

**MODULE C5  
CONCEPTS & PROCEDURES OF SEMS AT THE LOCAL EOC**

**I. MODULE DESCRIPTION:**

The goal of Module C5 is to provide the student with a basic understanding of the concepts and procedures for the local government EOC. This Module covers activation criteria; purpose, scope and basic responsibilities; need for coordination and communications, and the common tasks of the five SEMS functions associated with the local government EOC. At the completion of the Module, the student should be able to achieve the minimum performance objectives listed, through knowledge, skills or abilities relating to the following topic areas:

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1. ACTIVATION CRITERIA & REQUIREMENT TO USE SEMS
2. GENERAL PURPOSE, SCOPE & BASIC RESPONSIBILITIES
3. REQUIREMENT FOR COMMUNICATION & COORDINATION
4. REQUIREMENT FOR MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION

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5. STANDARDS AND MODELS FOR STAFFING, ORGANIZATIONS, LAYOUTS AND EOC SUPPORT ITEMS
6. RELATIONSHIP OF DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS CENTERS AND THE EOC
7. NEED FOR SPECIFIC SOP AND POSITION CHECKLISTS

## II. Module Contents

### A. SEMS Requirements for Local Governments

Local governments must comply with Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) regulations in order to be eligible for state funding of response-related personnel costs. SEMS regulations establish five basic requirements for local governments. Local governments are required to:

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- 1) Use SEMS when
  - a) a local emergency is declared or proclaimed, or
  - b) the local government EOC is activated.
- 2) establish coordination and communications with Incident Commanders either
  - a) through departmental operations centers to the EOC, when activated, or
  - b) directly to the EOC, when activated
- 3) use existing mutual aid systems for coordinating fire and law enforcement resources.

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- 4) establish coordination and communications between the local government EOC when activated, and any state or local emergency response agency having jurisdiction at an incident within the local government's boundaries.
- 5) use multi-agency or inter-agency coordination to facilitate decisions for overall local government level emergency response activities.

Coordination with the field response level is discussed in module C9. The other requirements are discussed further below.

**B. Activation**

Activation of the local government level means that at least one local government official implements SEMS as appropriate to the scope of the emergency and the local government's role in response to the emergency. The local government level is activated when field response agencies need support. The local official(s) implementing SEMS may function from the EOC or from other locations depending on the situation.

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SEMS regulations do not include criteria for when a local government EOC should be activated. Each local government should establish criteria for activating its EOC. Activated EOCs may be partially or fully staffed to meet the demands of the situation. It is recommended that local government procedures provide for three EOC staffing levels that can be applied to various situations as discussed in Module C3. Activation criteria should include specific hazards that may affect the local government. *An example of activation criteria and staffing levels for a local government EOC is shown in student reference manual.(Exhibit 1)*

HAVE STUDENTS DISCUSS APPLICABILITY OF EXAMPLE TO THEIR SITUATION.

Exhibit 1  
**Example Local Government EOC Activation Guide**

| Event/Situation <sup>1</sup>   | Activation Level | Minimum Staffing <sup>2</sup>  |
|--|------------------|--|
| Severe Weather Advisory<br>Small incidents involving 2 or more departments<br>Earthquake Advisory<br>Flood Watch   | One              | EOC Director<br>Planning Section Coordinator   |
| Moderate Earthquake<br>Wildfire affecting developed area<br>Major wind or rain storm<br>Two or more large incidents involving 2 or more departments<br>Imminent Earthquake Alert<br>Major scheduled event (such as World Cup, Papal visit, Olympics) | Two              | EOC Director<br>All Section Coordinators<br>Branches and Units as appropriate to situation<br>Liaison Representatives as appropriate |
| Major city or regional emergency. Multiple departments with heavy resource involvement<br>Major earthquake   | Three            | All EOC Positions  |

<sup>1</sup> Local governments and the operational area should work together to develop consistent activation criteria and levels for hazards that are common within the operational area.

<sup>2</sup> Minimum staffing may vary with the size of the local government.

SEMS regulations require that SEMS be used when the local government EOC is activated or when a local emergency is declared or proclaimed. The EOC is usually activated when a local emergency is declared or proclaimed. However, there may be situations such as an agricultural emergency or drought emergency that necessitates a local emergency declaration or proclamation, but does not require EOC activation.

C5-6

The requirement to use SEMS includes:

- fulfilling the management and coordination role of local government, and
- providing for the five essential SEMS functions of management, operations, planning/intelligence, logistics and finance/administration.

Note that the operational area should be notified when a local government EOC is activated or a local emergency is declared or proclaimed. Operational area EOC activation criteria include criteria based on local government EOC activations and emergency declarations or proclamations. Coordination with the operational area is discussed in Module C9.

### **C. Purpose and Scope of the Local Government Emergency Operations Center**

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The emergency operations center (EOC) is the location from which centralized management of the local government emergency response is performed. The use of EOCs is a standard practice in emergency management. All local governments should have a designated EOC. The physical size, staffing, and equipping of the local government EOC will depend on the size and complexity of the local government and the emergency operations it can expect to manage. The level of EOC staffing will also vary with the specific emergency situation.

A local government's EOC facility should be capable of serving as the central point for:

- coordination of all the jurisdiction's emergency operations.
- information gathering and dissemination.
- coordination with other local governments and the operational area.

#### **D. Role of Department Operations Centers**

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Department Operations Centers (DOC) are facilities that may be used by a distinct discipline or agency (such as flood operations, fire, medical, hazardous materials, Department of Public Works or Department of Health). The department operations center is the location from which centralized management of that discipline's or agency's emergency response is performed.

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DOCs should provide for the five primary SEMS functions of Management, Operations, Planning/Intelligence, Logistics, and Finance/Administration. In a small department, the five functions may be performed by a single person or a very few persons. A very large department may have a highly structured DOC organization with sections, branches and units.

DOCs should coordinate with the EOC when activated. Departments should have appropriate representation at the EOC as determined by local procedures. DOCs may be the link to the Field Response level as described later in this module.

## E. EOC Organization

### 1. Five SEMS Functions in the Local Government EOC

SEMS regulations require local governments to provide for five functions: management, operations, planning/intelligence, logistics, and finance/administration. These functions should be the basis for structuring the EOC organization.

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| <u>Primary SEMS Function</u> | <u>Role at Local Government Level</u>   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Management                   | Responsible for overall emergency policy and coordination through the joint efforts of governmental agencies and private organizations.   |
| Operations                   | Responsible for coordinating all jurisdictional operations in support of the emergency response through implementation of the local government's action plan.                             |
| Planning/Intelligence        | Responsible for collecting, evaluating, and disseminating information; developing the local government's action plan in coordination with other functions; and maintaining documentation. |
| Logistics                    | Responsible for providing facilities, services, personnel, equipment, and materials.  |
| Finance/Administration       | Responsible for financial activities and other administrative aspects.  |

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### 2. Other Local Government Emergency Functions

Other local government emergency functions may be placed under the five essential functions.

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Exhibit 2 in *student reference manual* shows how functions from the Multi-hazard Functional Planning Guidance fit under SEMS.

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Exhibit 3 *in student reference manual* shows other possible functions at the local government level. IG ASK STUDENTS IF THEY CAN IDENTIFY OTHER FUNCTIONS AND WHERE THEY WOULD FIT

### 3. EOC Terminology

Use of Incident Command System terminology is recommended, but not required, for the hierarchy of organizational elements within the EOC:

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- Section
  - Branch
    - Group
      - Unit .

The five essential SEMS functions would be established as sections within the EOC using the above terminology. Other functions, such as, the MHFP functions, would be included as branches, groups, or units. It is not necessary to use all four hierarchical levels in the EOC. For example, many EOCs use only sections, branches and units.

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Function may be clustered in various ways under the five SEMS functions (*Exhibit 4 in student reference manual.*)

For purposes of this course, we will use the position title "coordinator" to refer to the lead person of each of organizational elements in the EOC. The term coordinator is used because the role of EOC elements is to coordinate.

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Local governments may use other positions titles within their EOC organization. Three options are shown (*in student reference manual.*)



**4. Example EOC Organizations**

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C5-18

*Exhibits 5 and 6 in student reference manual* show example EOC organizations for small and large jurisdictions. The examples show modular EOC organizations.

Organizational elements are staffed as needed for the situation.

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*Exhibit 7 in student reference manual* shows how an EOC organization can evolve over time during a disaster.

The EOC organization should include representatives from special districts, volunteer agencies and private agencies with significant response roles.

**5. EOC Director and General Staff**

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The EOC Director has the overall responsibility for accomplishing the EOC mission. Many local governments have a policy group that is responsible for setting overall policies for the local government response. These policies guide the actions of the EOC Director. The EOC Director may seek policy guidance on specific issues during the response. However, the EOC Director must clearly have the authority to manage the emergency response.

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The Coordinators for Operations, Planning/Intelligence, Logistics, and Finance/Administration constitute the General Staff of the local government EOC.

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The EOC Director and General Staff function as an EOC management team. The General Staff are responsible for:

- overseeing the internal functioning of their section, and
- interacting with each other, the EOC Director, and other entities within the EOC to ensure the effective functioning of the EOC organization.

The EOC Director may wish to establish the functions of Liaison and Public Information at a section or branch level in the local government EOC and to include the lead persons for these functions as members of the General Staff.

#### **F. Multi-agency or Inter-agency Coordination at the Local Government Level**

SEMS regulations require local governments to use multi-agency or inter-agency coordination to facilitate decisions for overall local government level emergency response activities.

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Multi-agency or inter-agency coordination is important for:

- establishing priorities for response
- allocating critical resources
- developing strategies for coordinating multi-agency and inter-agency response problems
- sharing information
- facilitating communications

Multi-agency or inter-agency coordination is an integral part of the functioning of a local government EOC as described previously in Module C4. The EOC is staffed by representatives from the local government's departments and agencies who work together at the EOC to coordinate

the local government's emergency response. Liaison representatives from outside agencies including special districts, volunteer agencies and private organizations may also participate at the EOC with departmental representatives in coordinating the local government response effort. Coordination with agencies not represented in the EOC may be accomplished through telecommunications.

Multi-agency or inter-agency coordination may also be accomplished through formation of a multi-agency or inter-agency coordination group by the local governments as was described in Module C4. Local government representatives may also participate with other local governments and other agencies in a multi-agency coordination group organized by another local government, operational area or regional level.

### **G. Special District Involvement**

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Special districts are defined as local governments in SEMS. The emergency response role of special districts is generally focused on their normal services. During disasters, some types of special districts will be more extensively involved in the emergency response by assisting other local governments.

Coordination and communications should be established among special districts who are involved in the emergency response, other local governments, and the operational area. This may be accomplished in various ways depending on the local situation. Relationships among special districts, cities, county government, and the operational area are complicated by overlapping boundaries and by the multiplicity of special districts. Special districts need to work with the local governments in their service areas to determine how best to establish coordination and communications in emergencies.

C5–26

The simplest situation is when a special district is wholly contained within a single city or within a county unincorporated area. Usually in this case, the special district should have a representative at the EOC of the city or county in which it is located and direct communications should be established between the special district EOC and the city or county EOC. An exception may occur when there are many special districts within a large city or county.

Typically, special district boundaries cross municipal boundary lines. A special district may serve several cities and county unincorporated areas. Some special districts serve more than one county. Ideally, a special district involved in the emergency response will have liaison representatives at all activated city or county EOCs within its service area. However, this may not be practical when many jurisdictions within its service area are affected. One alternative may be to focus coordination at the operational area level and designate a representative to the operational area EOC to work with other local government representatives at that EOC.

When there are many special districts within one city or within the county unincorporated area, it may not be feasible for the jurisdiction to accommodate liaison representatives from all special districts at the jurisdiction's EOC in area-wide disasters. In such cases, the jurisdiction should work with the special districts to develop alternate ways of establishing coordination and communications.

**ASK STUDENTS FOR IDEAS ON HOW THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED.**

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Some alternatives to consider:

- liaison representatives at the EOC only from designated key special districts--telecommunications with other special districts
- one representative from each type of special district who would communicate with other special districts of the same type
- establish a special district coordination center for a particular type of special district, such as a water district coordination center, that communicates with the jurisdiction EOC. Such an arrangement may be established for the operational area.

#### **H. Coordination with Volunteer and Private Agencies**

Coordination with volunteer and private agencies should be established at the local government level. City EOCs will generally be a focal point for coordination of response activities with many non-governmental agencies. City EOCs should establish coordination with private and volunteer agencies providing services within the city.

C5-28

Agencies that play key roles in the response should have representatives at the EOC. If an agency supports several functions and has only one representative at the EOC, the agency representative should be located at the liaison area. If an agency is supporting one function only, its representative may be located with that functional element. For example, in some cities, American Red Cross personnel may be part of the staffing for the Care and Shelter element of the EOC.

It may not be feasible for some agencies that have a county-wide response role to provide representatives to all city EOCs. Such agencies should be represented at the operational area level.

Cities served by a large number of private and volunteer agencies may not be able to accommodate liaison representatives in the EOC from all agencies that have important response roles. Cities should develop alternate means of coordinating with these agencies when liaison representation is not practical. Coordination with volunteer and private agencies that do not have representatives at the EOC may be accomplished through telecommunications, liaison with community councils that represent several agencies, or involvement of agencies in special multi-agency groups on specific issues.

### **I. Relationship to Mutual Aid Systems**

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Local governments request resources through established discipline-specific mutual aid systems such as fire, law enforcement, and medical. Resource requests are made to designated Operational Area Mutual Aid Coordinators who may be located at the operational area EOC or another location depending on the emergency situation and the mutual aid system. Resources not available through discipline-specific mutual aid systems are requested by local governments through the emergency services channel. Local governments place such requests to the Operational Area EOC when activated. Requests should be placed through the logistics section when activated. Coordination with the operational area level is discussed further in Module C9.

In addition, some local governments have developed specific mutual aid agreements with other nearby local governments. These agreements may provide for specific types of mutual aid in certain contingency situations or for response to defined geographic areas.

**J. EOC Standard Operating Procedures and Position Checklists**

C5-30

Procedures and positions checklists provide guides for EOC staff to operate effectively and efficiently in the EOC. Checklists provide “mind joggers” to remind EOC staff of their duties. Procedures and checklists are especially helpful in getting off to a good start during the initial chaos of a disaster.

The most experienced and knowledgeable staff are not always immediately available when the emergency occurs. A well designed position checklist can be an invaluable tool for a less experienced person thrust into an EOC start-up situation. Checklists should be developed for all EOC positions. SEMS guidelines provide sample position checklists for the five SEMS functional positions: EOC Director (Management), Operations Section Coordinator, Planning/Intelligence Section Coordinator, Logistics Section Coordinator, Finance/Administration Coordinator. Sample position checklists are also provided for the Public Information Officer, Liaison Officer, and Agency Representative.

IF CLASS IS FOR A SPECIFIC JURISDICTION, HAVE STUDENTS REVIEW APPLICABLE CHECKLISTS IF DEVELOPED. DISCUSS IF ADDITIONAL CHECKLISTS NEEDED OR IF CHECKLISTS NEED TO BE UPDATED FOR SEMS.

Checklists as applicable

EOC Standard Operating Procedures may cover a number of items such as:

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- Setting up the EOC
- Message handling within the EOC
- Communications to outside entities such as department operations centers, field level, other local governments, and the operational area
- OASIS forms for reporting information to the Operational Area
- Status boards and displays
- Documentation
- Resources and Contacts Lists
- Resource Requests

IG: ASK STUDENTS FOR OTHER POSSIBLE PROCEDURES. IF CLASS IS FOR A SPECIFIC JURISDICTION, IDENTIFY EXISTING PROCEDURES. DISCUSS IF ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES ARE NEEDED.

### **K. EOC Layout and Support Requirements**

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The EOC should be physically arranged to facilitate coordination among all activated EOC elements. A common model for the EOC layout provides a central room, often called the operations room, in which all functions are located. In the central room, work stations are grouped by the five SEMS functions. Communications and message centers and conference rooms may be in adjacent rooms. The overall layout should contribute to efficient exchange of information.

In this model, support areas such as eating, sleeping, first aid, sanitary and mechanic equipment facilities are located in nearby separate rooms. The overall facility layout



should minimize interference between the EOC functions and support areas, but should make the support areas convenient for EOC staff.

The actual configuration of an EOC will be constrained by the available physical space. In some cases, it may be necessary to place EOC elements in separate rooms. The work stations should remain grouped by the five SEMS functions as much as possible. Care should be taken to avoid isolating a function from the rest of the EOC elements. A poorly planned EOC can inhibit coordination among functions.

**IG: IF CLASS IS FOR A SPECIFIC JURISDICTION, HAVE STUDENTS REVIEW EXISTING EOC LAYOUT. DISCUSS ITS CONSISTENCY WITH ABOVE PRINCIPLES.**

EOC Layout if applicable

Equipment and supplies should be sufficient for prolonged operation of the fully staffed EOC. Typical EOC supplies include:

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- Furniture-desks/tables and chairs for all positions, conference tables and chairs
- Computers and printers
- Copiers
- Communications equipment
- EOC Forms and log books
- Emergency Generator
- Flashlights/emergency lighting
- Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) for computers
- TV, VCR, AM/FM Radio,
- Displays, maps, and white boards

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- Administrative supplies and office equipment (pens, pencils, staplers and staples, etc.)
- Food Supply
- Kitchen equipment and supplies
- First Aid and Sanitary supplies
- Blankets and other items for sleeping area
- Janitorial supplies