Managing Health Emergencies

A Guide for Establishing, Operating and Evaluating An Emergency Operations Centre

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Introduction

This guide is intended for community leaders, institutional policy makers, health services providers, emergency planners and managers and others who are responsible for the management of the health-related consequences of emergency events. It is based on an all-hazards approach and users can reasonably treat the recommendations, adjusted to suit local conditions, as a minimum set of standards for the establishment of the physical and human resources infrastructure to support the management of emergencies.

Due to the differing capacities and capabilities of WHO member states in the Western Pacific Region, it is not practical to attempt to address the specific needs of each individual country. Those with highly developed, sophisticated emergency management capabilities and resources will understand their needs differently from those whose resources and development opportunities are more limited.

The field of emergency management has developed rapidly in recent years, to the point where there is growing knowledge and consensus about what constitutes the best known practices. Coincident with this is the growth of concepts, organizational strategies and management technologies that support the effective management of emergencies. This guide recommends and advocates adoption of those practices which are demonstrably effective, but leaves users to tailor these to the approaches and technologies mandated or endorsed by their respective organizations or jurisdictions.

The idea of an emergency operations centre (EOC) needs to be considered broadly, because implicit in the notion of a physical space for collecting, analyzing and displaying information for the purpose of conducting or coordinating emergency operations, is the necessity of management systems to effectively utilize the available resources. This guide addresses both the physical attributes of EOC’s and the necessary management systems to make them work.

Throughout this guide, the term ‘emergency management’ is limited to the relatively narrow context of the time-limited management of responses to specific emergency events, at various levels of engagement. The field or profession of emergency management is considerably broader than this, encompassing expertise and activities involving risk assessment, prevention and mitigation, preparedness planning, emergency response management, and recovery planning and management. Organizations that have comprehensive emergency management programs will have committed resources to all of these activities and will routinely practice and review aspects of their program to ensure that they are ready to deal with a broad range of emergencies.

The terms ‘emergency’ and ‘emergency operations centre’ are used in a generic sense. An emergency is an exceptional event that exceeds or potentially exceeds the capacity of normal resources to cope. The event may be sudden and unexpected, as in an earthquake, flash flood, or local outbreak of communicable disease, or slowly
evolving as in a major storm or disease pandemic. Emergencies are by definition dangerous, because of the potential of loss of life. It is important to note that in this guide the term ‘emergency’ covers everything from relatively minor, often routine, localized incidents with real but limited impact, to large-scale disasters with catastrophic impact on entire populations and significant international implications. Similarly, the term ‘emergency operations centre’ covers a range of entities from a very temporary, site-level Incident Command Post, through a dedicated off-site Emergency Operations Centre, to a permanently established provincial/regional or national Emergency Coordination Centre. (And conceivably, an international coordination centre). The essential differences between each are that the closer the EOC is to the actual emergency site, the more hands-on, operational and tactical the management issues are and the further, more removed from the site, the more strategic, logistical and policy oriented the management issues become. The concept of an EOC also embraces a number of similarly conceived entities that have much the same or key elements of the same purpose, such as a ‘Situation Room’, ‘WAR’ (We Are Ready) Room, Ops (operations) Centre, Command Centre and others.

In the health sector, various forms of real and virtual situation rooms are commonly used to collect and display data about the health impacts of emergency events. The mission for health professionals is to rapidly translate the implications of their data into effective actions, in a chaotic, post-disaster environment. Incorporating the features of a situation room into an emergency operations centre provides the vehicle for achievement of that mission. **This guide is concerned primarily with emergency operations centres that are focussed on strategic level coordination of the health sector’s engagement in larger scale emergencies.**

All emergencies and their subsequent management occur in a **context**. The concept of context relates to the many variables that make superficially similar events quite different from each other, and shapes the extent of creativity and improvisation required to adjust pre-established response plans to deal with them. This includes such factors as magnitude, location and impact of the event; availability of human and material resources to address it; mandates, strengths and limitations of emergency response and management agencies; degree of resilience in individuals, agencies and social systems; and other factors that contribute to the uniqueness of each situation.

Larger and more complex emergency events that challenge the resources across geographical, political and operational boundaries of responder organizations are commonly described as **multi-jurisdictional**. A jurisdiction has two primary attributes: territory and authority. Throughout this guide, the term **jurisdiction means an organization** (agency or level of government) **with the authority and therefore the responsibility, to provide particular functions and services within a defined area.** A jurisdiction will often be much the same as a **sector**, as in health sector, private sector, public sector; hence the terms multisectoral and multi-jurisdictional will often be seen to be used interchangeably, despite technically different meanings.
Chapter 1

The Rationale for an Emergency Operations Centre

The twenty-first century world is increasingly vulnerable to the effects of a broad range of events that damage infrastructure, impact people and disrupt communities. This vulnerability has come about due to an exponential increase in the interdependence of people, institutions, societies and nations as a product of industrialization; urbanization, particularly urban congestion; global high-speed communications and travel and the globalization of trade. A relatively isolated outbreak of a serious communicable disease will resonate around the world in a matter of days, if not hours, challenging those responsible for its management to deal with it rapidly, effectively, with full and immediate notification of citizens and local, national and international authorities. Similarly, natural disaster such as an earthquakes and flooding; technological emergencies such as power failures and hazardous materials spills; and social disasters such as riots, terrorism and armed conflict; all require competent, confident management of both the responses and the consequences. Most emergency responses are multisectoral, with the health component providing very specific functions related to the post-rescue triage, stabilization, transportation and treatment of casualties. Even in the absence of the logistical resources to effectively accomplish these, health agencies are obligated to effectively manage and leverage their scarce resources to maximise their effectiveness.

With the exception of primary responsibility for direct response to communicable disease outbreaks, the health sector in most jurisdictions is involved generally in the management of the consequences of emergencies. In all instances, the purpose of an emergency operations centre (EOC), in whichever of many possible forms it takes, is to provide a physical place, where the appropriate personnel can be assembled and the management activities necessary to mount a timely and effective response, can occur.

In support of this fundamental purpose there are six universal, values-based, priority objectives that direct management decisions and EOC processes, the first three of which relate directly to the management of health consequences, and all of them to the provision of humanitarian aid:

- Protect response personnel and resources
- Minimize loss of life, disability and suffering
- Protect public health
- Protect civil infrastructure
- Protect environmental and economic assets, including property
- Reduce economic losses
When there are failures in addressing these priorities during any emergency, it will be due typically to some or all of five reasons:

- Ambiguity of authority and responsibility
- Technical communications failures in the response/management organization
- Agencies responding in unplanned, unpractised ways
- Absence, poor use or loss of key specialized resources or response assets
- Poor management of media relations, resulting in consistently negative media

In order to prevent, or at least reduce the impact of these types of failures, many jurisdictions have adopted a variety of emergency management approaches designed to maximise their ability to make informed decisions and focus resources on the priority objectives during emergencies. Characteristically, these approaches require significant and sustained levels of communication, coordination and cooperation, best accomplished by locating the significant players in one location and utilizing organizational models and processes designed to address a number of core principles.

- Based on an all-hazards approach
- Modular, scalable or adaptable organizational structures
- Support for joint engagement of multiple jurisdictions/organizations in management decisions
- Clear lines of accountability
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities, consistent with normal roles and supported by training
- Clearly articulated procedures for activation, escalation, and demobilization of emergency capacities.
- Common functional groupings and consistent terminology
- Integrated with stakeholder agencies
- Mechanisms for the involvement of all stakeholders and users of the EOC in its design, operational planning and evaluation.
- Provision of capacity to manage public communications opportunities as part of the response to emergencies.

Globally, there are a number of emergency management systems currently being employed to address some or all of these principles. These systems have evolved from civil defence, military or fire suppression command and control systems. To the extent that any system is better than any other, it is because it more completely addresses the principles above.

Significant benefits could be realized by applying the principles in this guide to all levels of emergency management responsibility within a jurisdiction, from national government to front-line emergency services. Such a pan-jurisdictional approach would facilitate powerful, interoperable, integrated and comprehensive emergency management infrastructure and practices.
Chapter 2
EOC Functions

Most individuals, when confronted with an emergency, intuitively engage all of the functions of an emergency management system, and conduct themselves as a microcosm of an organized emergency operations centre. For example, an individual who is presented with an emergency will:

- Evaluate the situation and the options for dealing with it (engage a planning function)
- Make a decision about how to respond (engage an executive/strategic management function)
- Acquire resources to respond (engage a logistical function)
- Initiate a response (engage a tactical operational function)
- Be aware and keep track of resources used (engage an administrative function)
- Report their activities to someone with authority either to seek direction or to account for their activities. (engage a policy function)

The amount of time and activity committed to each function and whether external assistance is required for any function will vary with the scale and type of emergency. This is the functional model for an all-hazards emergency operations centre, which with some elaboration, expansion and for some applications, specialization or customization, is suitable for the management any size and type of emergency, from either a tactical/operational or broad, strategic perspective.

Most small-scale emergencies or incidents are managed in the field at a site by someone designated to be in-charge, (an incident manager or commander) who may establish a small EOC identified as a command post or something conceptually similar. Most of the management activities and decisions are concerned with operational procedures and utilization of immediately available human and physical resources. Often, the full range of EOC functionality is exercised by one person or a few people working as a team with one (the most senior, best qualified or experienced, or who is designated by policy or jurisdiction) in charge. In larger emergencies, on-site responders may require additional resources, coordination or policy direction to support their activities.

This is the point where a pre-designated, off-site EOC comes into service, to provide the necessary logistical support and strategic direction. The EOC provides policy direction to site-level in-charge personnel coordinates resource requests from the site(s) and manages non-site activities.

When incidents become large or multi-site events that impact a number of locations or jurisdictions, and require resources and actions beyond the authority of the activated EOC(s), a type of EOC called an (Area) Emergency Coordination Centre may be put into
service to provide wide-area coordination of resources and consequence management in the broader community.

Site-level response command posts, or similar concept, are expected to focus on the direct, operational aspects of the emergency response. For example, field personnel from health agencies responding to a flood would be evaluating and stabilizing people with injuries; arranging evacuation of the most seriously injured or setting up an on-site treatment facility; evaluating the damage to water and sewage systems and arranging for potable water, evaluating the risk of subsequent or consequent events. If this event was sufficiently large or damaging, so as to overwhelm the locally available resources, or cross jurisdictional or operational boundaries, an expanded response would be required, which would entail activating an off-site EOC to support the expansion of operations to multiple sites. Such an EOC would have responsibility for:

- Provision of policy guidance and support
- Establishment of priorities
- Coordination of agencies and operations
- Collection, evaluation and display of information about the event for decision makers
- Resource acquisition and management
- Communications within the response structures
- Public information, risk and crisis communication

The Policy function

When an EOC is activated, the agency/organization responsible for it may create a policy group, consisting of the most senior heads of the affected organizations, government agencies and other executive officers who have a duty to provide strategic level leadership. Their role is to provide the EOC Director with high level policy direction and advice regarding overall management of the emergency. This group would also be responsible for endorsing requests for external resources and assistance. For example, a request for human and material resources, beyond those available within the response agency or jurisdiction, where no other superseding arrangement has been made with nearby agencies, (a mutual aid agreement) would be processed through the policy group.

The Management function

The management function is responsible for overall emergency policy and operational decisions and coordination. At the emergency site level, the management function includes consideration of responder safety and may include a liaison capacity with assisting (providing tactical resources) or cooperating (providing external support) agencies. At an off-site EOC, or a remote Coordination Centre, these will often be addressed as a risk management capacity and provision for liaison with external agencies. The in-charge person may be called an Incident Manager at site level and an EOC Manager or Director at an off-site EOC. In all cases, engagement in and management of public communications, is a vital component of the management
function that is best served by having a dedicated media relations person as part of the management group.

Joint or Unified Management

Increasingly, emergencies impact multiple jurisdictions or agencies, creating significant potential for ambiguity about responsibility and authority for responding. Management or command during an incident is most often established initially by the first arriving authority at the scene or in the EOC. It is then transferred to the jurisdiction or agency with primary responsibility for the incident.

Joint or Unified Management provides for all agencies with geographic or functional jurisdiction for an emergency to jointly manage the response by establishing a common set of objectives and strategies. Unified/joint management does not mean giving up agency authority, responsibility, or accountability. It means that all involved agencies contribute to the management process by:

- Jointly determining overall objectives.
- Planning jointly for operational activities while conducting integrated operations.
- Maximizing the use of all assigned resources.
- Coordinating the emergency response functions are under a single action plan
- Designating one jointly resourced Operations Section as responsible for implementing the action plan
- Activating one EOC or Incident Management Post (as opposed to multiple)
- Designating one of the joint managers to act as spokesperson

The Operational function

At site level, the operational function is all about direct response activities. (Vaccinating people, interviewing contacts, rescuing people, triaging, treating and transporting sick/injured people, putting out the fire, etc) Once removed from the site, the operational function is responsible for strategic coordination of all response operations by implementing an existing or improvised response plan. At this level in an off-site EOC the health agencies would be dealing with Emergency Medical Services dispatch and managing the availability of off-site resources.

The Planning Function

The role of the planning function is to collect, evaluate, display and communicate information about the emergency; develop objectives, strategies and action plans including those for escalation and deactivation of the EOC. The planning function provides analysis of the intelligence (data) and technical expertise needed in the response effort. At site level, much of the planning function is concerned with the assignment of on-hand human and material resources to achieve maximum effect. At an off-site EOC,
planning activities tend to be concerned with bigger issues such as how and where to deploy newly acquired resources to contain the emergency.

**The Logistical function**

The logistical function is responsible for the **acquisition, tracking and repatriation** of the tactical/operational resources required to respond to the emergency; and includes the facilities, services, (furniture, food, security, etc) service personnel (information technology support, clerical staff, drivers etc) and equipment (telecommunications, computers, radios, etc) within the EOC.

**The Administrative function**

All of the **financial activities and administrative tasks** such as tracking of material and human resource costs, maintenance of administrative records, processing compensation claims, preparation of procurement contracts etc. are the responsibility of the administrative function.

It should be noted that some of the tasks and roles assigned to particular functions may vary among jurisdictions, as they adapt the standard functional model to accommodate the architecture and operations of their organizations.

**Organization structure of emergency management functions**
Chapter 3

Physical Attributes of an EOC

There are two primary considerations when establishing an EOC. The first is the **location**, with respect to ease of access, security and proximity to participating and supporting agencies. The second is the **facility**, with respect to size, amenities and configuration. Cost, both budgetary and space, tends to be a third and dominant consideration in most jurisdictions, but planners are encouraged to try to fit the costs to the requirements rather than the reverse.

**Location**

In the case of a site-level EOC (command post) the emergency site is the location and the facility will usually be the normal workspace of the responders. This could be a community clinic for public health personnel dealing with a communicable disease outbreak; the back of an ambulance for Emergency Medical Service paramedics or the cab of a fire truck for fire fighters. These will often be augmented by mobile command posts that are commonly deployed by first responder agencies.

An off-site EOC, established to support responses to larger, often multi-site emergencies, entails a more complex set of considerations, unless there is an emergency management agency that sponsors it and agrees to make their infrastructure available to others on an as-needed basis. Where these arrangements exist there are significant cost benefits to user participants and funding bodies. Proximity to partners, stakeholders, donors and humanitarian agencies is a significant consideration, and because many of these are interested in a broader range of information than what the health sector usually produces, a degree of integration with the broader emergency management infrastructure of the jurisdiction is desirable.

Since an EOC needs to survive and remain accessible during disasters, decisions about where to locate one should be based on an understanding of the potential threats to any proposed location, so that the most likely hazards can be avoided. (For example: unstable ground in earthquake zones, landslide areas, flood plains and even excessive traffic congestion associated with bridges and evacuation routes)

**Facility**

In the health sector in most jurisdictions, a purpose-built EOC is relatively rare; since it will be idle much of the time, and tend to become offices or storage space. Dedicated health emergency coordination facilities tend to be common only at the level of national governments, where they often do double duty as meeting room space. More common is the dual or multi-purpose EOC, where the space is routinely used for some other purpose and converted to an EOC when required. This can be advantageous since it will likely be in the location from which many of the EOC staff will be drawn and the communications
and information technology equipment will probably be routinely used and maintained. There are four key considerations when contemplating the use of space that is in use for other purposes on a daily basis:

- It should be possible to vacate, convert and activate the space as an EOC in less than one hour, and this conversion can be routinely practised;
- The location is secure, or appropriate security measures can be put in place within the timeframe of the conversion.
- The space/facility should meet the basic requirements of disaster survivability and access and have the ability to sustain operations during an emergency, by virtue of secure water supplies and an emergency generator.
- While it may be crowded, there should be sufficient space to accommodate the personnel and the equipment required to run it. Most EOC’s have a mix of open and closed work space, with much of the work being done in open areas. Some closed spaces are needed for meetings, group-work activities and teleconferences.

With respect to size and configuration, there are no standards, other than those that exist to support safety of staff and basic functionality. Often these are compromised in seldom used EOC’s because they are in use for only short periods of time. **It is important to make form follow function.** The functions are standard (see pages 9-10 above). The scale of emergencies and hence the staffing and space requirements are unknown and will need to be estimated from an analysis of the largest anticipated emergency events that will require management through the EOC. A small jurisdiction contemplating the management of modest sized events may only require 8-12 people in the EOC at any time. A larger jurisdiction, dealing with events with a broader impact, may require 4 or 5 times that number of staff at any time and may be required to provide on-site lodging for many of them.

In any site-support (off-site) EOC set-up, the facility must be capable of supporting staff in meeting basic direction and control functional responsibilities including: gathering and displaying information, setting priorities, and coordinating response activities. This will entail, at a minimum, space for the following:

- Standard emergency management functions (management, operations, planning, logistics and administration)
- Policy group. (may be accommodated intermittently when required in a meeting room)
- Communications centre
- Break-out/meeting rooms
- Rest and eating areas
- Storage
- Media relations/public information. (may not be included in the EOC but the unique space requirements need to be addressed)
When planning the space, there are a number of useful considerations to make the space optimally functional:

- The person in charge—the EOC Director—should be positioned so that they can easily receive information and oversee operations.
- Functions that are interdependent should be co-located. For example, planning and operations; logistics and finance.
- Functions should be located adjacent to any displays that pertain to their activity, to facilitate easy updating of information.
- A separate, quiet meeting room for priority setting discussions, management briefings, etc. An EOC is often a very noisy place due to the necessity of a large open work space for the core functions. The noise level can be managed to some extent by providing for a generous separation of work stations and use of sound absorbing materials in the facility.
- If a high volume of incoming communication is anticipated, a separate communications room is desirable, so that all messages come through one contact point for logging and redirection.
- All entrances and exits must be secure at all times. An EOC is never a public place. The presence of the public or media—anyone not involved in the direct operation of the EOC—is a distraction in an already pressurized environment. All ‘guests’ should be escorted and media photo opportunities staged.
- Food and rest areas should be away from the main area, otherwise staff will try to eat and rest at their work stations, which should not be encouraged. Food handling practices and storage facilities should meet the highest public health standards. An EOC is a poor place to have to manage an outbreak of food-borne illness.

**Building and Resources**

- If the centre is to operate 24/7 and require that staff sleep on site, segregated sleeping facilities with storage for cots and blankets will be required, along with enhanced, segregated toilet and bathing facilities; and suitably scaled water and sewage systems. There should be minimum interference between operational and staff support areas such as eating, sleeping and sanitary facilities.
- Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems will need to be scaled and calibrated for the extra burden of some crowding and additional heat-producing office equipment. The emergency power generator should be scaled to support operation of these systems and have fuel for at least 2 or 3 days.
- Furnishings may be fixed or movable, with movable furniture offering greater flexibility to meet changing needs and greater adaptability in multi-use facilities. Probably the most important consideration is that furniture be ergonomically suitable. During a sustained activation, staff in an EOC will often spend 10-12 hours at their work station.
- The facility should support generous use of communications technologies, with sufficient telephone and fax lines, wire and/or fibre-optic data hook-ups, charging points for mobile telephones and radios and arrangements for external antennae if the structure is not transparent to radio, cell phone and television signals. Note
that if a wireless local area network is to be used to link computers internally, provision must be made for suitable encryption of the wireless transmissions and the system needs to be strongly password protected.

- There should be a facility floor plan that identifies the workstations and maps the wiring and equipment at each station. Be prepared for the plan to change with experience and evaluation. All wiring and cabling should be labelled at both ends to facilitate relocation, repair and rapid deployment in multi-use space.

**Office Equipment and Supplies**

- All office equipment and supplies should, to the extent possible, be identical to that which the assigned personnel normally use in their daily work. If computers or particular software applications are not in use routinely, then they should not be in the EOC, because an emergency is a poor time to learn to use new technology. Staff will be more comfortable in the EOC environment if they have access to items they depend on daily, including relevant reference materials. Where computers are used, there should be a back-up pen and paper system for documentation and reference, in the event of a system failure.
- Information displays, if electronic or projected, should be backed up by manual systems (flipcharts, whiteboards). Information is the lifeblood of an EOC, so make full use of all the possible display space. At least one television and radio tuned to the local media should be included. Most EOC’s now incorporate multiple media displays as primary sources of information.

**Redundancy**

Few EOC’s are fully hardened against all hazards. In reality, most have significant vulnerabilities because they were created where it was expedient, but not ideal, to do so. Consequently, in the same way that it is necessary to have back-up plans for technological failures within the EOC, it is also recommended to have an alternate site for the EOC itself, in the event that circumstances make the designated facility uninhabitable. Depending on the magnitude and impact of emergencies that are contemplated, the alternate site may not fully satisfy all the requirements and will need to rely on moving some of the equipment, along with personnel from the primary site.
Chapter 4

Operational Aspects of an EOC

Staffing considerations

An EOC is only as effective as the personnel who staff it. The whole purpose of the physical structure and organization of an EOC is to support informed, skilled, practised personnel in an emergency environment that can be fluid, ambiguous and chaotic. The first rule of staffing an EOC is that no person should be assigned roles and responsibilities that are alien to them. The emergency environment may be alien, but they should be competent to perform the functions required of them in the circumstances. To achieve this, all personnel in an EOC should:

- Be deployed in functions identical or significantly similar to their normal working roles
- Be oriented/trained in the functions, roles and procedures they will undertake in the EOC

Staffing for the various functions will be drawn primarily from departments within the organization responsible for the EOC or from agencies using a joint EOC. As long as the two criteria above are met, staff may be full or part-time, contracted or even volunteers. Many organizations partially resource their EOC’s with internal volunteers, rather than direct staff assignments. Staffing for the functions may include and are not limited to:

- Policy group: elected officials; chief medical officers; chairs of boards or board committees; legal advisors; chief executive, operating, administrative or financial officers; senior department heads
- Management: Chief executive, operating or administrative officers; emergency program coordinators or planners; communications officers; safety officers; risk managers
- Operations: Division and department heads with programmatic responsibility relevant to the emergency, who can work directly with the incident manager
- Planning: program and emergency planners; analysts; subject matter experts
- Logistics: staff from purchasing departments; information technology and systems support; human resources officers
- Administration: financial officers, accounts and contracts processing personnel; financial analysts; administrative assistants; clerks

When estimating the total number of staff that may be required for an EOC, planners should be cautious about a tendency to minimize the requirements and err on the generous side, particularly with respect to the administrative support requirements for each function.
Redundancy

Some staff may not be deployed full-time to an EOC and will be able to adjust their normal work schedule to accommodate part-time engagement in the centre. Others may be required full-time, and if the centre is required for long periods each day and over a prolonged period of time, as in a 24 hour continuous operation, a second complete shift and potentially a third complete shift, will be required if the event lasts longer than 7-10 days.

EOC Plan

The EOC Plan is the primary reference document that provides guidance for the management, operation and staffing of the emergency operations centre. It outlines the authority and procedures for activating the EOC along with responsibility checklists and standard operating procedures for all functions and roles, along with the supporting forms and documentation needed to support operation of the EOC. The Plan is a supporting document to the jurisdiction’s or agency’s Emergency Plan and specific contingency plans, which should detail the resources and strategies, that will be employed to deal with specific types of emergencies. (For example; while the overall EOC management plan is relatively constant, the response to a communicable disease outbreak will be different from that required for a mass casualty natural disaster)

The objective of the EOC plan is to minimize the need for improvisation in the EOC management process, by standardizing basic and routine activities. When adequately trained, this leaves staff free to focus on the specific response requirements of the emergency.

An EOC plan will, at a minimum, include the following:

- The purpose of the plan
- The concept of operations, detailing the emergency management structure employed in the EOC, the roles of the personnel and how the components work together
- Activation procedures and levels, including who is authorized to activate the plan (at least 3 officials identified by title) and under what circumstances.
- Escalation and de-escalation plan detailing the procedures for expanding and reducing EOC capacity when ordered by the EOC Director
- Call-out list and notification procedures
- Checklists of the roles and responsibilities of EOC functions
- Checklists of standard operating procedures (SOP or, how things are done) for the functions
- EOC floor plan, with inventory and locations of equipment and supplies
- Electronic information management processes (including a layout plan of phone, fax, data lines, cables, switches and outlets)
- Communication resources and procedures, especially mobile phones and radios
- Public information and warning processes
- Procedures for engaging local government and/or a superior jurisdiction
• Standard **forms and instructions** for documenting EOC activities
• **Maps** of the area covered by the EOC
• Guidelines for worker care and **safety**
• Identification of agency and **position responsible** for maintaining and updating the plan and the procedure for requesting changes.
• **Training and exercise** schedule to ensure staff and procedures are up-to-date.

**Escalation of capacity**

As an emergency expands, and/or as more response resources are employed, there will be a need to expand the scale of the response and the management structures. **In the same way that each of the core functions can be selectively activated or not, as needed, so can each of the functions be scaled up or down to suit changing requirements.** The operations functions can add single resources, divisions and specialized resources as groups, team and task forces. The Planning function can add specialty applications to address situational awareness, resource tracking, documentation, technical advice and demobilization planning. The logistics function can add units to separately address services and facility support. The administrative function can add units to address timekeeping, compensation, procurement and cost tracking. When adjusting the scale, there are five principles to consider:

- The Incident Manager/EOC Director is responsible for all functions and if one is not activated by staffing it, then the manager/director is doing it.
- Only as much or as many of the functions as the situation requires, need to be activated and resourced
- For site-level response, the functions are always expanded from the ‘ground up’ by the on-scene Incident Manager
- For a site-support EOC or more distant Coordinating Centre, the functions are expanded from the ‘top down’
- To maintain optimum effectiveness, the span of control (ratio of supervisors to workers) should not exceed one to seven and ideally one to five, and each supervisor is one of no more than five reporting to the next level, up to the EOC Director. This provides for a clear chain of accountability and control and unity of management, with each person directly reporting to only one person.

**Internal Communication**

The key to a highly functional EOC lies in the ease with which internal communication occurs. At a one to five span of control, the required **vertical briefing processes** are manageable: every supervisor is required to keep their staff briefed as the situation evolves and every staff is required to keep their supervisor briefed on the status of their activities. The mechanism for **horizontal** briefing is the **planning meeting**, which every supervisor is obligated to attend and to convey the information to their staff. Planning meetings start with a situation update and then proceed to a continuing consideration of new information, options and objectives.
Management by objectives

The mission of an EOC is to pursue objectives that result in a transition from reactive response to pro-active situation management. Successful emergency management requires utilization of a proven management technology, such as management by objectives, which addresses the time limited achievement of objectives through optimum tactical utilization of scarce resources. Management by objectives, for any emergency event regardless of magnitude or complexity, involves four cyclically applied steps:

- Within the context of agency policy and direction (mandate) establish observable or measurable, achievable objectives
- From an evaluation of the options, select an appropriate strategy
- Direct the use of tactical resources
  - Apply tactics that are appropriate to the strategy
  - Assign the right resources
- Monitor and evaluate outcomes to either re-initiate this cycle or achieve the goal

Action Plans

Effective emergency responses are the product of planned action and every event will benefit from an action plan, either oral or written. Action plans provide all the EOC supervisory personnel with directions for both current and future actions and are form the basis for defining time frames called operational periods. Operational periods are of no fixed length and are based on the needs of the event, to reflect the time required to achieve objectives and to plan in advance for required resources. They vary in length from a few hours to as many as 24.

It is accepted practice to prepare written action plans:

- When the emergency event is large and involves the full or partial activation of an off-site EOC to support the response
- When the event extends beyond the first operational period. Having a written action plan in such cases helps ensure continuity of action and management that may otherwise be broken due to personnel changes

The decision as to whether a written action plan is required may be a matter of agency policy or made situationally by the EOC Director/manager.

Elements of an Action Plan

An action plan, either oral or written will usually contain the following:

- A statement of objectives, appropriate to the entire event
- Identification of the functional elements of the EOC that will be activated for the current and estimated future operational periods
• Resource assignments to accomplish the objectives, with the intended strategies and tactics, for each organizational element
• Supporting materials such as a map of the event area; communications plan, patient transportation plan, traffic management plan, etc.

**Post Event Debriefing**

After every live or practice event, there should be at least one, preferably two debriefing sessions. The first occurs orally, immediately on conclusion of the event when impressions and information are still fresh in people’s minds. The second is more structured and involves a structured meeting of all participants where events are reviewed and formal recommendations noted for future action. The **debriefing sessions** are central to the **process of evaluating** the overall management of the situation and the effectiveness of the EOC in supporting the management processes. Debriefings consistently focus on three questions:

- What worked well? (met or exceeded standards or expectations)
- What needs improvement? (partially met standards or expectations, and how can future responses be improved)
- What did not work? (did not meet standards or expectations, needs to be re-thought and what options are there for fixing the problems)

It is customary to prepare a short report detailing the results of the evaluation and recommending any required corrective actions. This is often called a **lessons learned report**, which is slightly misleading. The lessons cannot be said to be fully learned until the recommendations have been implemented and new behaviors demonstrated through subsequent practice or experience!
Chapter 5

Developing and Evaluating an EOC

Steering committee

Creating a site-level command post is largely a spontaneous, and somewhat ad-hoc process driven by the on-scene responders’ assessment of the immediate needs of the event and regulated by the operational policies of the participating agencies. In contrast, developing a site-support EOC is a significant project that requires committed, top-down leadership, policy and funding support from participating departments, agencies or jurisdictions. From these, a sponsor needs to be identified, who convenes a steering committee consisting of the most senior decision makers from the participating agencies. The steering committee will comprise the majority of the Policy Group who provide high level direction to the EOC when it is in operation. Steering committee members should have the authority to commit their agency’s resources to the project and the long term maintenance and operational costs of the EOC. In the case of a single agency EOC, the steering committee will likely be the agency’s Emergency Management Committee (or similar). The steering committee appoints and mandates through terms of reference, an EOC Working (or Task or Project) Group that directly manages or does the project work to create the EOC. The steering committee, because of its representative structure, may also choose to sponsor evaluations of the EOC.

Working group

As a project team, using this Guide and under the overall direction of the Steering Committee, the Working Group will bear overall responsibility for addressing the facility, equipment, procedures, training and exercise requirements for the primary and secondary emergency operations centres. There are three important considerations when selecting members of the team:

- Individual team members must be appropriate representatives from their organizations and have the commitment, authority and access to resources to complete the project
- The members must possess, or have ready access to, expertise relating to their organizations, the community and the processes of emergency response and planning.
- They should be in agreement on their purpose and committed to working cooperatively

Suggested members for an EOC Working Group:

- Emergency Management Coordinator/Planner
- Medical officers
- Health Authority (Hospital and Clinic) Administrative and Program Managers
• EMS Managers and Dispatch personnel
• Risk Management personnel
• Media Communications Officer
• Operational supervisors and managers
• Planners
• Purchasing managers/supervisors
• Accounts processing and procurement managers/supervisors
• Information Technology business analysis and technical support Managers
• Facilities management and engineering Managers

An effective working group should probably be limited to 12 members, preferably fewer. If there is a need to engage more, a suitable, efficient mechanism would be through sub-committees rather than expansion of the working group beyond a workable number.

EOC Evaluation

An EOC, as a facility, is simply a tool designed to support personnel implementing emergency plans and performing response and management functions. Consequently, a full evaluation of the utility and effectiveness of the facility is inseparable from the skills, abilities and effectiveness of the users and their emergency response and management plans. Therefore the best potential evaluators of the capabilities, assets and limitations of the facility are its users. Since ideally, the user agencies are responsible for the actual design and operational planning for the facility, they are also optimally positioned to understand and correct any deficiencies and weaknesses. A suggested list of considerations for evaluation is located in Annex B.

An appreciation of the utility of an EOC can only be gained by actually using it, either during real emergency events, which are usually infrequent, or during training exercises, which ought to be relatively frequent. It is useful to start the exercise process during the planning and development phases by conducting orientation exercises. The value in such exercises is that as participants informally work through the exercises and become familiar with the physical EOC, its supporting hardware, protocols and procedures, they will be engaged in both training and an evaluation process, thereby initiating an established practice that is widely recognized in emergency management.

Types of evaluation exercises

An orientation exercise involves informal discussions designed to familiarize participants with plans, roles and procedures with a focus on questions of coordination and assignment of responsibilities. Typically an orientation is conducted by planners with the assistance of a capable note taker who keeps track of the discussions, identified deficiencies, weaknesses and suggestions for improvement. Orientation exercises are simple and low cost and should be considered the absolute minimum requirement for validating an EOC plan or sections of a plan and/or a facility under development.
When the EOC is established, it is important to practice activating it with a very limited type of exercise called a **drill**. A drill is used to develop, evaluate and maintain skills in specific procedures, such as alerting and notification, passage of critical information, activation of emergency resources such as the EOC and practice of specialized emergency skills that constitute one or more components of the EOC operational plan. Part of every drill is a critique of the procedure being practiced and whether the facility properly supports it.

For an established EOC, ongoing evaluation of its full functionality and training of the personnel requires exercises of increasing complexity, starting with a table-top and proceeding to functional and full-scale exercises.

In an EOC, a **table-top exercise** is a process in which all the assigned personnel, often including member of the policy group, gather together informally, without tight time constraints, to examine and discuss simulated emergency situations and attempt to hypothetically respond and resolve problems based on the EOC operational plan. Often, the simulation contains elements of ambiguity to challenge the application of the EOC plan. The success of the exercise is largely determined by group participation in the identification and evaluation of problem areas.

Advancing to a **functional exercise** from a table-top challenges participants differently in three ways. First, it is interactive, requiring participants to respond to each other in the roles designated for them in the plan. Second, it is conducted under time constraints that would be similar to, or often more challenging than a real event. Finally, it is usually conducted in the EOC facility, so the available tools and technologies can be used and evaluated. Functional exercises are fully simulated, at significant levels of detail, usually covering multiple functions and are designed to validate policies, roles and responsibilities, capabilities and procedures, of single or multiple emergency management functions or agencies. The design, conduct and evaluation of a functional exercise require considerable resources to ensure maximum benefit.

Where a functional exercise provides a focus on the policy and interactive elements of the management of an emergency, a **full-scale exercise** focuses on the operational capability of emergency response and management systems. In the evaluation of an EOC this would include actual deployment of the resources required to demonstrate coordination and response capabilities in as realistic a setting as possible without putting public and staff safety at risk. Properly executed full-scale exercises require more planning, conduct and evaluation resources than a functional exercise, plus the added staffing, operational and insurance costs of mobilizing emergency resources in real time. Consequently, they are seldom used to evaluate an EOC by itself, but rather as a component of a total response system.
Annex A

Glossary

**Action plan:** a statement that is specific to an event, which details the response strategies, objectives, resources to be applied and tactical actions to be taken. (see ‘plans’)

**Administration:** the emergency management function that attends to the management of accounting, budgeting, time and record keeping, payments and disbursements and procurement contracting.

**All-hazards:** an approach to emergency management based on the recognition that there are common elements in the management of responses to virtually all emergencies, and that by standardizing a management system to address the common elements, greater capacity is generated to address the unique characteristics of different events.

**Command post:** a form of site-level emergency operations centre, assembled as needed by the first agencies to respond to an event.

**Comprehensive Emergency Management Program:** a corporate or government emergency management program that commits resources to four fundamental aspects of the field; prevention and mitigation; preparedness; response and recovery. Typically, programs address these through hazard, vulnerability and risk assessment; preparedness planning; response and consequence management training and exercising; and long term risk management.

**Concept of operations:** a section or statement in an agency emergency plan or in an EOC plan that identifies policies, roles and responsibilities and how the structural or functional elements of the organization will work together to produce a coherent management response, with necessary communication among the internal elements and with external stakeholders.

**Consequence management:** a slightly elusive term that intends to distinguish between dealing with the emergency event (putting out the fire) versus dealing with the effects or aftermath of the event. (Treating the burn and smoke inhalation victims). Some examples of consequence management in the health sector include mass casualty management; psychosocial services; communicable disease control and environmental health measures.

**Context:** as applied to management of an emergency event, context relates to the setting, circumstances and environment of the emergency.
**Contingency plan:** a plan to deal with particular aspects of a specific threat that is different from other threats. For example: while the general management of emergencies is similar for most, and therefore efficiently addressed by a generic approach, the specific resources and actions that would be required to address a communicable disease outbreak are different from those used to treat multiple trauma victims. Each would require a different contingency plan. (See ‘plans’)

**Drill:** a limited form of training exercise, the purpose of which is to teach behaviours and establish procedural skills and evaluate how the EOC facility supports the procedures.

**Emergency:** an exceptional event of any magnitude that produces damage and injury and exceeds or potentially exceeds the capacity of normal resources to cope. Emergencies have effects that may be considered on a continuum from localized incidents with limited consequences, to wide area disasters with catastrophic consequences, and are often referred to as incidents or events, with the terms used interchangeably.

**Emergency Coordination Centre:** a term used to describe a type of Emergency Operations Centre that has no direct, tactical/operational function, but serves as a point of control and coordination of the strategic allocation of resources and management of policy issues.

**EMS--Emergency Medical Service:** the provision of pre-hospital care and transportation to hospital for people with medical emergencies. An ambulance service.

**Emergency management:** Sometimes referred to as disaster management. Emergency management is a discipline dealing with the assessment, reduction and avoidance of excessive risk; the organized response to natural, human-generated or technological disasters or risk events and post-event support for the planning and rebuilding of damaged institutions.

**Emergency management agency:** an organization, usually either a government agency or a non-government agency mandated to provide a single point of accountability for all emergency preparedness, mitigation and response activities within a particular area.

**Emergency plan:** also referred to as an emergency response plan. The expression refers to a type of document that describes how an agency or organization will manage its responses to emergencies of various types. In this context, emergency plans are agency-specific, detailing the resources, capacities and capabilities that the agency or organization will employ in its response. (see ‘plans’)}
**EOC, Emergency Operations Centre**: a place, activated for the duration of an emergency, within which personnel responsible for planning, organizing, acquiring and allocating resources and providing direction and control can focus these activities on responses to the emergency. An EOC is a somewhat generic concept, embracing a range of emergency management facilities from an on-scene incident command post assembled by first responders at an emergency site, to a national emergency coordination centre providing strategic direction and resources to multiple jurisdictions and agencies in a wide-area disaster. An EOC, properly, sits between the extremes and provides strategic policy and logistical support to site level responders and response agencies.

**EOC plan**: document that specifically relates to the operation of the EOC, which describes the structure, functions, procedures for operating the facility. It is the primary resource manual for EOC staff, containing samples of all the forms, role descriptions, concept of operations and standard operating procedures.

**Event**: an emergency incident or occurrence. Event is often used to describe an emergency with a number of incidents, but most often, event and incident are used interchangeably. Under the *International Health Regulations, 2005 (Article 1)* an event is “a manifestation of disease, or an occurrence that creates a potential for disease”......that may “constitute a public health emergency of international concern.”

**Exercise**: a simulation of an emergency, to which a simulated response is made based on agency emergency plans, contingency plans and the EOC plan, for the purpose of training staff and evaluating facilities, plans and personnel.

**Full-scale exercise**: the most complex and costly form of training and evaluation simulation that focuses on operational capabilities by actually deploying resources in real time, in as realistic a setting as possible, without putting public and staff safety at risk.

**Functional exercise**: a moderately complex evaluation and training simulation that focuses on policies, roles, responsibilities and management capabilities within the emergency response management system. A functional exercise will usually involve challenging time constraints and occur within the EOC or coordination centre, so that the available tools and technologies can be used and evaluated.

**Incident**: an emergency occurrence. (see ‘event’)

**Joint management**: a form of EOC management where agencies with complementary jurisdictions, or mandates in an emergency, work together to share the control and direction of the EOC, with agreement that one manager will take the lead for the emergency event, or for an agreed operational period. Also referred to as unified management or unified command.

**Jurisdiction**: an organization (an agency or level of government) with the authority and responsibility to provide particular functions and services within a defined area.
**Liaison:** a process of linking and coordinating joint planning and efforts of agencies that are external to the jurisdiction responsible for the response to an emergency. Such agencies may have either a policy or operational interest in the response and participate through a liaison officer, by either assisting in the response (have tactical resources assigned to the event) or cooperating (providing external support). Liaison Officers are considered part of the management staff and report to the EOC Director.

**Logistics:** the aspect of emergency management that deals with the procurement, distribution, maintenance, replacement and repatriation of material and human resources.

**Mobile command post:** a vehicle, employed by first response agencies, designed and equipped to support tactical level coordination and control of personnel and agencies involved in responding to an emergency at site-level.

**Modular:** an organizational characteristic where components are standardized to support flexibility in building or adjusting the organization to address changing requirements.

**Operational period:** a varying period of time linked to the time required to achieve a particular set of objectives.

**Orientation:** the simplest form of training and evaluation exercise, designed to acquaint users of an emergency plan, or emergency management facility with the features of the plan or facility, and how they should be used. An orientation uses low levels of simulation to focus on issues of coordination and assignment of responsibilities.

**Plans:** documents designed to identify, at various levels, responsibility for various emergency response activities and the intended objectives and strategies and tactics. The purpose of plans is to maximize effectiveness and minimize response time to events and to standardize the routine activities associated with response and management, so that more capacity can be available to address the unique characteristics of each emergency. Plans are specific to their intended users: a contingency plan is specific to both the unique event (contingency) and the agency mandated to deal with it; an agency emergency plan is specific to the agency and deals generally with the kind of emergencies that agency is mandated to address; an EOC plan is specific to the EOC and relates to the management and coordination processes of the EOC; and a support plan is specific to a supporting agency or jurisdiction (such as a national government) and lays out when and how they will support another jurisdiction’s emergency response.

**Planning:** the intellectual and interpersonal processes of designing, developing, testing and evolving a plan. An inclusive, comprehensive planning process usually results in the value of the product (the plan) being less important than the value of the planning process, which builds on the synergy of bringing together people and agencies with common interests to analyze and solve problems cooperatively.
**Public communication:** the discipline and process of providing the general public with information that creates awareness and knowledge so that people can adjust their personal understanding of risks and their reactions, decisions and responses to threats and crisis situations.

**Redundancy:** having secondary or backup, human and physical resources capacity in case the primary resource capacity is impaired or become unavailable for any reason.

**Risk management:** the discipline of evaluating risks (hazards, threats and vulnerabilities) and reducing them to minimize potential loss of life, assets and resources, injury and other adverse effects.

**Scalable:** capable of being enlarged or reduced in size to adjust capacity and capability by adding or deactivating modules, in order to adapt to changes in demand without the need for reconfiguration of a basic structure.

**Sector:** a division, or a collective aspect of a geographical area, an economy or a society.

**Site-level:** the actual location of the hands-on, tactical level response to an emergency. When site-level emergency responses capacities are overwhelmed, the role of a site-support EOC is to provide logistical (resources) and strategic (direction and coordination) assistance.

**Steering committee:** an oversight committee responsible for providing the sponsorship, leadership, policy and funding support to a working group assigned to develop an emergency operations centre.

**Strategic:** an unambiguous definition of strategic (pertaining to a strategy or strategies) is elusive, because the concept is always relative. What a local level of government sees as strategic from their perspective, is likely perceived as tactical from the perspective of a more senior government. The defining characteristic of ‘strategic’ is that it deals with the concepts of relatively long term and big picture in relation to the pattern or plan that integrates an organization's major goals, policies, and action sequences into a cohesive whole.

**Table-top:** a form of training or evaluation exercise where all the personnel assigned to an EOC gather informally, without the pressure of tight time constraints to examine and discuss simulated emergency situations and attempt to hypothetically respond and solve problems based on the EOC operational plan and the agencies’ emergency plans.

**Tactical:** those activities, resources and manoeuvres that are directly applied to achieve goals. Compare with ‘strategic’ above.

**Technical communications:** relates to the protocols, procedures and methods used to pass critical information among key participants during the management of an emergency.
**Unified management:** a team approach to the management of complex, multi-agency or multi-jurisdictional emergencies that allows all agencies with geographical or functional responsibilities in the response to establish a common set of objectives and strategies. A lead agency is established based on an agreement about the primary problem being addressed; and the other agencies share responsibility and participate fully in decision making.

**Virtual situation room:** a way of displaying emergency planning and management information on a restricted access web site, to enable participants in distant locations to understand the evolving situation and contribute to the response management process. This is a particularly useful and cost-effective approach to emergencies that develop and evolve over a long period of time.
Annex B  EOC Facility Evaluation Checklist

Location:
- Can survive local hazards
- Is accessible by public transportation
- Is reasonably close to partners, supporting and cooperating agencies
- Can easily be made secure

Multi-purpose Facility:
- Convertible to EOC within one hour
- Easily secured
- Safe from hazards
- Adequate electrical, water and sewage systems
- Sufficient space for all functions (see below)
- Mix of open and closed work space

Any EOC:
- Has adequate parking
- Access to all entrances, exits and windows easily secured
- Secure storage area for spare materials and valuable equipment when not in use
- Optional secure space for staging material and human resources pending field deployment
- Open work space for management, operations, logistics and planning functions. (Administration can be separate)
- Closed work space available for teleconferences, break-out groups, policy group meetings
- Controllable space for media briefings. (May be off-site, nearby)
- Communications room to accommodate equipment and message centre
- Data telephone and electrical connections at each work station, closed work space, and multiple telephone and fax lines into the communications room with each line labeled at both ends
- Plenty of wall space with numbers of large whiteboards or equivalent
- Adequate lighting, ventilation, heating and cooling capacity
- Floor plans, mapping the workstations and wiring
- Well-posted fire evacuation plans and assembly areas
- Paper and electronic copies of EOC Plan, with staff roles and standard operating procedures
- Copies of plans for evacuation to secondary EOC
- Staff rest area with food preparation and storage, cleanup and eating areas
- Segregated toilet/personal hygiene area adequate for the number of staff anticipated
- Optional segregated, quiet sleeping areas
- Water, sewage and electrical systems adequate for possible peak loads
- Service contracts for cleaning and janitorial should provide for security cleared personnel
Annex C   Checklist of Recommended Equipment and Supplies

Furnishings
☐ Workstation desks or tables
☐ Bookshelf(s)
☐ Filing cabinet(s)
☐ Ergonomic chairs
☐ Whiteboards/cork boards/chalkboards
☐ Flipchart stands and paper
☐ Conference tables
☐ Folding tables
☐ Coat rack/hangers
☐ Garbage cans/recycling boxes

Communications Equipment
☐ Telephones
☐ Computers/laptops with networking capability
☐ Digital camera/video camera
☐ Overhead projector
☐ LCD Projector/screen
☐ Photocopier
☐ Television/VCR/DVD
☐ AM/FM radios
☐ Tape recorders
☐ Cassette for tape recording
☐ Emergency power generator
☐ Extension cords
☐ Power bars
☐ Phone/computer cables

Office Equipment and Supplies
☐ Calculator(s)
☐ Pencil sharpeners
☐ In/out boxes
☐ Stamps (‘For Action’ ‘Completed’ ‘Approved’)
☐ Staplers
☐ Staple removers
☐ Scissors
☐ Scotch tape dispensers/scotch tape and masking tape
☐ Printer and cartridges
☐ Photocopier
☐ Scratch, message and post it pads
☐ Pushpins
☐ File folders
☐ Elastics
☐ Spare light bulbs
☐ Flashlights with spare batteries
☐ Dry erase and felt tip markers
- Envelopes of various sizes
- Waste baskets/Recyclable containers
- Poster board for signs
- String
- Photocopy/printer paper
- Identifications tags/name plates
- Message forms and other EOC forms
- Function log sheets
- Forms for each function
- Batteries for all equipment
- Film
- Clocks, all synchronized to the computer clock

**Reference Materials**
- Checklists (standard operating procedures/guidelines)
- EOC plan
- Local, area, and regional maps; aerial photos
- Updated EOC floor plan
- Updated contact/supplier/media lists
- Current telephone books
- Forms for recording and telecommunication information
- Emergency plans (and spare copies)
- Contingency plans (and spare copies)
- Resource inventories
- Current phone/email lists

**Food Service areas**
- Hot beverage containers (tea, coffee, soup) cups and bowls
- Coffee maker filters
- Food preparation/serving equipment
- Eating utensils/dinner plates
- Food supplies and storage cabinets
- Stove
- Refrigerator/freezer
- Plastic wrap
- Dishwashing supplies
- Pitchers, glasses or paper cups
- Garbage bags
- Water

**Sanitary and Lodging**
- Male and female toiletry supplies
- Paper towels/toilet paper/dispensers
- First Aid Kit sized for the number of people expected
- Waterless hand sanitizer
- Sheets, blankets, pillows, pillowcases and towels
- Cots
Annex D  Checklist of Common Responsibilities

There are certain responsibilities or instructions that are common for all personnel assigned to work in any function in an EOC.

- Understand your assignment from your organization/agency. At a minimum, this should include:
  - A reporting location and time and to whom
  - Likely length of assignment
  - Brief description of assignment, particularly what your function will be
  - Route information to the assignment
  - A designated communications link if necessary
- Take any specialized supplies or equipment required for your job. Be sure you have adequate pre-planned personal supplies (medication etc) to last you for the expected stay.
- Upon arrival, identify yourself to Security and follow the check-in procedures
- Deposit your ego and any personal issues at the door. An effective EOC runs on teamwork, not individual star performances
- Obtain a briefing from your immediate EOC supervisor. Be sure you understand your assignment.
- Acquire necessary work materials; locate and set up your work area.
- Organize and brief any subordinates assigned to you, and be briefed by them if they have history with the event that you do not
- Keep your supervisor briefed on the status of your activities
- Attend all section briefings
- Review Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the EOC
- Complete the required forms and reports. Submit them to your supervisor or to the Documentation Unit (in Planning) before you leave
- If you are required to use radio and telephone communications, adhere to the following protocols unless otherwise instructed.
  - Refer to personnel by functional title, not by name. (personnel in positions change, but the function is constant)
  - Refer to the facility (the EOC) by event name and location (there may be more than one facility)
  - During radio communications use only plain language, with no radio codes
  - Use proper radio procedures including the phonetic alphabet
- Remember that all communications and information in the EOC is considered privileged and subject to security provisions, until it is released to the public.
- Comply with all security requirements
- Brief your relief at the end of your shift, each operational period and whenever necessary
- Demobilize according to plan
Annex E    Checklists of EOC Functions

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Safety/Risk Management Officer....................41
Management Function

This is a generic checklist of tasks for the Management Function. While it reflects the minimum requirements for the function, not all tasks will necessarily apply to all emergency events and large events will have considerably more requirements. Some of the tasks are one-time actions; others are ongoing or repetitive for the duration of the emergency.

Under the direction of a policy level authority:

- Ensure welfare and safety of responding and management personnel. If the situation continuing risks to staff, a Safety Officer/Risk Manager should be appointed.
- Supervise EOC staff
- Understand the nature and scope of the event by obtaining initial briefing from agency administrator and current EOC Director if providing relief
- Determine status of disaster declaration and delegation of authority
- Assess incident situation:
  - Review current situation status and management objectives.
  - Ensure that all relevant agencies impacted by the incident have been notified.
- Determine need for, establish, and/or participate in Unified Management.
- Activate appropriate EOC functions
- Confirm work assignments.
- Determine information needs and inform staff of requirements.
- Establish parameters for resource requests and releases:
  - Review requests for critical resources.
    - Confirm who has ordering authority within the organization.
    - Confirm those orders that require Command authorization.
- Confirm dispatch and arrival times of activated resources.
- Determine frequency and locations of Planning Meetings.
- Brief staff:
  - Identify incident objectives and any policy directives for the management of the incident.
  - Provide a summary of current organization.
  - Provide a review of current incident activities.
- Establish level of planning to be accomplished and instruct Chief of Planning section:
  - Written Action Plan required?
  - Contingency planning required?
  - Formal Planning Meeting(s) arranged?
- Review and authorize implementation of and changes to Action Plan strategic goals
- Ensure staff efforts are coordinated and progress is reviewed
- Ensure response activities are consistent with agency policy
- Authorize release of information to the media:
  - If operating within a Unified Management, ensure all other Managers approve release.
- Keep policy group and agency administrator briefed on progress and problems
- Ensure that liaison officers are briefed and maintaining contact with home agencies
**Operations Function**

This is a generic checklist of tasks for the Operations Function. While it reflects the minimum requirements for the function, not all tasks will necessarily apply to all emergency events and large events will have considerably more requirements. Some of the tasks are one-time actions; others are ongoing or repetitive for the duration of the emergency.

**Under the direction of the EOC Director:**

- Obtain briefing from EOC Director
- Determine Action Plan objectives and recommended strategies
- Determine status of current tactical assignments
- Identify current organization, location of resources, and assignments
- Determine resource ordering process.
- Organize Operations section to ensure operational efficiency, personnel safety and appropriate span of control
- Establish operational periods.
- Attend Operations briefing. Assign Operations personnel to implement Action plan
- Brief Operations staff on resource ordering process, safety requirements and tactical assignments
- Develop and manage tactical operations to meet incident objectives.
- Continually assess safety and keep Safety Officer or risk manager involved in tactical decision-making.
- Evaluate and enforce use of appropriate (bio-)safety measures
- Provide situation updates to Planning Section
  - Location, status, and assignment of resources
  - Effectiveness of tactics
- Desired contingency plans
- Prepare Operations portion of written Action Plan with the Planning section
- Initiate tactical assignments
- Identify resources and request needed to accomplish assignments
- Notify Planning section of changes in resource status and deployment
- Ensure resource ordering and logistical support needs are passed to Logistics
- Manage relationships between the Operations section and other functions
- Ensure required Operations Section documentation is maintained and passed to Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration Sections, as appropriate
- Notify Liaison Officer(s) of issues concerning cooperating or assisting agency resources.
- Keep Incident Commander briefed on status of operational efforts
- Coordinate media field visits with the Public Information Officer.
- Attend Planning Meetings
**Planning Function**

This is a generic checklist of tasks for the Planning Function. While it reflects the minimum requirements for the function, not all tasks will necessarily apply to all emergency events and large events will have considerably more requirements. Some of the tasks are one-time actions; others are ongoing or repetitive for the duration of the emergency.

**Under the direction of the EOC Director:**

- Obtain briefing from EOC Director:
  - current resource status
  - current incident objectives and strategy.
  - current situation status/intelligence
  - whether EOC Director requires a written Action Plan
  - times and locations of Planning Meetings.
  - desired contingency plans.
- Establish and maintain resource tracking system.
- Advise response and management staff of any significant changes in event status.
- Compile and display event status summary information
- Prepare incident summaries/situation reports each operational period, or as required.
- Obtain/develop maps of the event area.
- Establish and operate information/intelligence/data gathering network
- Prepare contingency plans and identify resources required to implement them
- Review current and projected resource status.
- Develop alternative strategies
- Document action plan alternatives for EOC Director and Operations.
- Conduct Planning Meetings
- Supervise preparation and distribution to all functions of the written Action Plan
- Prepare detailed contingency plan information/recommendations
- Verify that resource needs for Action Plan are coordinated with Logistics and Administration sections
- Instruct Planning section staff in distribution of event information.
- Provide predictions on event potential
- Identify need for specialized resources with Operations and facilitate resource requests with Logistics
- Manage and scale Planning section resources and staff to ensure coverage for required functionality
- Prepare demobilization plan, if required
- Oversee post-event debriefing and prepare lessons learned report for EOC Director
- Ensure all Planning section activities are documented
- Ensure that all EOC event documentation is captured.
- Ensure preparation of final event dossier for approval of EOC Director and route to Agency administrators for archiving.
Logistics Function

This is a generic checklist of tasks for the Logistics Function. While it reflects the minimum requirements for the function, not all tasks will necessarily apply to all emergency events and large events will have considerably more requirements. Some of the tasks are one-time actions; others are ongoing or repetitive for the duration of the emergency.

Under the direction of the EOC Director:

- Obtain briefing from EOC Director:
  - situation and resource status for number of personnel assigned to event
  - current organization.
  - which EOC facilities have been/should be activated
  - confirm resource ordering process and authorities
- Ensure EOC and other event facilities are appropriately activated
- Review technical Communications requirements and capacities
- Organize, staff and brief logistics section as required
  - provide summary of emergency situation.
  - provide summary of the kind and extent of Logistics support the Section may be asked to provide.
- Notify Planning section of names and assignments of Logistics staff
- Research the availability of additional resources.
- Attend Planning Meetings:
  - participate in preparation of Incident Action Plan (IAP):
  - provide input on resource availability, support needs, identified shortages, and response time-lines for key resources.
  - ensure Medical Plan for care of staff is prepared.
  - ensure the technical Communications and information technology support requirements can be met.
  - assist in preparing plans for the movement personnel and materials
- oversee the security requirements of the EOC
- acquire material and human resources as identified by the Operations and Planning sections
- arrange transportation of material and human resources to staging area and/or point of use
- monitor use of material resources and remove from service as necessary
- ensure that the EOC meets requirements for staff safety and comfort and functionality
  (See EOC checklist)
- Review Action Plan and estimate needs for next operational period; order relief personnel if necessary
- Coordinate with Operations and Planning to identify future operational needs (both current and contingency), in order to anticipate logistical requirements.
- Coordinate with Administration regarding purchased and hired/leased resources
- Ensure all Logistics functions are documented
- Ensure that all shared, borrowed or leased resources are properly repatriated
Administration Function

This is a generic checklist of tasks for the Administration Function. While it reflects the minimum requirements for the function, not all tasks will necessarily apply to all emergency events and large events will have considerably more requirements. Some of the tasks are one-time actions; others are ongoing or repetitive for the duration of the emergency.

Under the direction of the EOC Director:

☐ Obtain briefing from Incident Commander:
- incident objectives.
- numbers of personnel, types of equipment and materials,
- supporting agencies and names of agency contacts
- anticipated duration/complexity of incident.
- possibility of sharing operational costs with another jurisdiction.

☐ Obtain briefing from Agency administrator:
- determine level of fiscal process required.
- identify applicable financial guidelines and policies, constraints and limitations.
- determine level of delegated financial authority to EOC Director, particularly for procurement.
- procedure for establishing charge codes.
- confirm/establish procurement guidelines.
- agency/local guidelines, processes

☐ Identify financial requirements for planned and expected operations.

☐ Determine potential for rental or contract services.

☐ Determine process for maintaining time records

☐ Determine agreements are in place for land use, facilities, equipment, and utilities

☐ Assess potential for legal claims arising out of incident activities.

☐ obtain copies of all event-related agreements, activated or not.

☐ Attend Planning Meetings:
- obtain information on status of incident; planned operations; changes in objectives
- provide financial and cost-analysis input.
- provide financial summary on labor, materials, and services
- prepare forecasts on costs to complete operations
- provide cost benefit analysis, as requested.
- determine the need for temporary employees.

☐ Collect and process continuing information:
- equipment time
- personnel time
- accident/injury reports
- potential and existing claims for compensation

☐ ensure that staff are properly paid

☐ prepare financial statements for auditors
**Liaison Officer Function**

This is a generic checklist of tasks for the Liaison Officer Function. While it reflects the minimum requirements for the function, not all tasks will necessarily apply to all emergency events and large events will have considerably more requirements. Some of the tasks are one-time actions; others are ongoing or repetitive for the duration of the emergency. As a liaison officer you are assigned to the EOC because your Agency is either assisting (have tactical equipment and/or personnel assigned to the host organization) or cooperating (operating in a support mode external to the host agency) in the emergency response.

**Under the direction of your agency administrator and reporting to the EOC Director:**

- Obtain briefing from EOC Director:
  - overview of event organization
  - companies/agencies/non-governmental organizations already involved in the event, and their roles (cooperating or assisting)
  - event status and action plan
- Obtain other cooperating and assisting agency information, including:
  - contact person(s), phone numbers and radio frequencies.
  - cooperation agreements.
  - type, number and condition of material resources provided
  - number and type of personnel.
- contact your agency concerning resources, capabilities, constraints and restrictions on use
  - provide this information at planning meetings.
- Participate in planning meetings
- Establish workspace for Liaison function and notify your agency of location
- contact and brief assisting/cooperating agency representatives and mutual aid cooperators.
- Work with Public Information Officer and EOC Director to coordinate media releases associated with inter-agency cooperation issues.
- Monitor EOC operations to identify potential inter-organizational problems, and advise the EOC Director as these arise.
- bring issues pertaining to logistical problems, communications, and strategic and tactical direction to the attention of the EOC Director.
- Document all your agency’s activity and provide to Planning section on your departure
Public Information Officer Function

This is a generic checklist of tasks for the Public Information Officer Function. While it reflects the minimum requirements for the function, not all tasks will necessarily apply to all emergency events and large events will have considerably more requirements. Some of the tasks are one-time actions; others are ongoing or repetitive for the duration of the emergency.

Under the direction of the EOC Director:

- Obtain briefing from EOC Director
- current status of Incident
- current organization
- point of contact for media (site, EOC, Agency or other)
- Determine current media presence and establish contact with media. (local, national as appropriate.)
- Develop and nurture a positive, forthcoming relationship with the media
- Review pre-existing agreements for Joint Information Centers if unified management
- Determine and comply with constraints on public information processes
- Confirm process for release of information concerning event-related injuries or deaths.
- Assess need for special alerts and warnings, (the hearing impaired, non-English speaking and communities or industries especially at risk for a specific hazard)
- Prepare initial information summary as soon as possible after activation.
- Arrange for necessary work space, materials, telephones, and staff.
- Establish Information Center for media and public away from EOC
- Establish schedule for news briefings
- Establish "rumor control" lines to answer questions from the public
- Obtain current incident status reports from Planning Section
- Provide standard statement which can be given to general requests for information
- Obtain approval for information release from EOC Director
- confirm details to ensure no conflicting information is released
- Coordinate information releases with information staff from other impacted agencies and jurisdictions
- Release news to media, and post the information in EOC and other operational sites
- Respond to special requests for information
- Record all interviews and copy all news releases
- Contact media to correct erroneous or misleading information
- Update off-site agency personnel on a regular basis using electronic mail
- Attend Planning Meetings
- Document all activity and provide all news releases, bulletins, and summaries to Planning section to be included in the final event dossier.
**Safety Officer/Risk Management Function**

This is a generic checklist of tasks for the Safety Officer/Risk Management Function. While it reflects the minimum requirements for the function, not all tasks will necessarily apply to all emergency events and large events will have considerably more requirements. EOC Risk Management Officers will be more concerned with threats to the response infrastructure and response activities that may expose the agencies to claims. Some of the tasks are one-time actions; others are ongoing or repetitive for the duration of the emergency.

**Under the direction of the EOC Director:**

- Obtain briefing from the EOC Director and/or from any initial on-scene Safety Officers
- Identify hazardous situations associated with the event and the response
- Ensure adequate levels of protective equipment are available and being used properly
- Monitor the risk environment for threats to personnel, resources, and response infrastructure and recommend preventative or protective actions
- Staff and organize the Safety or Risk Management function, as required
- In responses involving more than one specialized discipline, consider an Assistant Safety Officer from each discipline.
- Multiple high-risk operations may require an Assistant Safety Officer at each site.
- Request additional staff through EOC Director.
- Review planned tactics in Action Plan to identify potentially unsafe procedures.
- Identify corrective/alternative actions for unsafe procedures and work with Operations section and EOC Director to ensure implementation.
- Ensure adequate sanitation and safety in food preparation, service and storage
- Debrief any Assistant Safety Officers prior to Planning Meetings
- Attend Planning meetings
- Prepare Risk and Safety Analysis for inclusion in the Action Plan
- Investigate and report on accidents involving potential or actual injuries or death
- Provide copies of accident reports to Management and the Administrative section
NOTES