in an Incident Management Team who wish to have their practice acknowledged and certified as part of AFAC's Professionalisation Scheme. It is expected that demonstrating the capabilities will require a portfolio of evidence collected over time.

This document is NOT:

- a prescription of what training courses should be delivered;
- a replacement for agency sign off and validation that personnel are able to do the job;
- a selection and recruitment tool for trainees, or
- a template to be used to sign off capabilities in a once-off observation.

The role of Public Information Officer is to lead and manage all activities and resources necessary to provide public information and warnings in order to help achieve the objectives defined by the Incident Controller. In some states and territories warning messages require approval from the Incident Controller, and the Public Information Section will prepare warnings for the Incident Controller's approval.

The Incident Controller may task the Public Information Officer to assist with liaison with the delegating authority, other agencies involved in the incident response, and local and jurisdictional governments.

The Public Information Officer will be required to exercise critical thinking and judgement to determine the level of resources and structure required to manage the Public Information function, as well as maintain effective information flow and reporting arrangements.

Public Information is provided in accordance with AIIMS (Au)/CIMS (NZ) and other systems aligned with AIIMS principles and functions.

Appointment of Public Information Officers

Appointment to the role of Public Information Officer for an emergency incident is made by the Incident Controller, or otherwise in accordance with jurisdictional emergency management arrangements. The Incident Controller retains ultimate responsibility for the effective management of the Public Information function.

Accountabilities

The Public Information Officer will be required to:

- obtain a briefing from the Incident Controller;
- maintain a strong focus on providing timely and relevant warnings and information to the public;
- establish and manage a structure for the Public Information section;
- provide a safe working environment for all public information personnel;
- obtain information on the current and projected incident situation from the Planning and Intelligence sections and external sources including social media;
- manage and develop appropriate communication and engagement strategies;
- issue warnings and information to threatened communities on behalf of, or with the approval of, the Incident Controller;
- disseminate incident information to communities and other stakeholders;
- disseminate incident information to incident personnel;
- monitor the effectiveness of information and warnings and adjust strategies in response;
- liaise with media and manage media needs, including on the incident ground;
- liaise with affected communities.

The extent to which these accountabilities are required is determined by the scale of incident to be managed.

The explicit tasks and responsibilities are described and explained in the **AIIMS Manual (2017)**.

Stakeholders

The Public Information Officer may be required to manage relationships with a broad range of stakeholders including:

- communities and individuals that are affected or likely to be affected
- the Planning, Intelligence and Operations sections in the incident management structure
- state and regional coordination and control centres
- multi-jurisdictional emergency management response and recovery agencies
- local governments
- media and public information agencies.

Areas of capability

There are two main areas of capability for Incident Management Team members (see Appendix 1), these are:

1. capabilities to *manage the incident*, and
2. capabilities relevant to the specific *hazard context*.

1. Capabilities to manage the incident include the ability to:

Model Leadership and Teamwork: *the ability to act with integrity, influence others, and facilitate team efforts towards the achievement of common goals. This involves:*

- modelling ethics, inclusiveness and good governance;
- creating effective background conditions to build confident and capable teams and engaged stakeholders, and
- applying effective decision making.

Think and plan strategically: the ability to consider multiple perspectives and scenarios to engage in strategic planning and consequence management. This involves:

- pursuing sense-making and encouraging same in others;
- practicing strategic thinking and planning;
- planning and mapping diverse audiences;
- enabling consequence management.

Demonstrate self-awareness: the ability to monitor stress and fatigue, display resilience and agility and reflect on and adjust to feedback. This involves:

- monitoring and managing self for symptoms of stress and fatigue;
- displaying resilience and agility, and
- recognising own strengths and limitations.

2. **Capabilities related to the specific hazard context** include the ability to:

Apply technical skills/knowledge: having a relevant understanding of existing policies, structures and doctrine to be applied when managing the incident. This involves:

- effectively applying appropriate legislation, policy and procedures;
- effectively managing the Public Information function at an incident in accordance with AIIMS doctrine;
- demonstrating understanding of broader stakeholder EM arrangements, and
- demonstrating understanding of available systems and technologies.

Employ expertise in hazard specific knowledge: apply a specialist understanding in the Public Information context (obtaining specialist advice as required) of the risks and behaviours of hazards such as fire, severe weather (flood, storm, and cyclone), search and rescue, hazardous materials, aviation and other hazards.

The following table (Appendix 1) describe these capabilities and the expectations for each of the five areas of capability.

Review

This standard will commence April 2018. The Panel will review this standard after five years or as required.

Related professional standards

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- Code of Ethics (2017)
- Professional Standard: Public Information Officer Requirements (2018)
- Professional Standard: Continuing Professional Development (2018)
- EMPS Core Incident Management Team Capabilities

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
<p>Model Leadership and Teamwork</p> <p><i>The ability to act with integrity, influence others, facilitate team efforts towards the achievement of common goals</i></p>	<p>Model ethics, inclusiveness and good governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behave in ways consistent with the <i>Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct</i> Engage in building partnerships with multiple stakeholders through establishing collaborative goals with agreed parameters and treating stakeholders with respect Demonstrate resilience and moral courage Accept scrutiny as a naturally occurring process during a crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts in accordance with the <i>Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct</i> Acts in alignment with organisational frameworks (e.g., OH&S policy) Employs compelling communication to deliver key messages with integrity Treats others with respect Applies governance processes and procedures for the greater good Displays courage to make hard decisions Establishes and maintains appropriate governance processes, including processes to engage in upward chain of command and lateral multi-agency coordination, along with whole-of-government processes
	<p>Create effective background conditions to build confident and capable teams and engaged stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage immediate team and stakeholders so that they are motivated to achieve the outcomes sought Create team communication climates where all team members feel safe to speak up about any concerns they may have regardless of rank or status, without fear of ridicule or recrimination Recognise and contribute critical information to support cross-functional team work and decision-making Proactively seek opportunities to help achieve team goals <p>Critical capabilities for a Public Information Officer:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates a collaborative team climate (e.g., communicates in a way that is open, direct, measured, and approachable) Pursues honest and open input and feedback Responds promptly and constructively to questions and concerns raised Uses effective communication to advocate for the needs of the team Monitors team member capability and addresses any dysfunctional behaviour or gaps

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with other team members, especially the Planning, Intelligence and Operations Officers, to identify actual and potential communities at risk and other stakeholders of interest and identify key safety messaging • Interpret and communicate information from a range of sources to effectively advocate for the needs of communities and other stakeholders 	
	Apply effective decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make effective decisions in a timely manner under conditions of uncertainty, incomplete information, tight deadlines, and pressure and to acknowledge the limitations of these conditions • Balance operational outcomes with government, community and stakeholder expectations with team requirements • Collaborate with others in decision-making to reach an agreed approach • Recognise and articulate the triggers that would require a decision change • Monitor progress to assess alignment with the objectives and reset as necessary <p>Critical capabilities for a Public Information Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise critical triggers and act quickly when warnings and information are needed, and effectively advocate and negotiate for action to expedite decisions • Identify critical information from community and other sources and use effective communication to convey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is timely in making decisions that can be assessed as likely to be reasonable at their point in time • Employs decision-making styles appropriate and demonstrates flexibility appropriate to the context (e.g., balances the need for speed, thoroughness and inclusiveness with the time available) • Can explain, when asked, the reasons for the decision made as well as the processes used (e.g., can articulate how team and stakeholder needs have been taken into consideration in the decisions made) • Clearly articulates the triggers that would require a decision change and recognises them when they occur in practice • Proactively looks for early signs of when the decision needs to be adjusted • Employs conflict resolution and negotiation strategies to balance competing stakeholder needs and priorities, to achieve an agreed decision • Utilises effective communication to communicate decisions made and to ensure decision intent is implemented

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
		this information to team members in support of team decisions	
<p>Think and plan strategically</p> <p><i>The ability to consider multiple perspectives and scenarios to engage in strategic planning and consequence management</i></p>	<p>Pursue sense-making and encourage same in others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make meaning from sometimes incomplete or conflicting information in high pressure environments • Ability to listen carefully and to recognise discrepancies between expectations and reality • Critically evaluate information and intelligence promptly, to assess risk and diagnose the decision most likely to lead to a positive outcome • Understand the sensitivity of various pieces of intelligence and gaps • Identify what is NOT being considered or said • Proactively attune to subtle signals that conditions are deteriorating and ask good questions to ascertain what is happening <p>Critical capabilities for a Public Information Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sense of information from affected communities and sources to determine strength and credibility • Assess the credibility of various information sources, determining their relative strength • Synthesise emerging information trends and identifying discrepancies • Evaluate the implications of incomplete and conflicting information • Synthesise disparate information and match information needs to diverse communities and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes mechanisms for testing and improving situational awareness • Identifies knowledge gaps, uncertainty, threats and emerging issues so that these can be managed • Is able to identify patterns and trends in a timely manner • Encourages (and coaches if needed) other team members to engage in critical questioning and frank discussion to test assumptions and process conflicting information • Seeks alternative opinions and perspectives including contra-indicators • Can outline how a judgement has taken into account personal and group biases • Projects possible future conditions based on information and intelligence gathered, weighing up difference sources of credibility

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
	Practice strategic thinking and planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convert sense-making into a course of potential action • Articulate objectives, strategies and actions determined through sense-making so that they provide a good basis for planning and decision-making for all involved • Prioritise multiple time and space issues to identify what is important to plan for, and to filter what is not • Employ strategies to avoid being distracted by minutia and to maintain a wider focus, canvassing future outcomes, options and potential impact <p>Critical capabilities for a Public Information Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use compelling communication to inform stakeholder planning and strategic thinking • Identify emerging information needs in the future and proactively plan communication strategy • Identify emerging issues in the political environment, advising the IC of potential gaps • Monitor stakeholder understanding and gaps, and develop communication plans to match needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can predict future conditions that reflect the information gathered through sense-making and evaluate those options • Can clearly explain the significance and potential consequences of predictions • Can clearly and concisely explain the information strategies chosen • Explains the assumptions on which plans are based and triggers for reassessing plans • Acts quickly to adjust the strategy as the context changes • Demonstrates creativity and flexibility in adapting plans to improvise in novel situations
	Enables consequence management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a focus on consequences of the incident and actions and assess the consequences of actions to resolve the incident • Engage in contingency planning, adjust strategies • Assess broader issues beyond the immediate incident. <p>Critical Public Information Officer capabilities include:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can identify all those who are potentially affected by the incident • Can explain the long term impacts of the incident including the consequences of actions to resolve the incident • Anticipates what might go wrong and any unintended adverse effects • Explains contingency planning for adverse effects • Flexibly matches communication style to audience

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify consequences of the event for stakeholder groups to support IMT planning and decision making and quickly move to support recovery efforts. 	
<p>Demonstrate self-awareness</p> <p><i>The ability to monitor stress and fatigue, display resilience and agility, and reflect and adjust to feedback</i></p>	<p>Monitor and manage self for symptoms of stress and fatigue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop effective strategies to manage psychological and physiological demands Employ strategies to identify and manage personal limitations and impact of biases Manage emotion and display empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains focus and remains grounded when under pressure Uses coping strategies to manage under sub-optimal conditions Self-regulates emotions under the pressure of challenging circumstances Monitors self-behaviour and its impact on others
	<p>Display resilience and agility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt and overcome adversity Employ personal strategies to operate effectively in challenging conditions to maintain well-being Respond to pressure and setbacks whilst remaining focused on objectives and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages in a realistic assessment of predicted tough days Copes with flux, the unexpected and incomplete information Recovers quickly from setbacks and persevere to get things done despite difficulties Is flexible when faced with sub-optimal or novel conditions and improvises in response Accepts that things do go wrong and sometimes there are limits to what can be controlled Acts promptly to signs that action is not producing the desired outcomes
	<p>Recognise own strengths and limitations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and monitor personal limitations and biases Critically reflect on and identify areas of self-improvement in action and in review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciates limitations and avoids arrogance and hubris Accepts feedback or criticism and adjust appropriately and objectively Objectively evaluates what went well and what did not Critically reflects on own performance and takes responsibility

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates learning from feedback and experience • Seeks opportunities to extend knowledge, skills and experience • Enacts plans for continued professional development
Apply technical skills / knowledge	Apply appropriate legislation, policy and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain, appropriately interpret, and apply relevant legislation, policies and doctrine • Lead, manage and operate within legislative and governance frameworks • Act in alignment with policies supporting decision making, for example in relation to issue of warnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can explain, appropriately interpret, and apply legislation, policies and doctrine relevant to the jurisdiction
	Demonstrate community engagement background or experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key factors in effective engagement of communities • Understand needs of diverse cross-section of community members • Maintains effective communication to communities/individuals in stressful situations or demonstrating distress and anger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can articulate/explain the requirements of effective community engagement and communication as they apply to the range of communities and individuals encountered in practice • Can apply effective communication techniques for stressed communities and manage challenging community feedback and emotions including anger and distress
	Manage the Public Information Section in accordance with AIIMS doctrine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply AIIMS to manage the Public Information Section • Lead, manage and operate to Incident Management Systems principles and structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriately applies AIIMS to manage the Public Information Section
	Demonstrate understanding of broader stakeholder EM arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply emergency management arrangements • Recognise organisational capabilities and limitations of stakeholders • Understand the application of multi-organisational arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works within the organisational and multi-organisational arrangement

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
	Demonstrate understanding of available systems and technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and deploy appropriate systems and technologies Understand the strengths and limitations of systems and technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selects and uses technologies appropriate to the incident
Employ expertise in Hazard Specific Knowledge	Demonstrate understanding of Fire, Severe Weather (flood, storm, cyclone), Search and Rescue, Hazardous Materials, Aviation and other hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply specialist understanding of the risks and behaviours of hazards (such as fire, severe weather (i.e. flood, storm and cyclone), search and rescue, hazardous materials, aviation, and other hazards) Apply expertise in hazard-specific knowledge including understanding the behavioural characteristics and the risks that the hazard poses. Seek specialist advice as required to support decision making <p>Critical Public Information Officer capabilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazard-specific knowledge and experience is desirable The ability to access needed hazard specific expertise is essential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses hazard specific knowledge to inform their management of the Public Information function