

Chapter 3

Emergency Operations Plan Format

Introduction

A planning team's chief concern will be to include all essential information and instructions in the EOP. Poor organization of that information can limit the EOP's effectiveness.

FEMA does not mandate a particular format for EOPs. In the final analysis, an EOP's format is "good" if the EOP's users understand it, are comfortable with it, and can use it to extract the information they need. When that test is not met--in training, exercises, actual response, plan review and coordination meetings, and the like--some change of format may be necessary.

In designing a format for an all-hazard EOP and in reviewing the draft, the planning team should consider the following:

- *Organization.* Do the EOP subdivisions help users find what they need, or must users sift through information that is irrelevant? Can single subdivisions be revised without forcing a substantial rewrite of the entire EOP?
- *Progression.* In any one section of the EOP, does each element seem to follow from the previous one, or are some items strikingly out of place? Can the reader grasp the rationale for the sequence and scan for the information he or she needs?
- *Consistency.* Does each section of the EOP use the same logical progression of elements, or must the reader reorient himself or herself in each section?
- *Adaptability.* Is information in the EOP organized so that the EOP may be used in unanticipated situations?
- *Compatibility.* Does the EOP format promote or hinder coordination with other jurisdictions, including State and/or Federal Government? Are problems in this area more easily solved by

reformatting the EOP or by making a chart of the coordination relationships (i.e., a "crosswalk")?

This chapter outlines a format based on FEMA's experience with these concerns. Again, **the format is not mandated.**

A Functional Approach to the Overall Structure of the EOP

Concept

While the causes of emergencies vary greatly, the potential effects of emergencies do not. This means that jurisdictions can plan to deal with effects common to several hazards, rather than develop separate plans for each hazard. For example, earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes all can force people from their homes. The jurisdiction can develop a plan and an organization around the task, or *function*, of finding shelter and food for the displaced--with minor adjustments for the probable rapidity, duration, location, and intensity of different hazards if desired. It can do the same for other common tasks (see Chapters 5 and 6 for a discussion of selected functions and of hazard-specific adjustments that can be made). In fact, a critical aspect of planning for the response to emergency situations is to identify all of these common tasks, or *functions*, that must be performed, assign responsibility for accomplishing each function, and ensure that tasked organizations have prepared SOPs that detail how they will carry out critical tasks associated with the larger function.

However, the plans for performing each function should not be created in isolation. Since the jurisdiction's goal is a coordinated response, task-based plans should follow from a Basic Plan that outlines the jurisdiction's overall emergency organization and its policies (see Chapter 4).

Components

EOPs developed using the functional approach consist of a Basic Plan, functional annexes, and hazard-specific appendices. These are supplemented by the SOPs and checklists necessary for implementation of the EOP.

The Basic Plan

The Basic Plan is an overview of the jurisdiction's emergency response organization and policies. It cites the legal authority for emergency operations, summarizes the situations addressed by the EOP, explains the general concept of operations, and assigns responsibilities for emergency planning and operations.

<i>Functional Annexes</i>	Functional annexes are plans organized around the performance of a broad task. Each annex focuses on one of the critical emergency functions that the jurisdiction will perform in response to an emergency. The number and type of functional annexes included in the EOP may vary from one jurisdiction to another, depending on needs, capabilities, and organization. Since functional annexes are oriented toward operations, their primary audience consists of those who perform the tasks. They do not repeat general information contained in the Basic Plan.
<i>Hazard-Specific Appendices</i>	Hazard-specific appendices provide additional detailed information applicable to the performance of a particular function in the face of a particular hazard. They are prepared when hazard characteristics and regulatory requirements warrant and are attached to the relevant functional annex(es).
<i>SOPs and Checklists</i>	SOPs and checklists provide the detailed instructions that an organization or an individual needs to fulfill responsibilities and perform tasks assigned in the EOP. They may be attached to the EOP or referenced as deemed appropriate.
Options	<p>Creating a different plan for each hazard is an option, but not one that FEMA recommends. The functional approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Avoids duplication of the planning effort for every hazard and for every task, by dividing the EOP into four levels of specificity (Basic Plan, functional annexes, hazard-specific appendices, and SOPs).➤ Serves in all hazard situations, even unanticipated ones, by organizing the EOP around performance of "generic" functions.➤ Permits <i>emphasis</i> on hazards that pose the greatest risk to a jurisdiction, through the use of hazard-specific appendices.

A Task-Based Approach to Each Section of the EOP

Concept	A standard format for the Basic Plan, functional annexes, and hazard-specific appendices will make the EOP easier to use. The parts of an EOP can be structured around the problem to be solved, the objective to be attained, or the task to be performed. The following format is based on an easily understood, common-sense approach: definition of
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objective, characterization of the situation, general plan of action, delegation of responsibilities, and information on resources and administrative support necessary for accomplishing the tasks.

Components

FEMA recommends a format consisting of: Purpose, Situation and Assumptions, Concept of Operations, Assignment of Responsibilities, Administration and Logistics, Plan Development and Maintenance, and Authorities and References. Chapter 4 describes these components in more detail.

Options

This is a common, proven plan format that is easily understood. Possible modifications include:

- Listing all agencies involved in an annex immediately after the purpose statement, to permit even faster scanning of who does what.
- Setting forth "policies" in a section separate from those on situation and assumptions or concept of operations.

Consistent application of this or a similar format throughout the EOP will help the reader scan the document quickly for necessary information.