MSP EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY DIVISION

Building a Unified Voice

Integrating PIOs Into Statewide Interoperable Communications

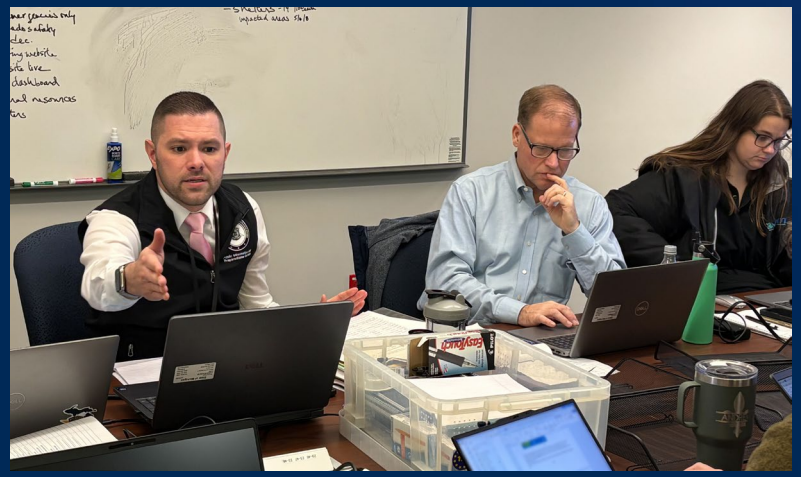
Michigan State Police, Emergency Management & Homeland Security Division (MSP/EMHSD) Public Information Team

Lauren Thompson Phillips
Public Information &
Preparedness Section Manager
PhillipsI12@michigan.gov
(517)216-0103

Clayton Cummins
Public Information Officer (PIO)
CumminsC3@michigan.gov
(517)730-8818

Lead PIOs for State of Michigan During Disasters and Emergencies

- Lead and coordinate SEOC and state agency messaging through the Joint Information Center (JIC) during State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) activations.
- Preparedness, Response, Recovery



News Backgrounds

Michigan Emergencies/Disasters

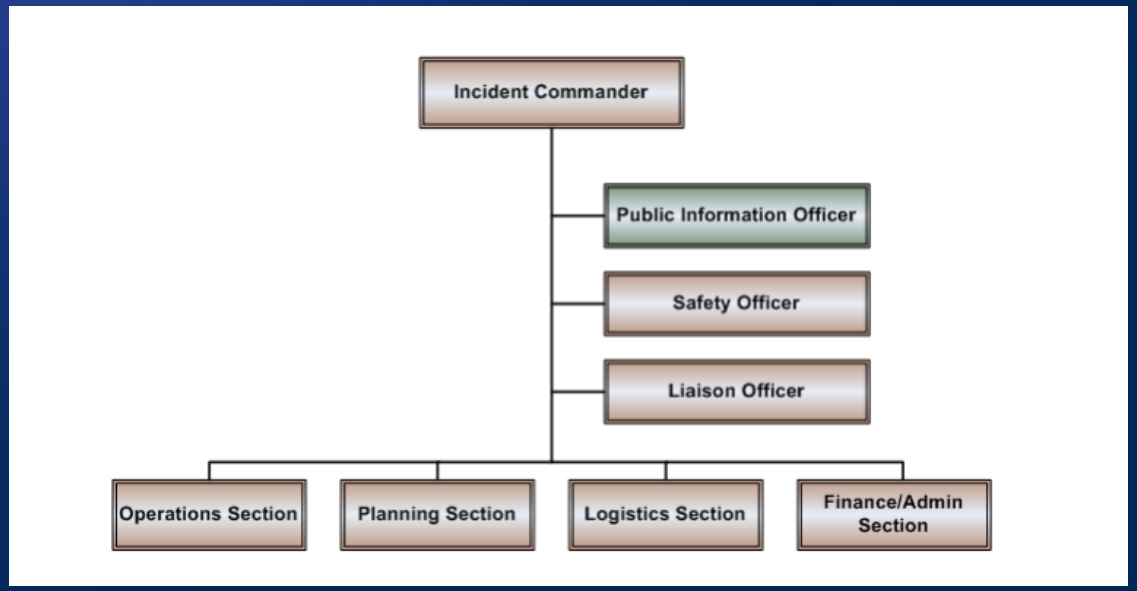
- Severe Weather
  - Tornadoes/Straight line winds
  - Heavy Rain/Flooding
  - Winter/Ice Storms
- Wildfires
- Mass Shootings
- Cyber Attacks
- Infrastructure Failure

Northern Michigan Ice Storm Spring 2026

- Public Information Efforts:
  - Centralized disaster webpage
  - 350+ coordinated social posts
  - 60+ news releases
  - Unified state/local messaging
  - Local agency PIO coordination

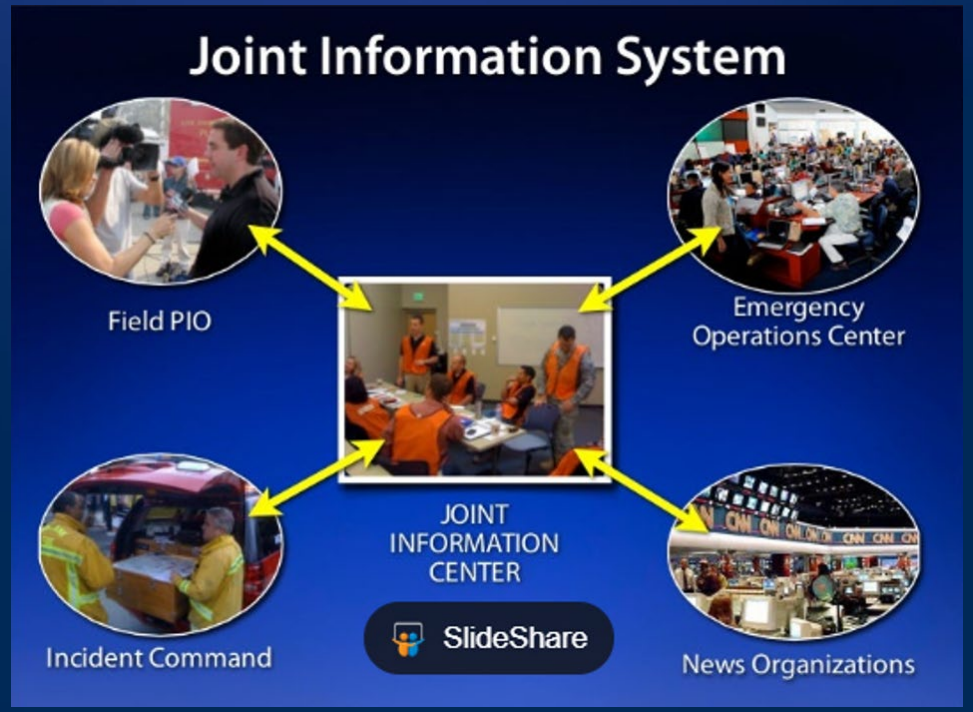
Incident Command System: PIO

- Member of Command Staff
- Advises Incident Commander
- Manages public information
- Leads the Joint Information Center (JIC)
- Coordinates messaging across agencies



The Joint Information System

- Framework for coordinated communication
- Enables multiple agencies to speak with one voice
- Central hub for messaging collaboration



Purpose of the JIC

The JIC ensures the response speaks with one coordinated, unified voice while supporting Command and protecting operational integrity.

- Centralizes public information functions in one coordinated location
- Supports the Incident Commander through the PIO
- Ensures unified, consistent messaging across all responding agencies
- Delivers timely, accurate information to the public and media
- Monitors and corrects misinformation to maintain public trust

One Unified Voice Saves Time, Reduces Risk, Builds Trust

Interoperability is no longer just about radios.
It’s about coordinated information, shared awareness,
and delivering clear, timely guidance to the public.

What is Interoperability?

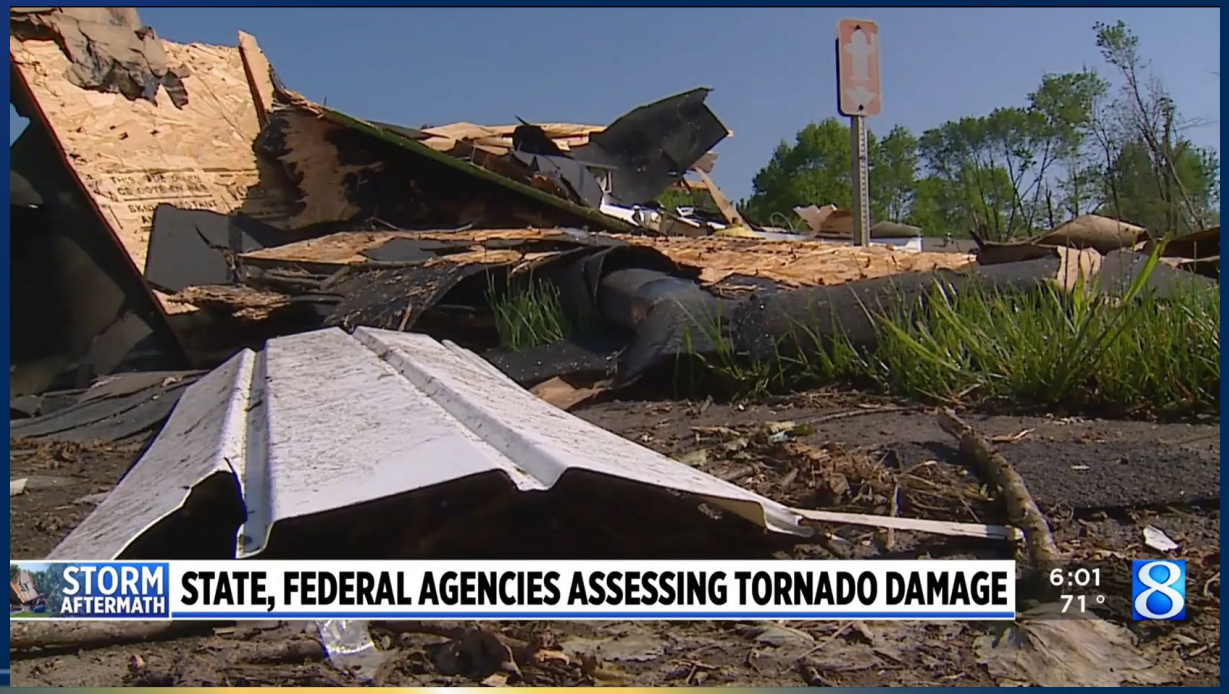
The ability of multiple agencies, systems, and personnel to communicate, share information, and operate together effectively during an incident.

PIO Role in Information Interoperability

- Ensures consistent messaging
- Shares verified information
- Aligns communication between partners
- Prevents conflicting public statements
- Manages outward facing response
- Maintains incident narrative and ground truth
- Addresses rumors and misinformation

Internal vs External Interoperability

- Internal: coordination among agencies
- External: communication with the public, media, and stakeholders



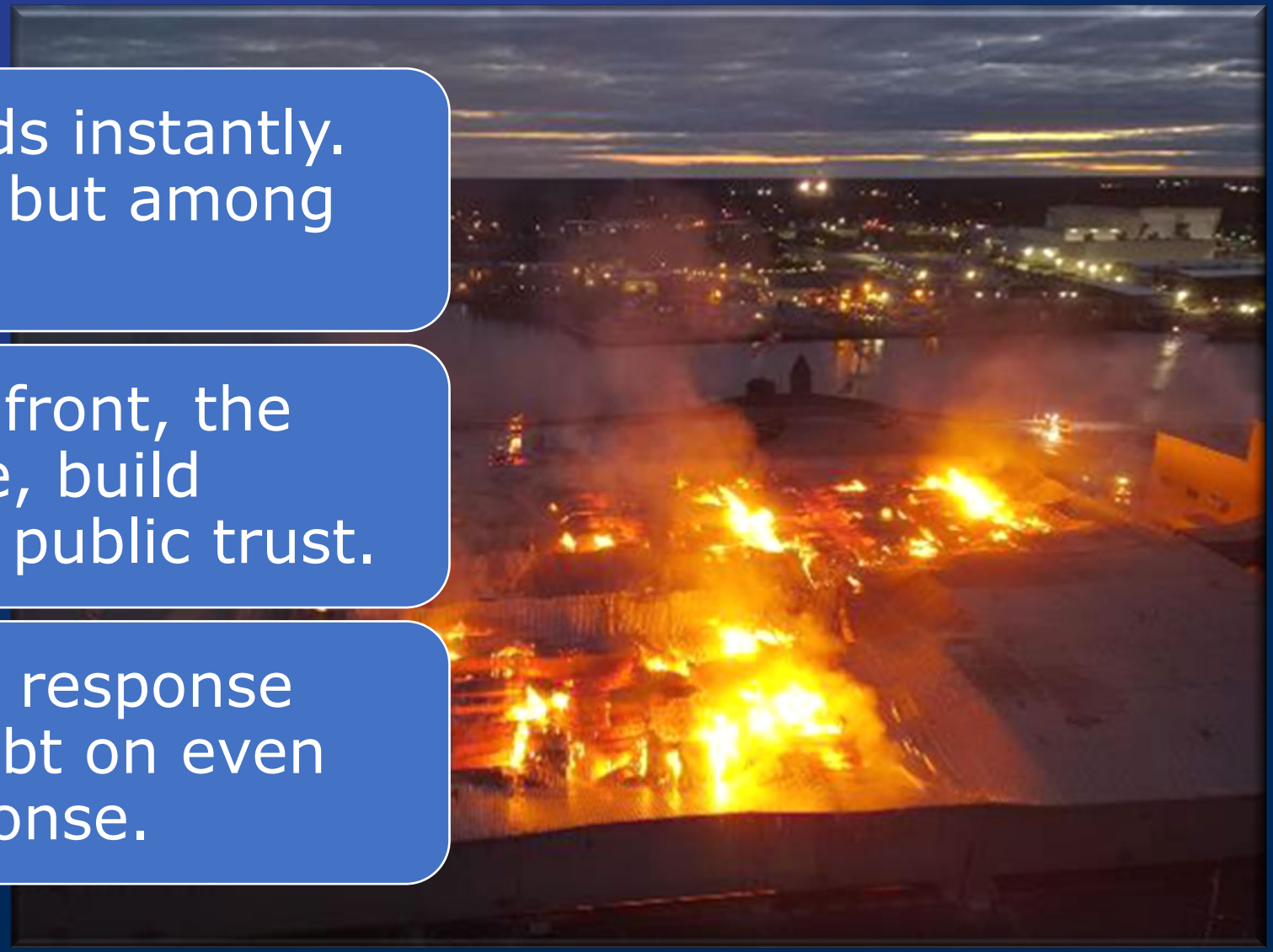
Quick, accurate communication impacts public safety and builds trust.

Goal: Get the right information to the right people at the right time so they can make the right decision.

Today, information spreads instantly. Not just on social media, but among family and friends.

The faster you get out in front, the easier it is to set the tone, build awareness, and maintain public trust.

A poor public information response can cast a shadow of doubt on even the best emergency response.

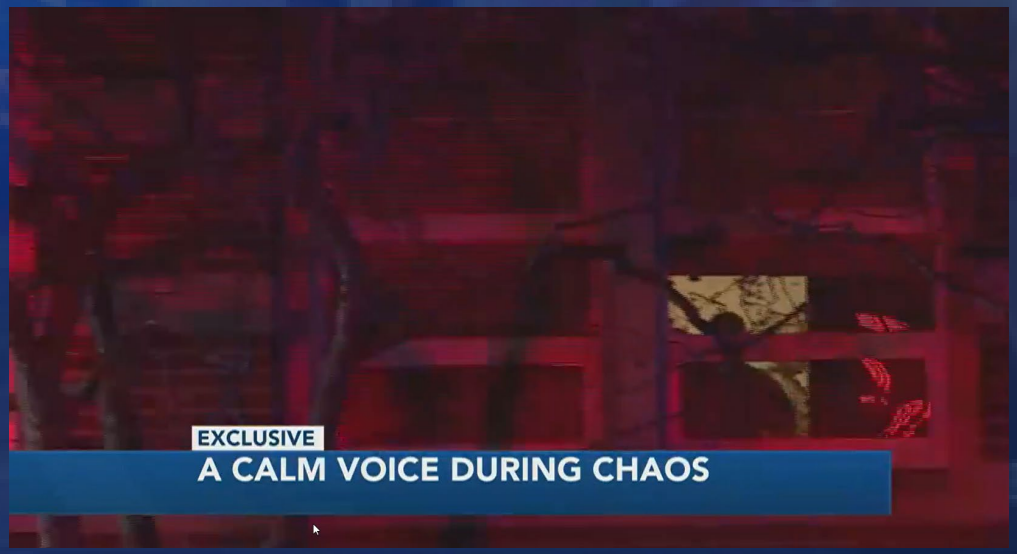


A Hard Truth

- Radio traffic is not private
- Social media
- Scanners and apps
- Scanners going encyrpted
  - New Federal Privacy Policy
  - Agencies in Michigan: Oct. 2026
  - Media fighting policy
- Public Alerts
  - Can make own news
  - Mis-information
  - Bad test messages

Michigan State University Campus Shooting, February 13, 2023

- Gunman opens fire in two buildings
- Three students killed; 5 others injured
- Unprecedented multi-agency response
- More than 2,200 911 calls
- 240+ text messages to 911
- 20+ dispatchers respond
- Response broadcast live around the world through scanner app
- News story based on dispatch, scanner, and radio traffic



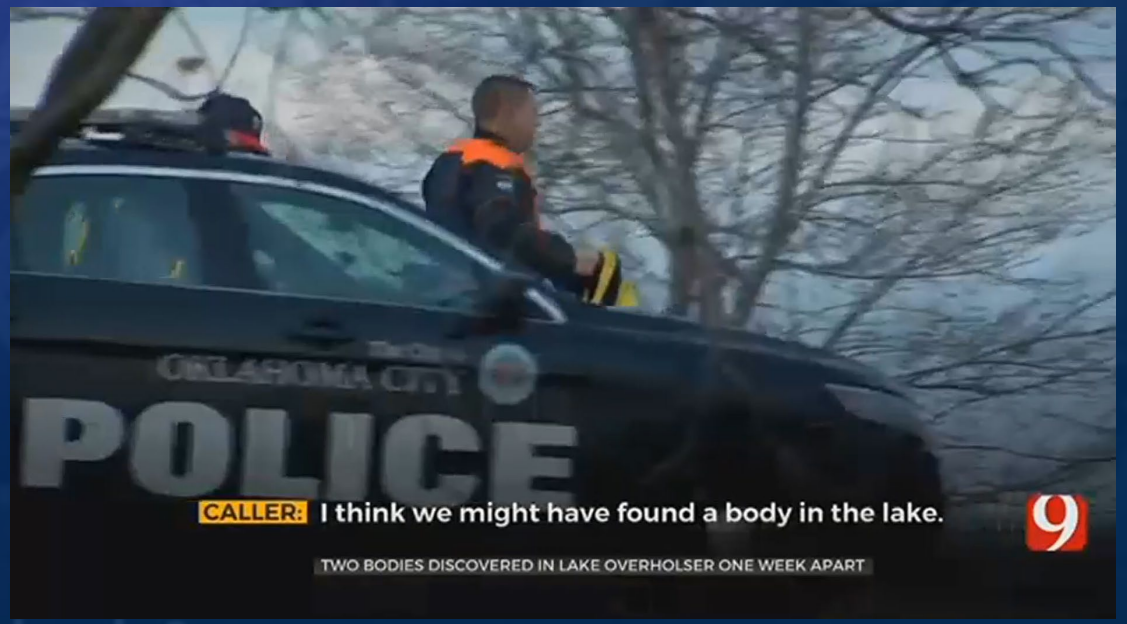
Safwat Ahnaf Aziz

Michigan State University Campus Shooting, February 13, 2023

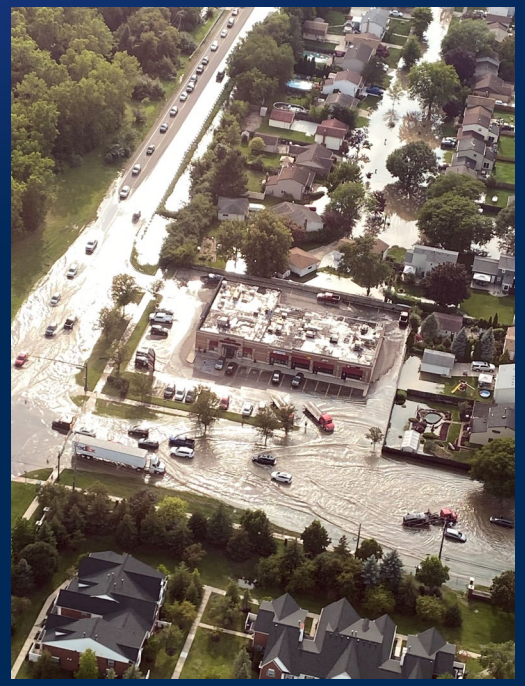
- Gunman opens fire in two buildings
- Three students killed; 5 others injured
- Unprecedented multi-agency response
- More than 2,200 911 calls
- 240+ text messages to 911
- 20+ dispatchers respond
- Response broadcast live around the world through scanner app
- News story based on dispatch, scanner, and radio traffic

911 Calls Reveal New Details After 2 Bodies Discovered At Lake Overholser

- Two bodies recovered from a metro Oklahoma City lake days apart in March 2019
  - Adult
  - 6-year-old boy
- Police and 911 callers declined an on-camera interview
- Medical examiners report not yet released



Social Media During Emergencies



Minutes Matter

In an emergency, the public needs clear, accurate information within minutes, not hours— today, social media is our fastest lifeline.

Speed and clarity on social media aren’t optional—they’re essential to keeping the public informed and safe.

Social Media as Intelligence

- Real-time public reporting
- Damage insights
- Incident situational awareness
- Consistent messaging
- Rumor identification
- Operational speed
- Unified public guidance

Social Media During Disasters

You reposted

Governor Gretchen Whitmer @GovWhitmer · Apr 2, 2025

To the first responders working day and night to keep Michiganders safe after Sunday's storm: thank you.

With more storms on the way today, it's important for Michiganders to be prepared. Here's where we're at and what to expect in the coming days.

86 45 286

MichEMHS @MichEMHS · 8/26/23

Canton Twp. took a double punch from severe weather August 24. First heavy rain prompted floods then just hours later a tornado touched down.

Our team put together this interactive map with a look at the water damage.

@waynecountymi @MichStatePolice

4 5 2.1K

MichEMHS @MichEMHS · Feb 9

Individual Assistance through @fema is now available for residents in 9 MI counties affected by August storms. More details and how to apply ⬇️

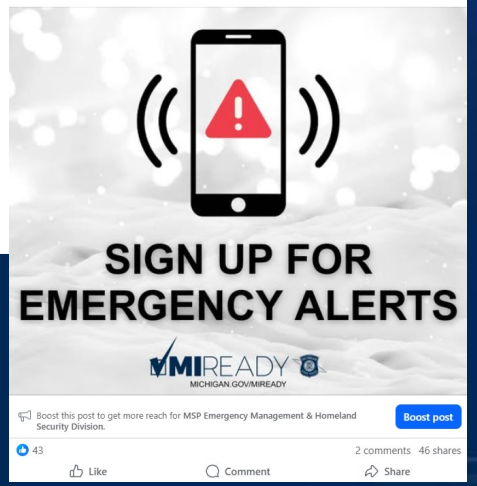
michigan.gov/whitmer/news/p...

10 6 9 3.4K

MSP Emergency Management & Homeland Security Division

January 23 ·

Stay informed. Stay safe. Have a plan. Sign up for emergency alerts from your county or city to get real-time updates during this January cold snap. You will also re... See more



Boost this post to get more reach for MSP Emergency Management & Homeland Security Division. Boost post

43 2 comments 46 shares

Like Comment Share

MPSCS @MPSCS · Apr 3, 2025

🚨Our teams at @MPSCS have been nothing short of heroic during this generational ice storm in MI. We are proud that MPSCS maintained uninterrupted #publicsafety communications for #firstresponders. #MPSCS30Years 🙏 @MichiganDNR @MichStatePolice @MichiganDTMB @migovernment

3 5 21 1.2K

MichEMHS @MichEMHS · May 15

Our Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments with @fema and @SBAgov are underway. 6 teams are in the ground across Branch, Cass, Kalamazoo, and St. Joseph counties working to document the damage from the May 7th tornadoes and storms. @MichStatePolice @femaregion5 #miready

2 6 1.1K

MSP/EMHSD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

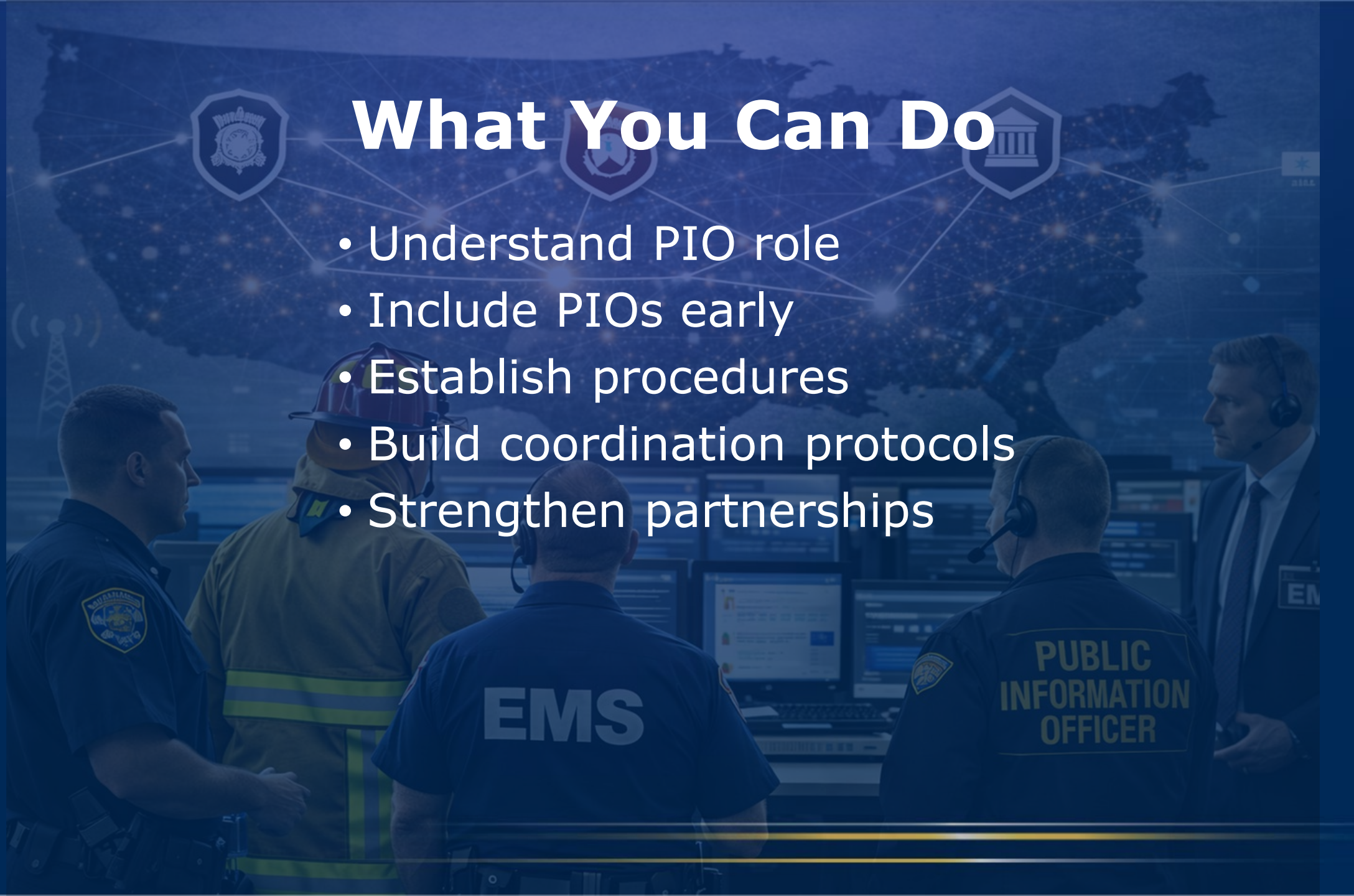
@MICHEMHS

Interoperability is not just about radios — it's about agencies communicating and operating as one team.

The PIO supports this by ensuring unified, accurate, and timely information.

What You Can Do

- Understand PIO role
- Include PIOs early
- Establish procedures
- Build coordination protocols
- Strengthen partnerships



L-105: Public Information Basics

- Learn skills to become full or part-time PIO
- Sharpen oral and written communication
- Explore media relations
  - Proactive and crisis responses
- Mock interviews / press conference

How to sign up

- Create a MiLogin account
- Search "L105" in Professional Development Learning Center

Questions?

Emergency Management & Homeland Security Division
MICHIGAN
STATE POLICE