

**MODULE C9**  
**COORDINATION BETWEEN SEMS LEVELS**  
**STUDENT REFERENCE MANUAL**

**I. MODULE DESCRIPTION:**

The goal of Module C9 is to provide the student with a basic understanding of the need and concepts for coordination between SEMS levels. This Module covers communications and coordination between field and local government levels, local government and operational area levels, operational area and regional levels, and regional and state levels. It also discusses coordination with the federal response to major disasters. Functional interactions between levels are described. 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:

1. NEED FOR COORDINATION AMONG SEMS LEVELS
2. FIELD, DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS CENTER, AND EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER RELATIONSHIPS
3. INTERFACE BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OPERATIONAL AREAS
4. INTERFACE BETWEEN OPERATIONAL AREAS AND REGIONAL LEVEL
5. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REOCs AND SOC
6. RELATIONSHIP TO FEDERAL EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

## **II. Module Content**

### **A. Need for Coordination**

Coordination among the SEMS levels is essential for an effective response to major emergencies. Coordination of information and priorities is necessary for rapid mobilization and appropriate allocation of mutual aid. SEMS regulations require each level to establish coordination and communications with the level immediately above and below, i.e., field- local government, local government-operational area, operational area-region, region - state.

### **B. Coordination between the Field Response and Local Government Levels**

This section describes the field-local coordination requirements, provides examples of field to local government linkages for various situations, and then discusses the interactions between organizational elements for field to department operations center (DOC), DOC to emergency operations center (EOC), and field to EOC coordination.

#### **1. Coordination Requirements**

Coordination among SEMS levels is clearly necessary for effective emergency response. SEMS regulations require that coordination and communications with Incident Commanders be established when a local government EOC is activated, either

- a) through departmental operations centers to the EOC, or
- b) between Incident Commanders and the EOC.

SEMS regulations also require that coordination and communications be established 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.

#### **2. Field to Local Government Level Linkages**

ICS field response organizations will normally communicate with DOCs or EOCs through dispatch centers. Dispatch centers do not have command authority over incidents; they have dispatch authority as determined by agency or jurisdiction policy. Because of the communications systems involved, agency dispatch centers often function in an intermediate role between Incident Commanders in the field and DOCs or EOCs. Also, in some cases under heavy load conditions, agencies may elect to move into an "expanded dispatch" mode which may provide a higher level authority at the agency dispatch facility.

Dispatch centers may be departmental or may be centralized within the jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions have the capability to go from departmental dispatching to centralized dispatching when the local government EOC is activated. The jurisdiction's dispatching arrangements and communication capability along with local policies will affect how the field level is linked to the local government level.

In many jurisdictions, the ICS field response organizations will be primarily linked (through a dispatch center) to the DOC of the agency that has jurisdiction over the incident. In these cases, DOCs have agency level authority over their assigned Incident Commanders. The DOC is responsible for coordinating with the local government EOC.

In some jurisdictions, ICS field response organizations may have direct communications with and/or receive policy direction from the local government EOC when it is activated. Whether this occurs will depend upon the size and policy of the jurisdiction, and lines of communication that are available.

### **3. Field to Local Government Coordination with Unified Command**

At the SEMS Field Response level, Unified Command may be established for some multi-jurisdictional or multi-agency incidents. Unified Command may be used when more than one agency has some significant jurisdiction over that incident. Under Unified Command each agency with significant jurisdictional responsibility will assign an Incident Commander and appropriate resources to the incident.

The Incident Commanders form a Unified Command, and work from a single Incident Command Post. They develop a set of common objectives, strategies, and a single Incident Action Plan. They select an Operations Section Chief for the incident from one of the jurisdictions or agencies and give that Operations Section Chief authority to implement the operations portion of the action plan and to command tactical resources.

Incident interactions with dispatch centers, DOCs, or an EOC will generally take two forms under Unified Command:

- Policy and Authority Interactions
- Resource Ordering Interactions

#### Policy and Authority Interactions

Under Unified Command, the Incident Commanders will maintain communications with their respective department or agency. Each Incident Commander will receive an appropriate delegation of authority to govern that agencies interactions at the incident.

## Resource Ordering Interactions

Resource Ordering under a Unified Command will be determined based on the policies of the agencies and disciplines involved, and the resource requirements of the incident.

Single point resource ordering from the incident takes place when all orders are placed from the incident to a single agency dispatch center, DOC, or an EOC. This is a preferred method, because logistics staff at the incident do not have to determine which agencies are responsible for ordering which resources. The selected agency for receiving the order could be the one with the greatest resource involvement or the closest to the incident.

Multi-point ordering is also used under Unified Command. In this method, each agency essentially orders the resources for which it has responsibility, after the overall resource requirements are determined as part of the Incident Action Planning process.

### **4. Example Linkages for Common Situations**

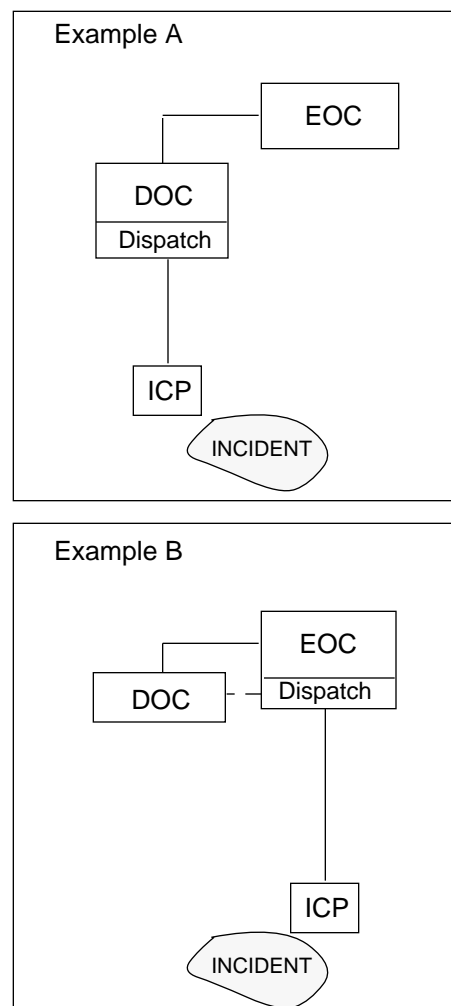
#### **a. Single Jurisdiction--Single Discipline Incident Situation**

For a single discipline incident, the Incident Commander may be in contact with the dispatch center for the jurisdictional authority. If the incident is large with a need for many resources, a department operations center (DOC) may be activated. The Incident Commander would report to the DOC typically through the agency dispatch center.

The local government EOC may be activated for large or complex incidents. The Incident Commander may report to the DOC or may report directly into the EOC.

Local policies, communications systems, and the nature of the incident will determine the appropriate reporting channels. Where there are departmental dispatch centers, the Incident Commander will most likely report to a DOC. Where there are central dispatch centers in collocated with the EOC facility, the Incident Commander may directly report to the EOC.

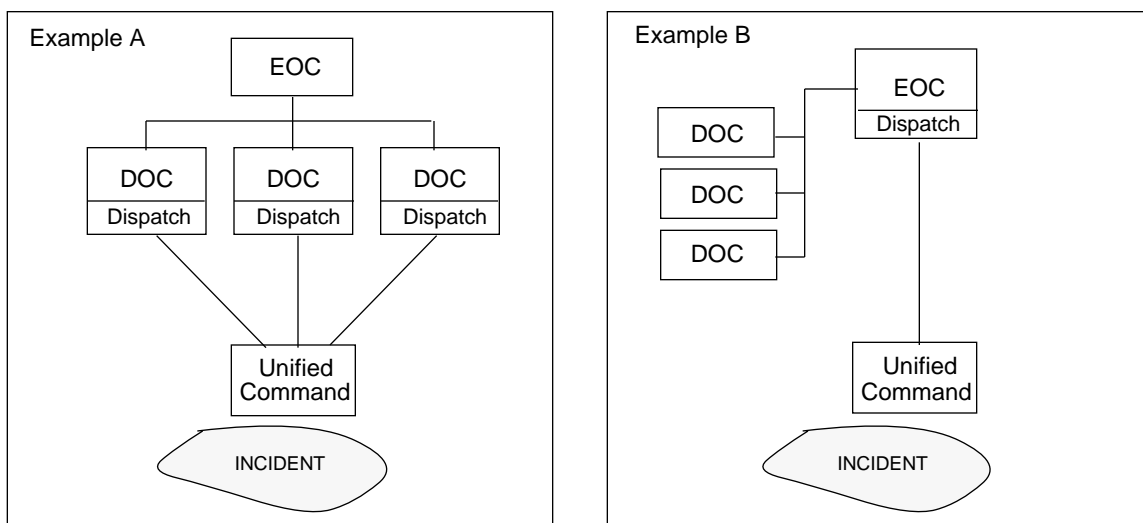
Exhibit 1



## b. Single Jurisdiction--Unified Command Situation

Unified Command may be established for a major multi-disciplinary incident within a jurisdiction. The members of the Unified Command may report to their respective DOCs through dispatch centers. When the local government EOC is activated, the members of the Unified Command may continue reporting to their respective DOCs or may coordinate directly with the EOC depending on jurisdiction policy and communications systems. For direct field- EOC coordination, the members of the Unified Command and their department contacts at the EOC may designate a single primary line of communications.

Exhibit 2

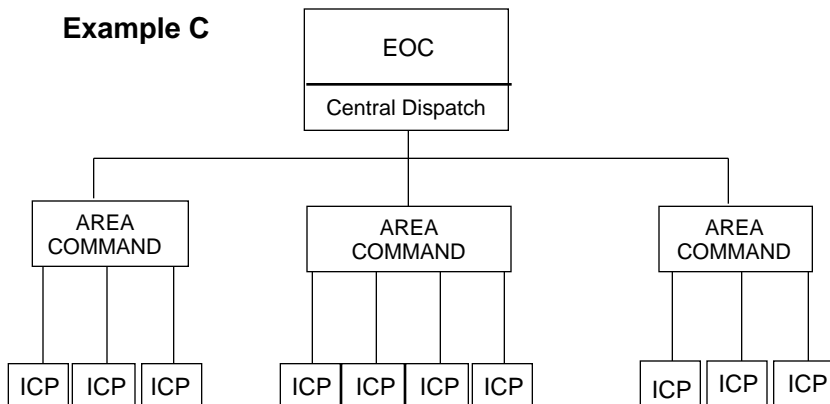
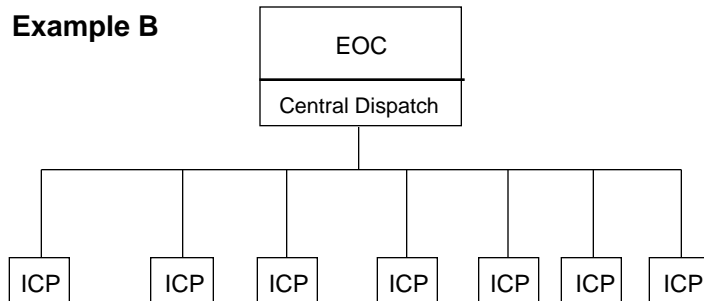
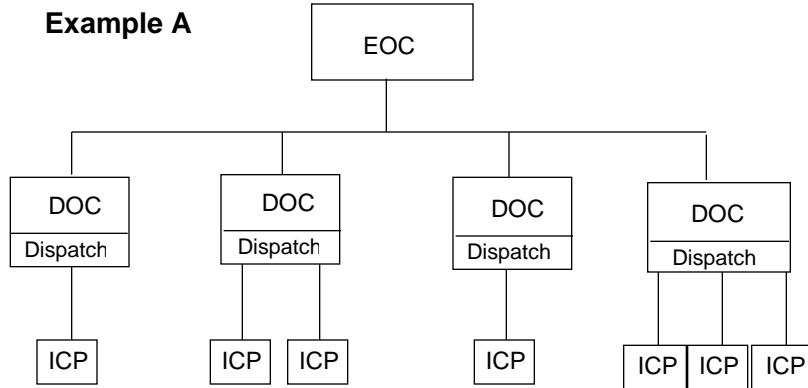


## c. Single Jurisdiction--Major Disaster Situation

In a major area-wide disaster, such as a major earthquake, there may be multiple incidents of various types within a single jurisdiction. Some incidents may be single discipline incidents, others may be multi-disciplinary incidents operating under Unified Command. The jurisdiction's EOC may be activated to coordinate the overall response, while the Incident Command System is used by field responders.

Incident Commanders may be linked (through dispatch centers) to department operations centers which in turn will coordinate with the EOC. Alternatively, in some jurisdictions direct coordinations and communications may be established between Incident Commanders and the EOC. Exhibit 3 illustrates field -EOC reporting relationships in major disasters. For simplicity, the diagrams show only single discipline incidents. Unified Commands may be linked to department operations centers or EOCs as described previously.

Exhibit 3  
**Field to Local Government  
 Coordination and Communications  
 in a Major Areawide Disaster**



When the EOC is directly overseeing Incident Command teams, the EOC is operating in a centralized management mode. The EOC will be establishing priorities among incidents and allocating resources according to those priorities. The relationship of the EOC to the field organization in this case is somewhat similar to that of an Area

Command; however, the EOC has a much broader scope of responsibility and a larger management organization than an Area Command.

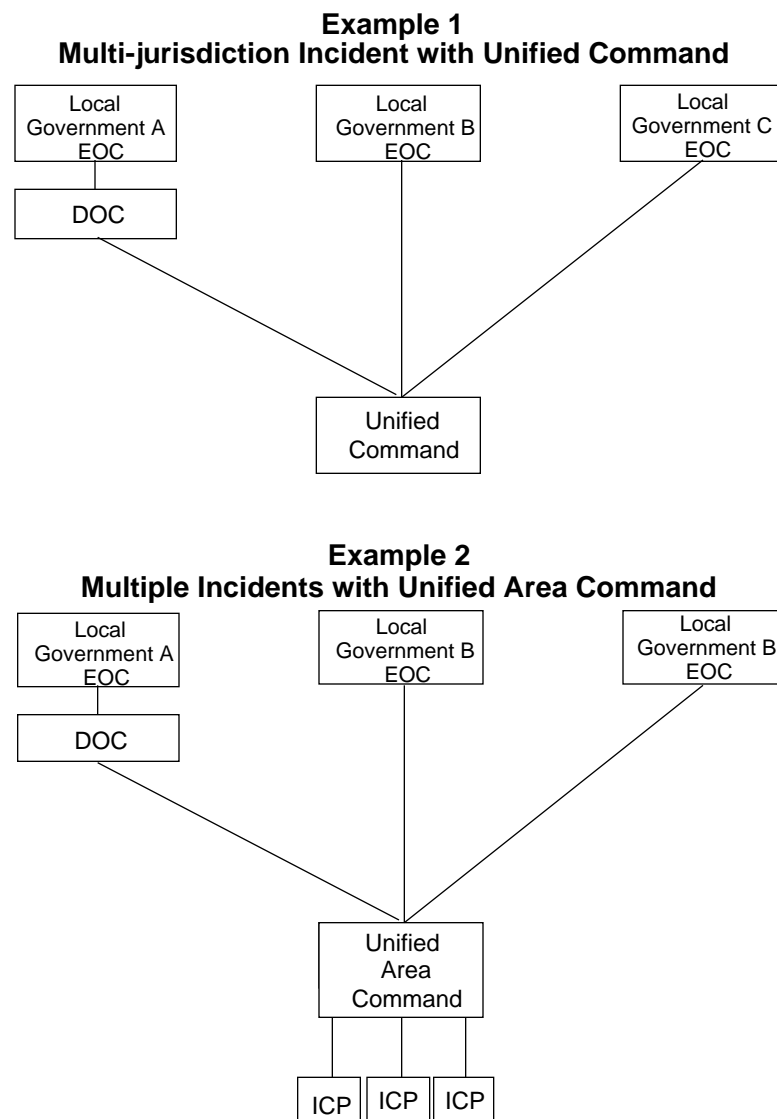
It is also possible in a large city or county for Area Commands to be established between the Incident Command teams and the EOC. During a major jurisdiction-wide disaster, the jurisdiction may be divided into areas, with an Area Command overseeing the Incident Command teams within each area. The Area Commands would report to the EOC.

**e. Multi-jurisdiction Coordination**

When an incident crosses multiple jurisdictions, coordination needs to be established with all the affected jurisdictions. In a Unified Command, the jurisdictional representatives would coordinate with their jurisdictions, either through a DOC or the EOC as shown in exhibit 4.

The occurrence of several similar type incidents located in close proximity but in different jurisdictions, may result in EOC-Area Command interactions. A Unified Area Command may be established to oversee Incident Commands operating in general proximity to each other. The Unified Area Command would coordinate with activated local government EOCs.

Exhibit 4  
**MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL INCIDENT COORDINATION**



## **5. Functional Interactions**

### **a. Field--DOC Interactions**

Interactions between the incident and the DOC will generally occur on a function to function basis. The Incident Commander will report to the individual having DOC management responsibility. Other incident functions may coordinate with their counterpart element in the DOC. The Incident Planning Section may exchange information with the DOC Planning function. The DOC Logistics function may coordinate resource orders received from the Incident Logistics Section.

It should be noted that in some DOCs, all of the SEMS functions may be performed by only one or a few individuals. This may be sufficient to support small incidents. For larger incidents, the DOC staffing may need to expand. If the department cannot provide additional personnel to expand the DOC organization sufficiently, it should shift responsibility and staff to the EOC.

Resource ordering from the incident may be single or multi-point.

### **b. DOC-EOC Interactions**

DOCs will coordinate with the EOC when activated. The primary interaction will be between DOC Management and their departmental contact in the EOC. Their departmental contact will most likely be in a branch of the EOC operations section. Additional secondary interactions may occur between other DOC functions and the EOC, but should be coordinated with DOC management.

### **c Field--EOC Interactions**

In some jurisdictions direct coordination and communications is established between Incident Commanders and the EOC. The lines of coordination and communications in such jurisdictions may vary depending on the jurisdiction and situation. Exhibit 5 illustrates alternative approaches for Incident Commander to EOC interactions when direct coordination and communications is established. These are described briefly below.

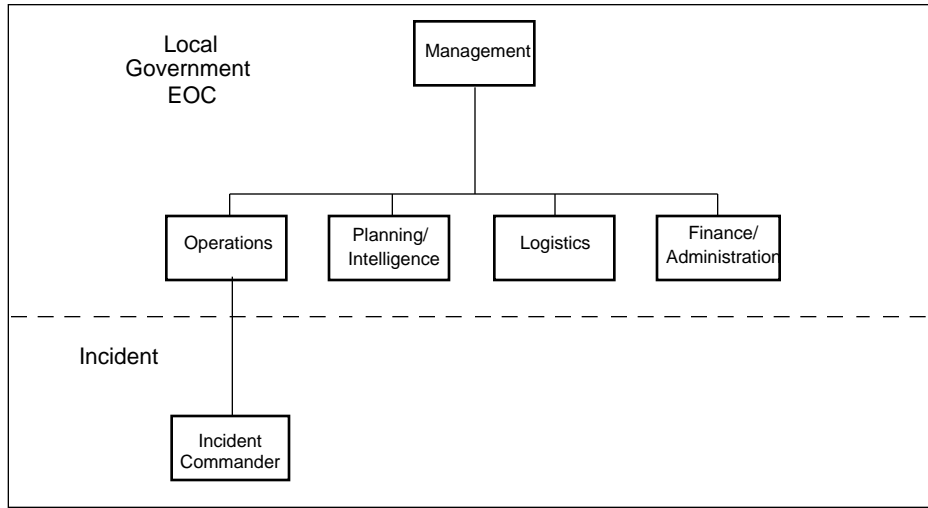
The Incident Commander will most likely interact primarily with the EOC Operations Section when there is direct coordination and communications. The Incident Commander will normally report to a senior official from the Incident Commander's department or agency.

In single incident situations, the Incident Commander may interact directly with the EOC Operations Section Coordinator.

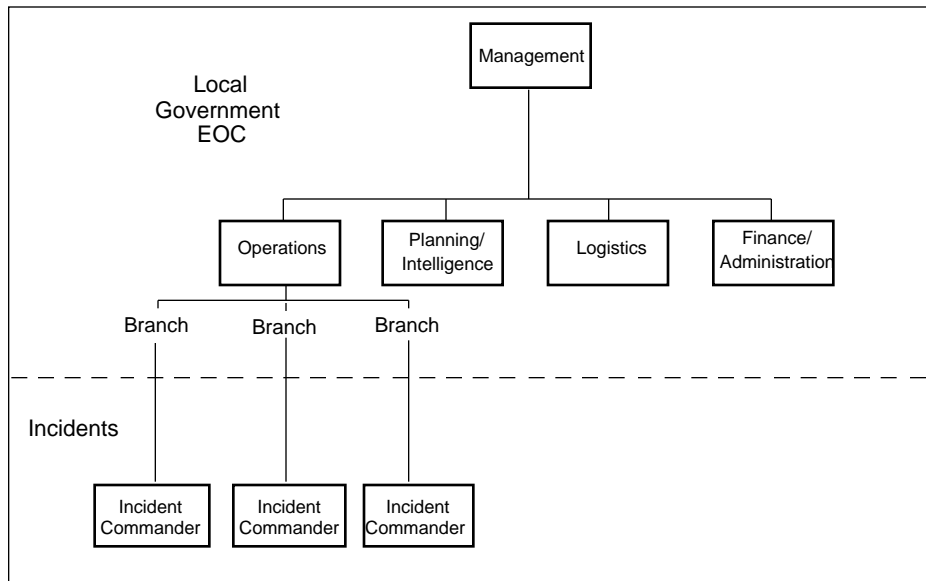


**Exhibit 5  
Incident Commander-Local Government EOC  
Primary Interactions**

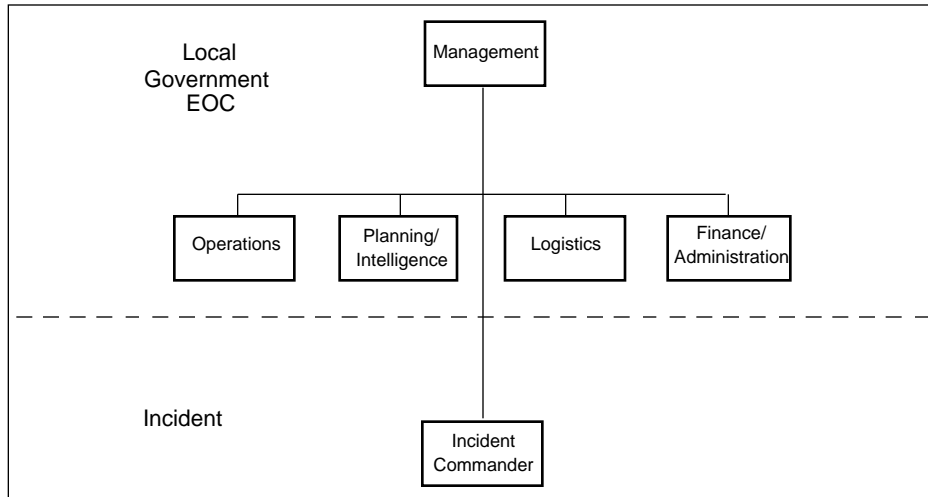
**Example 1**



**Example 2**



**Example 3**



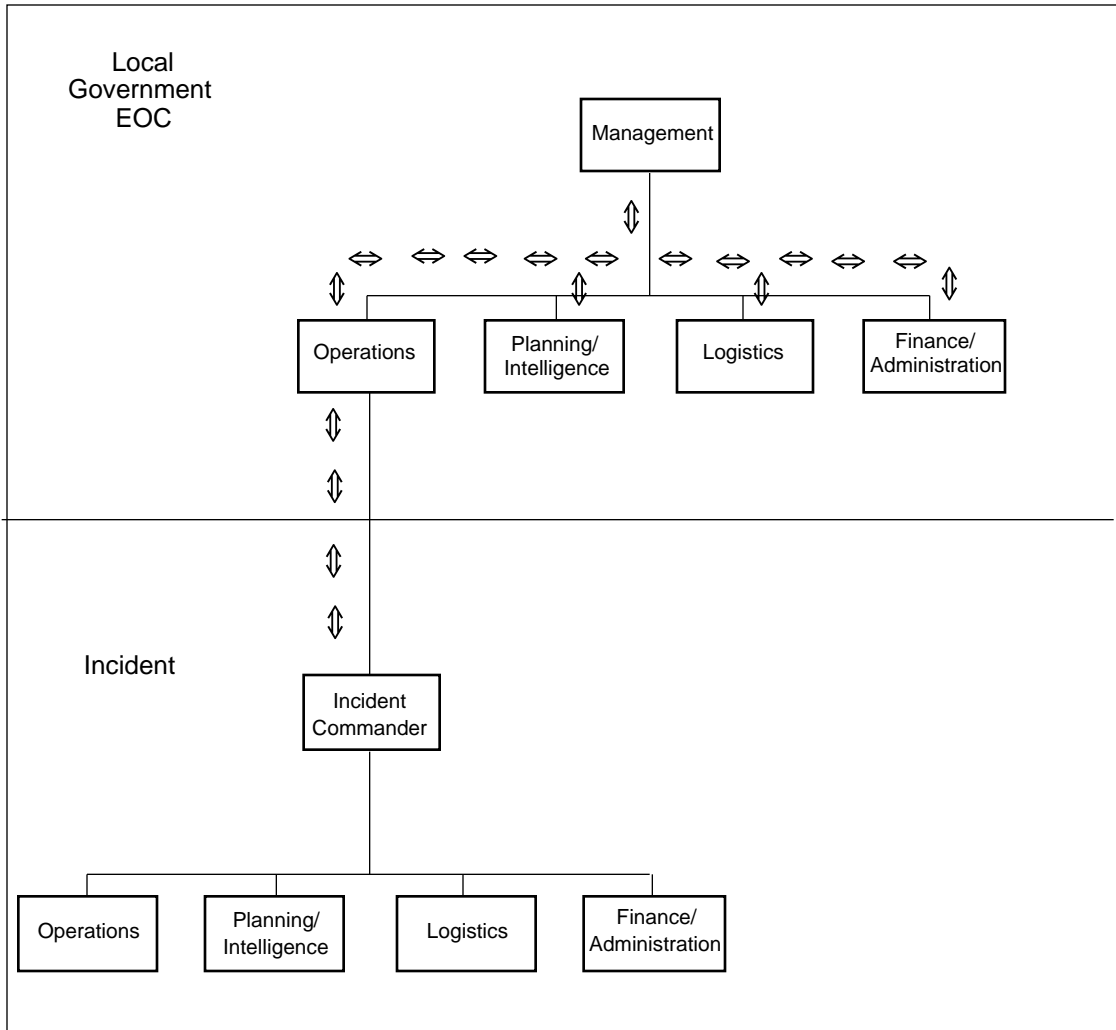
In major disasters, where there are multiple incidents within the jurisdiction, Incident Commanders will normally interact with branches of the EOC Operations Section.

In some jurisdictions, local policies may provide for direct Incident Commander to EOC Management interaction. This may occur when there is a single large incident that has a major impact on the community. Direct Incident Commander to EOC Management interaction would not be advisable in major disasters where there are multiple incidents as this would typically exceed the span of control of EOC Management.

In most cases where there is direct coordination and communications from the field to the EOC, the primary flow of coordination and information will be between the Incident Commander and the EOC Operations Section, either to the Section Coordinator or to a branch. The EOC Operations Section will be responsible for interacting with EOC Management and other functions as illustrated in Exhibit 6. Additionally, it may be useful in some situations to have direct coordination between Incident sections and their counterpart EOC section. For example, the Incident Planning/Intelligence Section may provide information directly to the EOC Planning/Intelligence Section.

Under a Unified Command the situation is somewhat more complex, but field to EOC interactions will generally be similar to those described above. Coordination may be facilitated if the members of the Unified Command and their department contacts at the EOC determine a single primary line of communications for field- EOC coordination. The primary contact in the EOC would then be the Operations Section Coordinator or one of the branches in the operations section depending on the circumstances, or in some cases the EOC Management. One of the members of the Unified Command may serve as the primary field contact. The primary contacts would be responsible for coordinating with their counterparts at the incident or within the EOC. Secondary interactions may still occur between other members of the Unified Command and their departmental contacts at the EOC. Resource ordering may be single or multi-point.

Exhibit 6  
**Incident Command System-Local Government EOC  
 Functional Interactions**



⇔ ⇔ Primary Field - EOC Coordination and Information Flow  
 — Lines of secondary communications and coordination  
 — Lines of Management Authority

## **C. Coordination between Local Government and the Operational Area Level**

The operational area is activated to coordinate support for local governments within the operational area. Coordination and communications should be established between activated local government EOCs and the operational area. The following describes coordination with city and county governments and special districts.

### **1. Coordination with Cities and County Government**

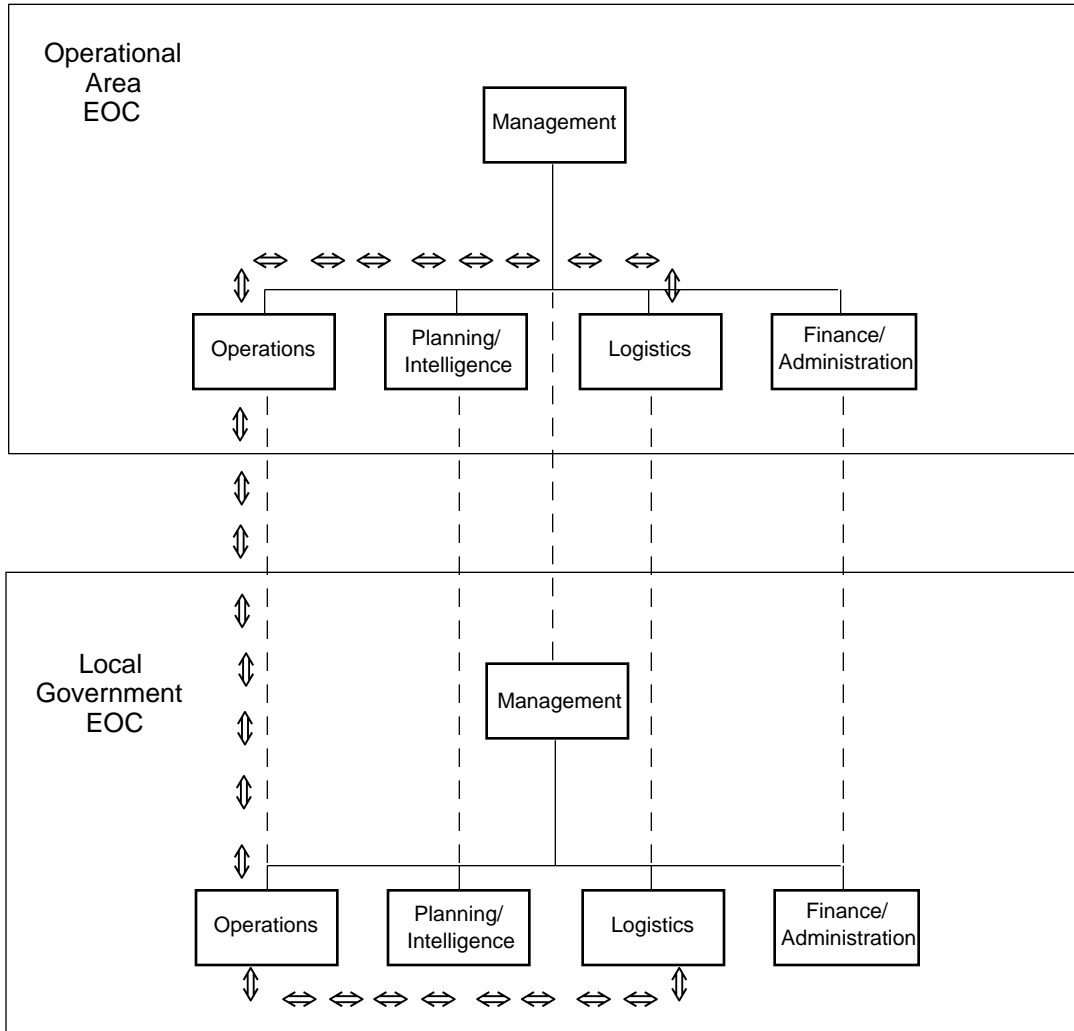
Coordination and communications should be established between the operational area EOC and all activated local government EOCs within the operational area.

Direct communications and coordination should be established between any activated city EOC and the operational area EOC when activated. Direct communications and coordination also should be established between the county government EOC and the operational area EOC if they are physically separate. Communications and coordination should occur along functional lines as illustrated in exhibit 7.

An agency representative should be at the operational area EOC from every activated city EOC and county government whenever feasible. In operational areas with a large number of cities, it may not always be practical to have representatives from all activated city EOCs at the operational area EOC. For cities with very small staffs, it may not be feasible to send a representative to the operational area EOC. The operational area and cities should develop arrangements to ensure adequate coordination and information exchange when city representatives are not present at the operational area EOC.

A combined operational area and county EOC will be functioning as a local government EOC for unincorporated areas of the county. Coordination and communications with the field response in unincorporated areas will be the same as that described above for field-local government coordination.

Exhibit 7  
**Local Government EOC - Operational Area EOC  
 Primary Interactions**



- Lines of management authority and internal coordination
- - - - Primary lines of communication and coordination between levels
- ⇔ ⇔ Primary interactions for priority resource allocation

## 2. Special District Involvement

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 the operational area, special districts who are involved in the emergency response, and other local governments. 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. The operational area should work with special districts providing services in the operational area to determine how best to establish coordination and communications in emergencies. The following discusses some situations and possible ways to establish coordination.

The operational area should be able to communicate and coordinate directly with a special district that serves more than one city and or serves a city and county unincorporated area. Ideally, such a special district involved in the emergency response will have a representative at the operational area, as well as, all activated city EOCs within its service area. However, this may not be practical when many jurisdictions within its service area are affected. In such cases, the special district representative at the operational area level may serve as the focal point of coordination and work with other local government representatives at that operational area EOC.

When there are many special districts within an operational area, it may not be feasible for the operational area EOC to accommodate representatives from all special districts in area-wide disasters. In such cases, the operational area should work with the special districts to develop alternate ways of establishing coordination and communications. Some alternatives to consider:

- Representatives from designated key special districts at the EOC-- 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, eg. a water district coordination center, that communicates with the operational area EOC

Some special districts may serve multiple counties and some may even have facilities in more than one mutual aid region. Such special districts should be represented at activated operational area EOCs in their service area, or have developed alternate arrangements for

effective coordination with the operational areas and local governments in their service area.

#### **D. Coordination between Operational Area and Regional Levels**

SEMS regulations require activation of the Regional EOC (REOC) when an operational area EOC is activated. It is essential that direct coordination and communications be established between activated operational area EOCs and the REOC. Coordination with the REOC can be accomplished in three ways:

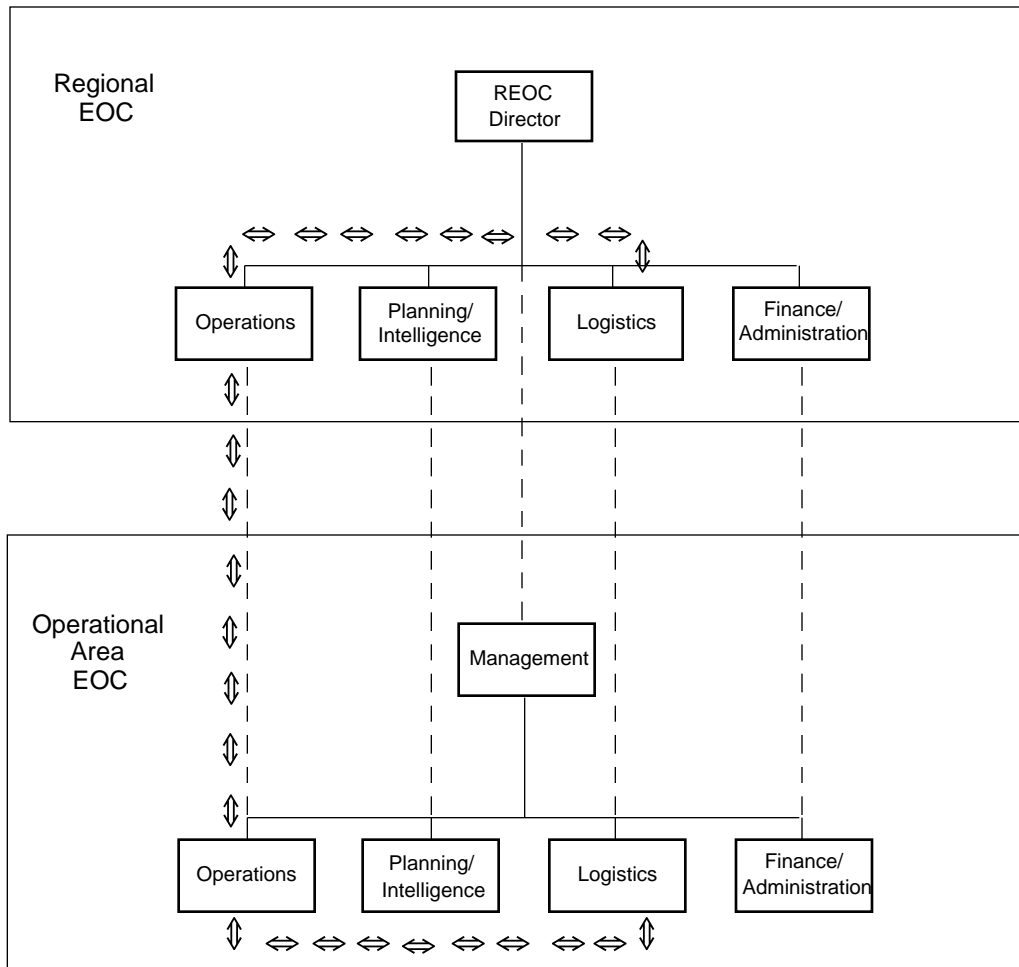
- The REOC sends liaison representatives to the operational area.
- The operational area sends a liaison representative(s) to the REOC.
- The operational area and REOC coordinate through telecommunications (telephone, radio, OASIS).

The REOC plans to send OES Agency Representatives to activated operational area EOCs to facilitate communications and coordination. An operational area may provide a representative to the REOC when the presence of a liaison would facilitate coordination and information exchange. The REOC Director (OES Regional Administrator) may request that a representative be sent by the operational area. In minor situations that necessitate only limited staffing of operational area and regional EOCs, telecommunications may be a sufficient method of coordination.

Coordination and communications between operational area and region EOCs will be primarily along functional lines as illustrated in Exhibit 8. Coordination and communications will occur between the five SEMS functions at the operational area level and their counterparts at the regional level. In addition coordination and communication may occur between organizational elements under a SEMS function and counterpart elements at the other level as illustrated in Exhibit 9. The OES Agency Representative assigned to the Operational Area performs in an information and coordination role to ensure effective communication is taking place between functions. Agency Representatives do not replace or perform roles assigned to functions.

Direct coordination and communications will also be established between Operational Area Mutual Aid Coordinators and Regional Mutual Aid Coordinators. These coordinators may be functioning from their respective operational area and regional EOCs or from other locations depending on the situation and the mutual aid system. Mutual aid requests for resources within the inventories of the mutual aid system will be placed from the Operational Area Mutual Aid Coordinator to the Regional Mutual Aid Coordinator. Requests for other resources will be channeled through the logistics function at the operational area EOC and REOC.

Exhibit 8  
**Operational Area EOC - Regional EOC  
 Primary Interactions**

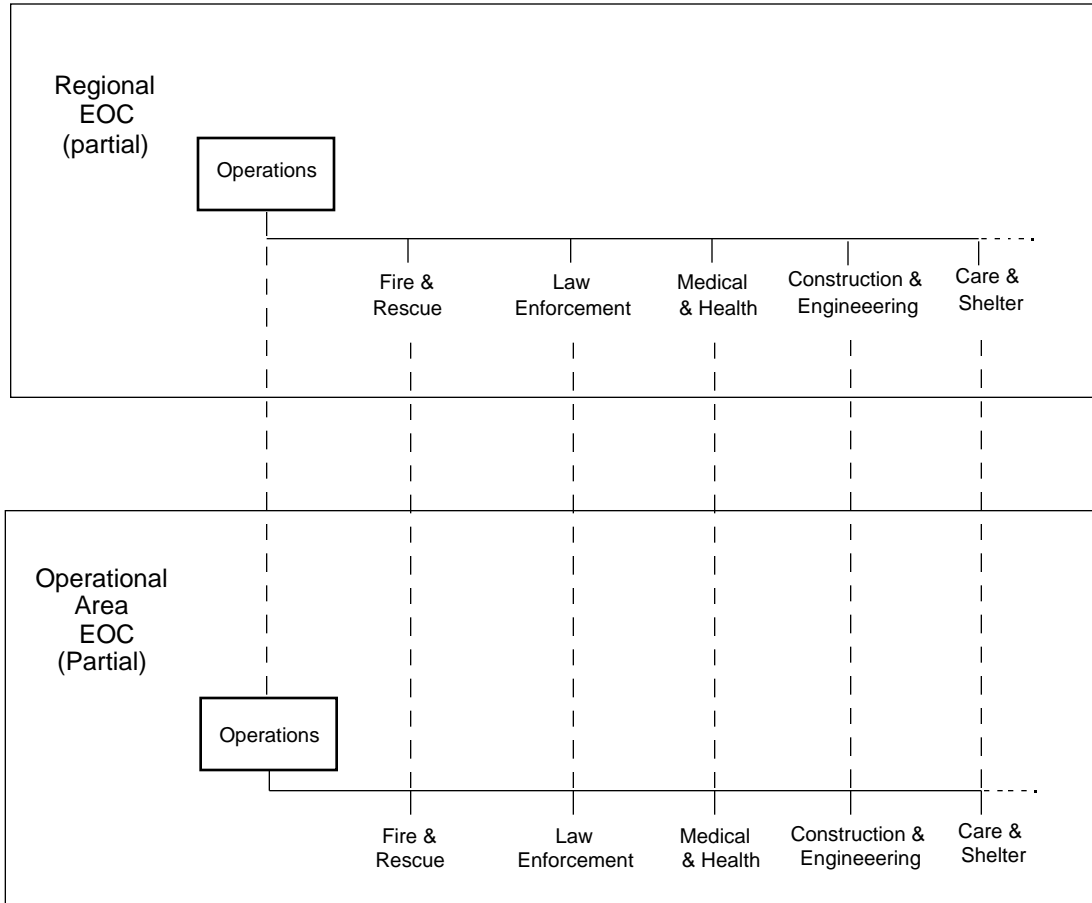


- Lines of management authority and internal coordination
- - - - Primary lines of communication and coordination between levels
- ↔ ↔ Primary interactions for priority resource allocation for resources coordinated through the operational area EOC and REOC. Coordination must also be established with Operational Area and Regional Mutual Aid Coordinators.

Agency Representatives also will facilitate communications and coordination as needed.



Exhibit 9  
**Example**  
**Operational Area EOC- Regional EOC**  
**Functional Interactions within a SEMS Function**



--- Lines of communication and coordination

**Notes:**

Agency Representatives also will facilitate communications and coordination as needed.

This diagram focuses on interactions between EOCs. Interactions among functional elements within an EOC are also essential for coordination.

## **E. Coordination between Regional and State Levels**

Response coordination with mutual aid regions and operational areas will be maintained at the State OES Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC ) level whenever possible.

SEMS regulations require activation of the State level EOC when a REOC is activated. The State Operations Center (SOC) will ensure that all state and regional elements of the Standardized Emergency Management System are activated in a timely manner, function effectively, and are maintained at the level necessary for the response. The State SOC will function as the state's initial response entity until the appropriate REOCs can be activated and assume local management of their operational response functions.

The State level will have an overall coordination role with REOCs in the event of simultaneous multi-regional disasters such as earthquakes, fires or floods. In this situation, the state SOC will provide inter-regional policy direction and coordination for emergencies involving more than one REOC activation. The SOC will monitor and facilitate as necessary inter-regional communications and coordination issues.

The level of coordination required with the REOC will be determined by the type of emergency, the ability of the REOC to perform assigned functions, and the level of required interaction between the two state levels.

While the REOC will have primary responsibility for State interaction with affected Operational Areas, the State SOC will perform the following functions which will require close interaction with the REOC.

1. Prepare and release the State Situation Report. Information for this report will be obtained from regional situation reports, conference calls, reports from other state agencies, and information received from any other valid information sources as determined by OES. It will be the responsibility of the SOC to collect and authenticate material from all available sources, and to compile and release Situation Reports on a schedule to be established. Extensive coordination with functional elements within the REOC serving the affected area will be required as well as information received from activated but non-affected REOCs.
2. Develop state level public information announcements. In any major disaster which involves multiple state agencies, it is essential that there be coordination of the release of public information on the state response. Much of this information will be obtained from REOC Situation Reports, from coordination with REOC Information Sections, and from information and public affairs officers of assisting state agencies.
3. Coordinate the involvement of all activated mutual aid systems to ensure they are functioning effectively, sharing information, and to ensure there are no duplications of resource ordering taking place through the several mutual aid channels.

4. Ensure REOC SOC coordination takes place in the event that federal Emergency Support Functions are established at more than one REOC location or are required at both SOC and REOCs. Coordinate the State Federal interactions to ensure most effective application and use of federal response system.

#### **F. Coordination with the Federal Emergency Response**

It is planned that the REOC will become the primary point of coordination with the Federal emergency response during a major disaster. The REOC must be able to immediately respond to operational area resource requests and information needs. In some cases, accomplishing this will require a joint state-federal interaction which can best be accomplished if state and federal counterpart organizations are working together at the same location.

FEMA plans that in the event of a Federal Declaration, Emergency Support Functions (ESF) activated under the Federal Response Plan in support of the state will be represented at the REOC. State functional elements and counterpart Federal ESF personnel should work closely together in a collocated and in some cases a combined functional environment when possible.

Federal ESF functions may also be located at the SOC. This could occur under at least two situations.

- The SOC is the primary state response entity.
- Certain overall state coordination functions are best performed at the SOC and require federal ESF involvement.