

Chapter 1

Preliminary Considerations

What an EOP Is

General

A jurisdiction's emergency operations plan is a document that:

- Assigns responsibility to organizations and individuals for carrying out specific actions at projected times and places in an emergency that exceeds the capability or routine responsibility of any one agency, e.g., the fire department.
- Sets forth lines of authority and organizational relationships, and shows how all actions will be coordinated.
- Describes how people and property will be protected in emergencies and disasters.
- Identifies personnel, equipment, facilities, supplies, and other resources available--within the jurisdiction or by agreement with other jurisdictions--for use during response and recovery operations.
- Identifies steps to address mitigation concerns during response and recovery activities.

As a public document, an EOP also cites its legal basis, states its objectives, and acknowledges assumptions.

Local EOPs

In our country's system of emergency management, local government must act first to attend to the public's emergency needs. Depending on the nature and size of the emergency, State and Federal assistance may be provided to the local jurisdiction. The local EOP focuses on the measures that are essential for protecting the public. These include warning, emergency public information, evacuation, and shelter.

State EOPs

States play three roles: They assist local jurisdictions whose capabilities are overwhelmed by an emergency; they themselves respond first to certain emergencies; and they work with the Federal Government when Federal assistance is necessary. The State EOP is the framework within which

local EOPs are created and through which the Federal Government becomes involved. As such, the State EOP ensures that all levels of government are able to mobilize as a unified emergency organization to safeguard the well-being of State citizens. The State EOP is of critical importance.

Why Your Jurisdiction Should Have an EOP

Government's Responsibility for Emergency Management

When disasters threaten or strike a jurisdiction, people expect elected leaders to take immediate action to deal with the problem. The government is expected to marshal its resources, channel the efforts of voluntary agencies and private enterprise in the community, and solicit assistance from outside of the jurisdiction if necessary.

In all States and most localities, that popular expectation is given force by statute or ordinance. Congress also recognizes State and local emergency management responsibility in the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended:

- "It is the intent of Congress, by this Act, to provide an orderly and continuing means of assistance by the Federal Government to State and local governments in carrying out *their* responsibilities to alleviate the suffering and damage which result from [...] disasters (Sec. 101(b), emphasis added).
- "The purpose of this title is [...] to vest responsibility for emergency preparedness jointly in the Federal Government and the several States and their political subdivisions" (Sec. 601).

The elected leadership in each jurisdiction is legally responsible for ensuring that necessary and appropriate actions are taken to protect people and property from the consequences of emergencies and disasters.

Comprehensive Emergency Management

Governments can discharge their emergency management responsibilities by taking four interrelated actions: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. A systematic approach is to treat each action as one phase of a comprehensive process, with each phase building on the accomplishments of the preceding one. The overall goal is to minimize the impact caused by an emergency in the jurisdiction.

Mitigation

Mitigation actions involve lasting, often permanent, reduction of exposure to, probability of, or potential loss from hazard events. They tend to focus on where and how to build. Examples include: zoning and building code requirements for rebuilding in high-hazard areas; floodplain buyouts; and analyses of floodplain and other hazard-related data to determine where it is safe to build in normal times, to open shelters in emergencies, or to locate temporary housing in the aftermath of a disaster. Mitigation also can involve educating businesses and the public on simple measures they can take to reduce loss and injury, like fastening bookshelves, water heaters, and file cabinets to walls to keep them from falling during earthquakes.

Cost-effective mitigation measures are the key to reducing disaster losses in the long term. In hazard-prone areas, mitigation can break the cycle of having to rebuild and rebuild again with every recurrence of floods, hurricanes, or earthquakes. Where there is a willingness to mitigate, opportunities can be found. Ongoing efforts might include: educating the private sector about what it can do to mitigate at home and at work; reaching out to planning, zoning, and development agencies to ensure that hazard conditions are considered in comprehensive plans, construction permits, building codes, design approvals, etc.; and creating inventories of existing structures and their vulnerabilities, to aid mitigation planning. There is also a need for planning to take advantage of mitigation opportunities in the aftermath of an emergency or disaster, when hazard awareness is high, funds may become available (with associated requirements for mitigation), and disruption of the *status quo* makes it possible to rethink design and location of some facilities and infrastructure. Attention to mitigation opportunities can make safer communities for us all.

Preparedness

While mitigation can make communities safer, it does not eliminate risk and vulnerability for all hazards. Therefore, jurisdictions must be ready to face emergency threats that have not been mitigated away. Since emergencies often evolve rapidly and become too complex for effective improvisation, a government can successfully discharge its emergency management responsibilities only by taking certain actions beforehand. This is preparedness.

Preparedness involves establishing authorities and responsibilities for emergency actions and garnering the resources to support them: a jurisdiction must assign or recruit staff for emergency management duties and designate or procure facilities, equipment, and other resources for carrying out assigned duties. This investment in emergency management requires upkeep: the staff must receive training and the facilities and

equipment must be maintained in working order. To ensure that the jurisdiction's investment in emergency management personnel and resources can be relied upon when needed, there must be a program of tests, drills, and exercises. Consideration also must be given to reducing or eliminating the vulnerability of the jurisdiction's emergency response organizations and resources to the hazards that threaten the jurisdiction.

Accordingly, preparedness measures should not be improvised or handled on an *ad hoc* basis. A key element of preparedness is the development of plans that link the many aspects of a jurisdiction's commitment to emergency management.

Response

The onset of an emergency creates a need for time-sensitive actions to save lives and property, as well as for action to begin stabilizing the situation so that the jurisdiction can regroup. Such response actions include notifying emergency management personnel of the crisis, warning and evacuating or sheltering the population if possible, keeping the population informed, rescuing individuals and providing medical treatment, maintaining the rule of law, assessing damage, addressing mitigation issues that arise from response activities, and even requesting help from outside the jurisdiction.

Recovery

Recovery is the effort to restore infrastructure and the social and economic life of a community to normal, but it should incorporate mitigation as a goal. For the short term, recovery may mean bringing necessary lifeline systems (e.g., power, communication, water and sewage, and transportation) up to an acceptable standard while providing for basic human needs (e.g., food, clothing, and shelter) and ensuring that the societal needs of individuals and the community are met (e.g., maintain the rule of law, provide crisis counseling, demonstrate that people do care and that help is becoming available). Once some stability is achieved, the jurisdiction can begin recovery efforts for the long term, restoring economic activity and rebuilding community facilities and family housing with attention to long-term mitigation needs.

Criticality of All-Hazard EOPs

The centerpiece of comprehensive emergency management is the EOP. First, the EOP defines the scope of *preparedness* activity necessary to make the EOP more than a mere paper plan. Training and exercises, in particular, depend on an EOP. Training helps emergency response personnel to become familiar with their responsibilities and to acquire the skills necessary to perform assigned tasks. Exercising provides a means to validate plans, checklists, and response procedures and to evaluate the skills of response personnel.

Second, the EOP facilitates *response* and *short-term recovery* (which set the stage for successful *long-term recovery*). Response actions are time-sensitive, with little allowance for delay or "mid-course corrections," and some post-disaster mitigation issues such as rebuilding and placement of temporary housing facilities also must be addressed quickly. Advance planning makes this easier.

Finally, an EOP that is flexible enough for use in all emergencies--including unforeseen events--provides a community with an emergency management "bottom line." From there, a community can proceed confidently with long-term *mitigation* efforts directed at specific hazards. Or, it can devote more resources to risk-based *preparedness* measures (e.g., specialized training, equipment, and planning). Whatever the initiative, an all-hazard EOP helps the community start from a position of relative security.

What an EOP Is Not

Those who draft an EOP must understand what it is not. While this chapter has called a jurisdiction's EOP--its response plan--the "centerpiece" of its comprehensive emergency management effort, that does not mean that the EOP details all aspects of that effort.

Other Types of Plans

Emergency management involves several kinds of plans, just as it involves several kinds of actions.

Administrative Plans

Administrative plans describe policies and procedures basic to the support of a governmental endeavor: typically they deal less with external work products than with internal processes. Examples include plans for financial management, personnel management, records review, and labor relations activities. Such plans are not the direct concern of an EOP. However, if it is assumed that provisions of an administrative plan apply in emergency situations, then the administrative plan may be referenced in the EOP. Likewise, if exceptions to normal administrative plans are permitted in an emergency, that fact should be noted in the relevant part of the EOP.

Mitigation Plans

A jurisdiction may outline its strategy for mitigating the hazards it faces; in fact, a mitigation plan is required of States that seek funds for post-event mitigation after Presidential declarations under the Stafford Act. Existing plans for mitigating hazards are relevant to an EOP, particularly in short-term recovery decision-making, which can affect prospects for effective

implementation of a mitigation strategy aimed at reducing the long-term risk to human life and property in the jurisdiction.

*Preparedness
Plans*

Preparedness planning covers three objectives: maintaining existing emergency management capability in readiness; preventing emergency management capabilities from themselves falling victim to emergencies; and, if possible, augmenting the jurisdiction's emergency management capability.

Such plans would include: the process and schedule for identifying and meeting training needs (based on expectations created by the EOP); the process and schedule for developing, conducting, and evaluating exercises, and correcting identified deficiencies; and plans to procure or build facilities and equipment that can withstand the effects of hazards facing the jurisdiction. Results of these efforts should be incorporated in the EOP as assumptions: that certain equipment and facilities are available, that people are trained and exercised, etc.

Operational checks of equipment and communications systems, however, be a part of each tasked organization's standard operating procedures (SOP) for the period between notification and impact of an emergency. Measures to safeguard emergency management personnel, as well as vital records and existing equipment, should be part of an EOP.

*Recovery
Plans*

Typically, an EOP does not spell out recovery actions beyond rapid damage assessment and the actions necessary to satisfy the immediate life support needs of disaster victims; the EOP should provide for a transition to a recovery plan, if any exists, and for a stand-down of response forces. However, some short-term recovery actions are natural extensions of response and are covered by the EOP. For example, meeting human needs would require maintaining logistical support to mass care actions initiated in the response phase, with the addition of crisis counseling; it would also involve restoration of infrastructure "lifelines," and perhaps debris removal to facilitate response. At the State's discretion, its disaster assistance plans for distribution of Federal and State relief funds may be annexed to the EOP. Disaster assistance plans would identify how eligible aid recipients will be identified, contacted, matched to aid, certified, and issued checks.

Beyond that lies long-term recovery, which is not strictly time-sensitive and can sometimes be more *ad hoc*. Pre-disaster planning for long-term mitigation and recovery would involve identifying strategic priorities for

restoration, improvement, and growth; here emergency management planning starts to intersect the community development planning of other agencies. FEMA recommends and supports the development of State and local hazard mitigation plans to facilitate and expedite obtaining Federal mitigation funds during the post-disaster recovery period.

Plans Versus Procedures

Although the distinction between plans and procedures is fluid, writers of an EOP should use it to keep the EOP free of unnecessary detail. The basic criterion is: What does the entire audience of this part of the EOP need to know, or have set out as a matter of public record? Information and "how-to" instructions that need be known only by an individual or group can be left to SOPs; these may be annexed to the EOP or referenced as deemed appropriate.

For many responsibilities in the EOP, it will be enough to assign the responsibility to an individual or organization and specify the assignee's accountability: to whom does he or she report, or with whom does he or she "coordinate"? For example, an EOP that assigns responsibility for putting out fires to the fire department would not detail what should be done at the scene or what fire equipment is most appropriate: The EOP would defer to the fire department's SOPs for that. The EOP would describe the relationship between the Incident Commander (IC) and the central organization that directs the total jurisdictional response to the emergency, of which the fire in question might be only a part. Likewise, the EOP would not detail how to set up facilities for emergency operations, leaving that for an SOP to be used by the responsible organization(s).

The emergency manager should work with the senior representatives of tasked organizations to ensure that SOPs needed to implement the EOP do in fact exist and do not conflict with the EOP or one another.

This Guide does not establish requirements for the preparation of SOPs. However, SOPs should be developed by each organization tasked in the EOP. SOPs provide the means to translate organizational tasking into specific action-oriented checklists that are very useful during emergency operations. They tell how each tasked organization or agency will accomplish its assigned tasks. Normally, SOPs include checklists, call-down rosters, resource listings, maps, charts, etc. and give **step-by-step procedures** for notifying staff, obtaining and using equipment, supplies, vehicles, obtaining mutual aid, reporting information to organizational work centers and the emergency operating center (EOC), communicating

with staff members that are operating from more than one location, etc. Development of certain procedures is required in REP, CSEPP, and Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) planning.