Buist/Alaska IMT Virtual Operations Support Team 2012

**Leader’s Intent**

**Provide support to the IMT, recognizing that the IMT has ultimate responsibility and accountability for the public face of the incident**

**Recognize that the IMO is the expert on the ground and honor their need to control messaging by posting only that information that is provided from the incident**

**Be accountable for any actions taken by a VOST member**

**Represent the IMO in a professional manner in all public-facing interactions, on-line or off**

**Treat VOST & IMO members and the public with dignity, respect, honesty and fairness**

**Maintain and post social media sites in a timely, accurate and efficient manner**

**Agree to keep confidential, any information the IMO asks you to keep confidential.**

**Understand and embrace being part of an emerging effort in virtual support on emergencies and agree to document actions and share the results with others.**

Protocols

1. Tools
* SOP for internal Buist/AK IMT VOST communications during incidents will include the use of texting, Gmail, Skype, and Google docs. Others may be added and analyzed as needed.
* The VOST will develop the public facing social media tools they feel are appropriate to provide accurate, timely and wide-ranging information products for an incident.
* The VOST will build, feed, monitor, maintain and close down these social media sites.
1. Monitoring:
* Use a variety of search engines to look for conversations about the incident. The monitoring should include discussion groups, blogs, regular media coverage, tweets, etc., and use any and all tools the team is comfortable with.
* Let PIO know of any trends that seem to be appearing, good or bad
* Be particularly vigilant about issues and concerns that come up such as misinformation or angry postings that need to be dealt with immediately, either from private citizens or media. Send these items to PIO immediately for answers or strategy for handling.
* Stand ready to use “all hands” should monitoring need to happen for a “special event” such as a fatality, serious injury or evacuation.
1. Messaging:
* Push out key messages/talking points. Talking points may be provided by the team every day. The VOST is free to use these messages/talking points as they choose to answer questions or simply to ensure a continued presence on social media without checking with the team. Significant changes to these should be approved by the IMT.
* The VOST should provide a supportive voice for the team and its efforts. Members of the VOST are free to answer as private citizens to act as a counter balance to negative/erroneous postings (within the parameters of provided messages).
* Send questions to the IMT, & post answers to questions (provided by the IMT), in a timely manner.
1. Documentation/Archiving
* Compile media coverage by date (traditional and non-traditional) for documentation file. Files can remain digital but should be stored in “open” form, not as URLs.
* Determine how to best follow and document specific social media chatter (most interested if something happens: big run on the fire, evacuations, big political stink over smoke or something like that)
* Document the VOST experience for our AAR. The IMT will document as well. The intent is to capture tools and practices that work and don’t, to help future VOSTS be successful
1. Analytics
* Be prepared to use available methods for analyzing the effectiveness of each social media tool where possible.
* Take steps to gather daily or time specific analytics in the event of a critical incident like a fatality, injury, evacuation, etc.
1. Use and Learn New Tools
	* Use any tools available that the VOST feels might have value - communicate what’s being tried.

7. VOST member agreements

* Members of the VOST agree to abide by any standards set by either the VOST and/or the IMT.
* Members of the VOST agree they will not create or generate information about the incident without approval from the IMT. They also agree not to comment, speculate or respond to public comments, without consulting the IMT, unless they are posting approved key messages or talking points.
* Members of the VOST agree to express concerns about message content, VOST strategic choices or IMT decisions, only to the VOST or the team
* As trusted agents, members of the VOST agree to hold in confidence, all information they are privy to, until it is approved for public dissemination.
* Members of the VOST and the IMT agree to deal with internal issues professionally and allow for honest and open discussion and dissension.
* The PIO lead will have final say about anything related to the public face of the incident.
* Any AAR or similar materials produced by VOST members either during or after the incident, that are in writing, must be approved by the lead PIO.