

USDA FOREST SERVICE



Pike/San Isabel National Forests and Cimarron/Comanche National Grasslands ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM GUIDEBOOK

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4.4.3 COMMUNICATIONS

ISO 14001 REQUIREMENTS

This element describes how the Forests will communicate internally with employees and externally with the public. Procedures for receiving, documenting and responding to both internal and external comments are also identified in this element.

PURPOSE

This procedure identifies the process used to communicate information related to the Environmental Management System (EMS) to Forest Service employees, contractors, permittees and volunteers, as well as external interested parties. The primary purpose of this procedure is to ensure the effective communication of the PSICC environmental policy. This procedure also describes the process that will be used to collect, record, and respond to comments related to environmental issues or concerns from interested parties.

SCOPE

Communication of environmental-related information is the primary responsibility of the **Forest Supervisor, District Rangers** and the **Forest Public Affairs Officer**. The **Forest EMS Representative** and the **Forest EMS Team** support the **Forest Supervisor, District Rangers** and the **Forest Public Affairs Officer** in their communication role.

DEFINITIONS

Environmental Policy – Overall intentions and direction of an organization related to its environmental performance as formally expressed by top management.

Interested Party – Person or group concerned with or affected by the environmental performance of an organization.

Organization – Company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private, that has its own functions and administration.

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PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Internal Communications (employees)

The **Forest EMS Representative** and the **Forest EMS Team** provide assistance and technical guidance to the **Forest Supervisor, District Rangers, or their designee** and the **Forest Public Affairs Officer** to effectively communicate information about the EMS, including the environmental policy, to Forest Service employees, contractors, permittees and volunteers, and external interested parties. These interested parties may include elected officials, non-governmental organizations, other federal or state agencies, community organizations, adjacent landowners, etc.

The **Forest Supervisor, District Rangers** and the **Forest Public Affairs Officer** communicate the environmental policy to all levels and functions of the forest using some of the following methods:

- Posting the environmental policy on the intranet site accessible to internal employees.
- EMS training (including, but not limited to, the EMS Awareness Training).
- Issuing a global e-mail to forest personnel making them aware of the policy and how to obtain a copy.
- Printing and distributing copies of the environmental policy to contractors, permittees and volunteers.
- Communicate the policy during staff meetings and family meetings.

The **Forest Supervisor, District Rangers** and the **Forest Public Affairs Officer** communicate the environmental policy to external interested parties using some of the following methods:

- Posting the environmental policy on the R2 external website [USDA Forest Service Internet - Rocky Mountain Region Land Mgmt Planning](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/projects/ems/index.shtml) <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/projects/ems/index.shtml>
- Placing a copy of the environmental policy in an issue of the local newspaper.
- Issuing a statement to the local news media.
- Making copies of the environmental policy available to elected officials, community organizations, adjacent landowner, and other external interested parties, upon their request.

2. Receive, Document, and Respond to Comments from Interested Parties

The **Forest Public Affairs Officer** is the lead individual for the following activities:

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- Prepares responses to comments or questions about environmental issues received from members of Congress and congressional staff.
- Maintains documentation of all responses provided to members of Congress and congressional staff regarding environmental issues.
- Reviews local newspaper articles and media reports concerning Forest Service activities.

As necessary, the **Forest EMS Representative** and the **Forest EMS Team** provide technical support and assistance to respond accurately and thoroughly to comments or questions. The **Forest Public Affairs Officer** briefs the **Forest Supervisor** on inquiries from interested parties to keep him/her informed of emerging issues.

3. Communication on NEPA authorized Projects

A different model is followed if the communications are related to a project subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A public involvement plan is prepared for all NEPA required projects. The public involvement plan outlines the procedures the Forest Service will use to:

- inform the public of the project,
- educate the public on the features of the project,
- collect comments from the public regarding the project,
- incorporate public comments into the decision-making process,
- respond to each of the comments received by the public, and
- document the final decisions regarding the project.

Roles and responsibilities for each of these communication activities are assigned to either Forest Service personnel or contractors working on behalf of the Forest Service. Communication received from and communicated to interested parties is documented and maintained in the NEPA project files.

4. Communications with the General Public

A less formal process is used to receive and provide responses to comments from the general public. The typical process the Forest Service uses to respond to comments from the public is to route the call to an employee with the appropriate technical expertise and, if possible, someone that is working at either the forest or district level.

For example, the Forest Service employee that receives a call from the public will gather information regarding the topic of concern. The employee provides the individual calling with the name and phone number of a Forest Service specialist that can answer the question or respond to the topic of concern. The Forest Service specialist who receives a call from the public has the responsibility to communicate the necessary information or refer the caller to another employee. Forest Service employees also have the responsibility to communicate relevant "emerging issues" or "hot topics" to the Leadership Team so that proactive communication with the public can occur on these

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issues. The employee who receives the relevant communication is responsible for summarizing the communication in an email that is to be sent to the EMS Representative and copied to the District Ranger, or in the case of SO Employees, to the appropriate Program Manager. The email should include the name of the external party, the date, the subject matter, along with any other relevant information. The EMS Representative will be responsible for maintaining the official file.

5. Management Review of Comments from Interested Parties

As described in the [EMS Procedure 4.6 – Management Review](#), the **Leadership Team (LT)** reviews comments received from interested parties regarding environmental issues. Comments from interested parties may be relevant when updating [4.3.1– Environmental Aspects and Impacts](#), and [4.3.3 -Objectives, Targets, and Programs](#) and [4.4.6 – Operational Controls](#).

6. EMS Communications with Contractors, permittees and volunteers

The **Forest Supervisor (or his/her designee)** is responsible for communicating the environmental policy to contractors, permittees, and volunteers. In addition, relevant EMS procedures and requirements are also communicated so that these organizations and individuals take the necessary actions when conducting work within the forest.

7. Communication of Significant Aspects

The forest can decide whether or not to externally communicate their forest-specific processes and associated significant environmental aspects. The decision regarding this communication must be documented.

At this time, the PSICC has decided to communicate their significant aspects with the public. The list of significant aspects will be posted on the Forest portion of the RO internet site and will be available to the public, upon request.

8. Communication of substantive changes to the EMS Guide to the employees

The EMS Representative will send the changes to the District Rangers and SO staff, including Program Managers. They will then be responsible for getting the changes to their employees and other affected parties (i.e. seasonals, volunteers, permittees, contractors, etc. as needed). The EMS Representative will also assure that these changes are reflected on the PSICC intranet and internet websites.