

**MODULE C6
CONCEPTS & PROCEDURES OF SEMS
AT THE OPERATIONAL AREA EOC**

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

I. MODULE DESCRIPTION:

The goal of Module C6 is to provide the student with a basic understanding of the concepts and procedures for an Operational Area EOC. This module covers activation criteria; purpose, scope and basic responsibilities; need for communications and coordination, multi agency and inter-agency coordination, and the common tasks of the five SEMS functions associated with the Operational Area 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
5. STANDARDS AND MODELS FOR STAFFING, ORGANIZATIONS, LAYOUTS AND EOC SUPPORT ITEMS
6. NEED FOR SPECIFIC SOP AND CHECKLISTS

II. Module Content

A. SEMS Requirements for Operational Areas

SEMS regulations specify three sets of requirements for Operational Areas:

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- organizing the operational area
- responsibilities of the lead agency
- activation of the operational area emergency operations center (EOC).

The requirements for organizing the operational area were discussed in Module C1. Lead agency responsibilities and EOC activation requirements are described below.

B. Activation of the Operational Area

SEMS regulations specify seven circumstances in which the operational area emergency operations center (EOC) must be activated and SEMS used:

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1. A local government within the operational area has activated its EOC and requested activation of the operational area EOC to support their emergency operations
2. Two or more cities within the operational area have declared or proclaimed a local emergency.
3. The county and one or more cities have declared or proclaimed a local emergency.

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4. A city, city and county, or county has requested a governor's proclamation of a state of emergency

5. A state of emergency is proclaimed by the governor for the county or two or more cities within the operational area.
6. The operational area is requesting resources from outside its boundaries. This does not include resources used in normal day-to-day operations which are obtained through existing mutual aid agreements.
7. The operational area has received resource requests from outside its boundaries. This does not include resources used in normal day-to-day operations which are obtained through existing mutual aid agreements.

C6-5

Operational areas should develop EOC activation criteria that include conditions based on a hazard analysis as well as regulatory requirements. The goal should be rapid EOC activation when operational area involvement will be needed. It is recommended that two to three levels of activation be identified that will provide EOC staffing commensurate with the coordination needs of varying emergency situations. *Exhibit 1 in the student reference manual* is an example of the type of activation criteria that an operational area should consider for its EOC.

**HAVE STUDENTS DISCUSS APPLICABILITY OF
EXAMPLE TO THEIR SITUATION.**

| Exhibit 1 | | |
|--|-------------------------|---|
| Example Operational Area EOC Activation Guide | | |
| Event/Situation¹ | Activation Level | Minimum Staffing² |
| Severe Weather Advisory Small incidents involving 2 or more county departments Earthquake Advisory Flood Watch Activation requested by a local government with activated EOC. Resource request received from outside the operational area. ³ | One | EOC Director Planning Section Coordinator Logistics Coordinator Representatives of responding departments |
| Moderate Earthquake Major wildfire affecting developed area Major wind or rain storm Two or more large incidents involving 2 or more departments Imminent Earthquake Alert Local emergency declared or proclaimed by: Two or more cities The county and one or more cities A city or the county requests a governor's proclamation of a state of emergency A state of emergency is proclaimed by the governor for the county or two or more cities Resources are requested from outside the operational area. ³ | Two | EOC Director All Section Coordinators Branches and Units as appropriate to situation Agency Representatives as appropriate |
| Major county wide or regional emergency-- Multiple departments with heavy resource involvement Major earthquake | Three | All EOC Positions |
| ¹ Local governments and the operational area should work together to develop consistent activation criteria and levels for hazards that are common to the operational area. ² Minimum staffing may vary with the size of the operational area. ³ Does not include resources used in normal day-to-day operations obtained through existing mutual aid agreements. | | |

C. Role of the Operational Area and Responsibility of the Lead Agency

The operational area is defined by the Emergency Services Act as an intermediate level of the state emergency services organization consisting of a county and all political subdivisions within the county area. Political subdivisions include cities, a city and county, counties, districts, or other local governmental agency, or public agency authorized by law.

The concept of an operational area was included in the Emergency Services Act in 1970. It was required by that act to be used during a state of war emergency, but its use was optional during a state of emergency or a local emergency. In many counties, the operational area concept has been used during peacetime emergencies. The operational area level has been used by established discipline-specific mutual aid systems including fire and law enforcement. Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) regulations now establish the operational area as one of the five SEMS levels for use in all emergencies and disasters involving multiple agencies or multiple jurisdictions.

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The operational area is used by the county and the political subdivisions comprising the operational area:

- For coordination of emergency activities within the geographic area of the county, and
- To serve as a link in the system of communications and coordination between the state's regional level EOC and the emergency operations centers of the political subdivisions within the operational area.

All local governments within the geographic area of the county are part of the same operational area. The operational area may establish zones or other subdivisions to improve coordination and communications within the operational area.

SEMS regulations specify that all local governments within a county geographic area be organized into a single operational area and that the county board of supervisors is responsible for its establishment . All local governments should cooperate in organizing an effective operational area, but the operational area authority and responsibility is not affected by the non-participation of any local government. Organizing the operational area is discussed further in Part II of the SEMS Guidelines.

The county government serves as the lead agency of the operational area unless another member agency assumes that responsibility by written agreement with the county government. The lead agency of the operational area is responsible for:

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- Coordinating information, resources and priorities among the local governments within the operational area.
- Coordinating information, resources and priorities between the regional level and the local government level.
- Using multi-agency or inter-agency coordination to facilitate decisions for overall operational area level emergency response activities.

The role of the operational area lead agency does not change the coordination of discipline-specific resources, such as fire, law, and medical, through their established mutual aid systems.

D. Operational Area Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

Each operational area should have a designated emergency operations center (EOC) from which the overall coordination role of the operational area will be accomplished. The physical size, staffing, and equipping of an operational area EOC will depend on the size and complexity of the operational area and the emergency

situations in which it function. The level of EOC staffing will also vary with the specific emergency situation.

The operational area EOC facility should be capable of serving as the central point for:

C6-8

- coordination with local governments within the operational area
- information gathering and dissemination within the operational area
- reporting of information to the regional level using OASIS (where available)
- coordination with the Regional EOC and other operational areas

C6-9

In most cases, the operational area EOC will also serve as the EOC for county government (or other designated lead agency). This will enable efficient use of available staff. In a combined EOC, some staff may be wearing two hats--coordinating operational area level and county government level functions. As local government coordinators, the EOC staff may be interacting with department operations centers or Incident Commanders. Coordination with the field response level is discussed in Module C9. The EOC should be designed to enable both operational area and the lead agency's local government responsibilities to be fulfilled.

E. Operational Area Emergency Management Organization

1. Functional Organization

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

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Primary SEMS Function Role at Local Government Level

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.

C6-11

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.

The organizational structure for the operational area EOC should provide for:

C6-12

- Representatives from local governments within the operational area.
- OES Agency Representative sent by REOC.
- Operational Area Mutual Aid Coordinators or their representatives from discipline-specific mutual aid systems
- Coordinators for other major functions needed for mutual aid and inter-jurisdictional coordination such as the functions defined in Multi-hazard Functional Planning Guidance and OASIS Interim Guidelines
- Other functions as needed to carry out the local government responsibilities of the lead agency (in a

combined operational area and county or other lead agency EOC). Examples of such functions are listed in Module C5.

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MHFP and other function may be clustered in various ways under the five SEMS functions. (*illustrated in Exhibit 2 in student reference manual*). It is important that the responsibility for major functions be clearly identified to facilitate coordination with the local government and regional levels.

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Exhibit 3 *in student reference manual* provides an example of an operational area EOC organization.

2. EOC Terminology

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

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- Section
 - Branch
 - Group
 - Unit

The five essential SEMS functions would normally 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. Functional elements are activated as needed.

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 a primary role of EOC elements is to

coordinate. Local governments may use other positions titles within their EOC organization.

C6-16

Three options are shown in student reference manual

3. EOC General Staff

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The Coordinators for Operations, Planning/Intelligence, Logistics, and Finance/Administration constitute the General Staff of the operational area EOC. The EOC Director and General Staff function as an EOC management team. The General Staff are responsible for:

C6-18

- 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 operational area EOC and to include the lead persons for these functions as members of the General Staff.

F. Relationship of Operational Area Mutual Aid Coordinators

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Discipline-specific mutual aid systems including fire, law enforcement, and medical, have designated mutual aid coordinators within each operational area. The designated Operational Area Mutual Aid Coordinators should be considered an integral part of the operational area emergency management organization. Operational Area Mutual Aid Coordinators may be located at the operational area EOC, at their normal work location, or at another location depending on the emergency situation, local communications systems, their normal job responsibility, and the level of operational area EOC activation. When the operational area EOC is fully activated, all Operational Area Mutual Aid Coordinators should have designated representatives at the EOC to facilitate coordination and information flow.

Coordination of discipline-specific resources will be accomplished through their respective mutual aid systems. However, it is essential that information and overall priorities be coordinated among mutual aid coordinators and the Operational Area EOC.

G. Resource Management at the Operational Area Level

C6-20

Resources requests from local governments and requests to the regional level will be made through one of the following processes:

- Discipline-specific mutual aid systems: Requests for resources that are normally within the inventories of the mutual aid system will go from local coordinator to Operational Area Mutual Aid Coordinator to Regional Mutual Aid Coordinator.

- All other resource requests will be made through the logistics function at each level with emphasis on the need for lateral coordination with other EOC functions.

Resource requests from local governments will be coordinated within the Operational Area to determine if the resource is available from other local governments or other sources within the Operational Area. Available resources will be allocated to the requesting local government.

If requests for a specific resource exceed the supply, the available resources will be allocated consistent with priorities established through the action planning process. The General Staff is responsible for ensuring that priorities are followed.

Resources not available within the operational area will be requested through the regional level. Resource requests should be coordinated internally at the Operational Area level before being placed to the regional level.

Functional coordinators in operations and logistics are responsible for tracking resource requests. The concept of resource tracking is discussed further in OASIS Guidelines.

H. Multi-agency or Inter-agency Coordination at the Operational Area Level

1. Purposes of Multi-agency or Inter-agency Coordination

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

C6-21

- establishing overall priorities,
- allocating critical resources,
- developing strategies for handling multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional response problems,
- sharing information,
- facilitating communications.

2. Multi-agency or Inter-agency Coordination in the EOC

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Multi-agency or inter-agency coordination is an integral part of the functioning of a operational area EOC as discussed previously in Module C4. The EOC is staffed by representatives from the departments and agencies who work together at the EOC to coordinate the operational area's emergency response. Agency representatives from local governments including special districts, volunteer agencies and private organizations should also participate with EOC functional elements in coordinating the operational area response effort. Coordination with agencies not represented in the EOC may be accomplished through telecommunications.

Involvement of the local government representatives in the action planning process at the EOC is essential for effective emergency management and provides an important focus for multi-agency and inter-agency coordination. In addition, the EOC Director or General Staff may convene meetings for multi-agency or inter-agency coordination purposes as needed.

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.

3. Establishing a Multi-agency or Inter-agency Coordination Group

It may be useful to establish formally a multi-agency or inter-agency coordination group to develop consensus on priorities, resource allocation and response strategies. A multi-agency or inter-agency coordination group involving representatives of local governments in the operational area may be a standard element of the operational area

organization. Such a group may meet regularly during the response or on an as needed basis. Alternatively, multi-agency or inter-agency coordination groups may be established to deal with specific issues that arise during the response.

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.

I. Coordination with Volunteer and Private Agencies

C6-23

Coordination of response activities with many non-governmental agencies may occur primarily at the local government level. The operational area EOC should establish coordination with private and volunteer agencies that have multi-jurisdictional or county-wide response roles.

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. Some agencies may have an important role in staffing organizational elements in the EOC. For example, American Red Cross personnel may be part of the staffing for the Care and Shelter element of the EOC.

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.

J. Role of OASIS

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The Operational Area Satellite Information System (OASIS) will be a key means of communication between operational area EOCs and regional EOCs. OASIS consists of a communications satellite, a communications hub which controls the system, and remote sites which include operational area EOCs, Regional EOCs, the State Operations Center, and other selected sites. Remote sites have a dish antenna and an indoor unit that connects to EOC telephones and computers. This enables voice and data communications with other sites. A few operational area, state, and federal agency sites will also have a high frequency radio system to provide backup communications. OASIS provides a disaster-resistant method of communication between the operational area and regional levels.

OASIS Interim Guidelines outline information needs for reporting between the operational area and regional levels. It identifies functional areas and reporting forms for each functional area. This concept of functional reporting remains valid under SEMS. The five essential SEMS functions overlay the functional areas identified in OASIS.

K. EOC Standard Operating Procedures and Position Checklists

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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 OPERATIONAL AREA, HAVE STUDENTS REVIEW THEIR EXISTING CHECKLISTS. DISCUSS IF ADDITIONAL CHECKLISTS ARE 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, local governments, other operational areas, and the regional level
- OASIS forms for reporting information to the regional level
- Status boards and displays
- Documentation
- Resources and Contacts Lists
- Resource Requests

ASK STUDENTS FOR OTHER POSSIBLE PROCEDURES. IF CLASS IS FOR A SPECIFIC OPERATIONAL AREA, IDENTIFY EXISTING PROCEDURES. DISCUSS IF ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES ARE NEEDED.

L. EOC Layout and Support Requirements

C6-27

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 as appropriate

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

Typical EOC supplies include:

C6-28

- 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