

## CENTER STAFFING

0653

(September 1991)

In some situations, one information specialist can handle information duties at the Emergency Command Center level. However, when a major emergency situation develops, an information center should be set-up near the Incident Command Post or unit office, whichever is most convenient. The Unit Information Officer or ECC should access the developing situation, anticipate the need, and respond appropriately.

Ideally, the Unit Information Officer heads up a small-scale information operation. Local information officers are familiar with travel routes, access to remote areas, specific locations and landmarks, and names of local residents, law enforcement and fire officials, and news reporters. The Unit Information Officer normally assumes the incident information officer role for the duration of the incident or until the arrival of an incident information team.

[Section 0642](#) Personnel Structure describes the positions within the information function. The Incident Information Center and the Field Information Center should anticipate staffing needs to adequately handle media and public concerns both day and night. Operating hours should be carried out while public interest exists, in accordance with applicable guidelines. During rapidly changing conditions, the center will require continuous staffing. As the incident quiets down and some stability develops, it may be possible to close down operations from about 11 p.m. until about 5 a.m.

At least one shift ahead of time, responsible personnel should prepare shift schedules that provide adequate lead time for travel and rest if additional forces are needed. It is imperative to have additional help ordered and ready for duty when needed. Additional information personnel should come with a vehicle and adequate communications (mobile radio and handie-talkie).

Duties at the center and in the field may be rotated to increase individual familiarity and first-hand feeling for the actual incident situation. Overflights before going on-shift provide an excellent familiarization procedure.

The center staff should maintain a balance among the cooperating fire agencies and team experienced veterans with trainees. Special situations may arise which require the use of untrained employees or personnel from other agencies who are not familiar with CAL FIRE information procedures. In these situations, the Incident Information Officer should assign these individuals to basic duties at the center or to work under a qualified individual for training.

Duty schedules should provide for overlapping work hours and for staggered shift changes ([see Shift Scheduling](#)). Information personnel should develop these assignments from a current organizational chart and have the assignments available to the Incident Information Officer. All centers should maintain a staff sign-off board that indicates destination, travel stops, and return time for assigned center and field staff.

As shifts change, relief personnel must be briefed of the current situation. Notes and other data should be explained and clarified as needed.

Adjusting the size of the Incident Information Center and Field Information Center staff rests with the Incident Information Officer's knowledge of current and predicted incident status. The Incident Information Officer checks with the Incident Commander and Planning Section Chief for containment progress, direction of spread, and threat to exposures, and seeks counsel from the Situation Unit Leader.

[\(see next section\)](#)

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