

# Introduction to SEMS Guidelines

## Purpose of SEMS Guidelines

SEMS guidelines are intended to assist those responsible for planning, implementing and participating in SEMS by:

- explaining further the principles and operating concepts of SEMS as set forth in regulations,
- describing how SEMS functions at field response, local government, operational area, region, and state levels and the relationships among levels,
- providing models and examples that may be used to plan and develop SEMS,
- describing how existing plans and systems fit with SEMS,
- describing the role of various levels of government, special districts, and private and volunteer agencies in SEMS,
- describing the system for maintaining and improving SEMS.

SEMS Guidelines are not regulations, do not alter regulations, and do not set standards for compliance. The models and examples contained in the SEMS Guidelines are not intended to be the only ways to implement SEMS.

## SEMS Documentation

Documentation specific to SEMS includes:

Government Code Section §8607(a)--Statute which directs the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) to establish SEMS by regulation.

California Code of Regulations §2400-2450--Regulations establishing SEMS.

SEMS Guidelines--Guidance for emergency response agencies on planning, developing, operating and maintaining SEMS consistent with regulations.

SEMS Approved Courses of Instruction--Training courses for emergency response personnel at field and emergency operations center (EOC) levels developed pursuant to SEMS Regulations. The approved courses include an Introductory Course, Field Level Course (Incident Command System), EOC Course, and Executive Course. Further information on the approved courses is provided in Part III of the Guidelines.

## Organization of the Guidelines

This SEMS Guidelines document is organized in three parts:

Part I. System Description explains how SEMS is intended to work. The General System Description provides an overview of the entire system and the general interactions between levels of the system. It is followed by a section on each of the SEMS levels: field response, local government, operational area, regional and state.

Part II. Planning and Developing SEMS provides initial guidance for emergency response agencies on steps that need to be taken to develop the system at each level.

Part III. Supporting Documents includes the SEMS Maintenance System document which describes the roles of the SEMS Advisory Board, Technical Group and Regional Advisory Committees in the ongoing development and maintenance of SEMS. Part III also contains a series of documents that provide additional information on specific topics useful to emergency response agencies, such as action planning, after-action reports, and a glossary.

Persons with SEMS responsibilities are encouraged to read the entire guidelines for a thorough understanding of the development, operation, and maintenance of SEMS. At a minimum, they should read Part I. A. General System Description, the applicable sections of Part I and Part II for their respective level(s), and Part III SEMS Maintenance System. State and local government agency officials with responsibilities for field level personnel should read the field response level sections of Part I and Part II. Local government officials with emergency operations center or department operations center responsibilities should read the sections on both local government and operational area levels. (Special districts are defined as local governments in SEMS.) State agency officials with emergency operations center or department operations center responsibilities may need to read the regional and/or state level sections.

The guidelines section for each SEMS level is intended to be a comprehensive discussion of that level including interactions with other levels. This results in some redundancy between sections.

## Relationship to Other Plans and Guidelines

Many emergency planning documents were developed prior to the establishment of SEMS. The general relationship of key documents to the SEMS Guidelines is described briefly below.

State Emergency Plan and Supporting Plans--The State Emergency Plan is the primary document guiding the state's response during emergencies. It defines emergency roles and responsibilities of State agencies. SEMS regulations and guidelines do not change the individual agency roles and responsibilities in existing laws or as described in the

State Emergency Plan. SEMS Guidelines describe the system in which these agencies will function. The current State Emergency Plan (1990) is generally compatible with SEMS, but the plan will be updated to more clearly show the relationship with SEMS. There are also state supporting plans that will be reviewed and updated for consistency with SEMS (discussed further in Guidelines Part II. D).

Multi-Hazard Functional Planning Guidance (MHFP)--The MHFP provides local emergency planning guidance in the form of a model plan. Most jurisdictions have used the MHFP as the basis for their emergency plan. The MHFP is organized around key emergency response functions. The SEMS Guidelines do not propose a model plan format, but do provide the organizational framework in which MHFP functions and other emergency functions can be placed. Some updating of local plans that are based on the MHFP will be necessary for consistency with SEMS. The relationship of the current MHFP to SEMS is discussed further in Guidelines Part II.B. Local Government.

Mutual Aid Plans and Support Documentation--Several documents describe the workings of mutual aid systems in California, including the Master Mutual Aid Agreement, Mutual Aid Handbook, and discipline-specific mutual aid plans, such as fire, law enforcement and medical. SEMS does not change existing mutual aid systems; mutual aid is part of the framework of SEMS. SEMS Guidelines provide an overview of mutual aid systems in the state and discuss the relationship of mutual aid coordinators to operational area, regional, and state EOCs. Readers interested in detailed information on discipline specific mutual aid systems should review the appropriate discipline-specific mutual aid plan and supporting documentation.

OASIS, Operational Area Satellite Information System, Interim Guidelines--The OASIS guidelines describe an information and resource tracking system for operational areas. It defines data and forms to be reported for key functions that include the MHFP functions. The OASIS functional approach and use of the operational area concept is compatible with SEMS. The functions in OASIS, like the MHFP functions, can be placed in the organizational framework of SEMS. It is anticipated that final OASIS Guidelines will identify data needed for essential SEMS functions and will become part of SEMS Guidelines.

## **Background on SEMS Development**

### **History**

As a result of events during the 1991 East Bay Hills fire, Senator Petris introduced SB 1841 (chaptered as Government Code Section 8607, effective January 1, 1993). This statute directs the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES), in coordination with all interested state agencies with designated response roles in the state emergency plan and interested local emergency management agencies, to establish by regulation the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). The framework of SEMS

includes the Incident Command System (ICS), multi-agency or inter-agency coordination, Master Mutual Aid Agreement and system, and operational area concept.

## **Regulation Development**

OES established the SEMS Development Advisory Committee to assist in the development of the system and regulations. Chaired by the Deputy Director, Planning and Disaster Assistance, OES, members include:

### Representing Local Government Emergency Management

- Mutual Aid Region I--Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
- Mutual Aid Region II--City of Oakland Office of Emergency Services
- Mutual Aid Region III--Redding Fire Department
- Mutual Aid Region IV--San Joaquin Co. Office of Emergency Services (previous)  
Placer County Office of Emergency Services (current)
- Mutual Aid Region V--Kern County Emergency Medical Services Department
- Mutual Aid Region VI--Riverside County Fire Department, Emergency Services  
Division (previous)  
City of San Diego Emergency Management Office  
(previous)  
Rancho Cucamonga Office of Emergency Services (current)

### Representing Law Enforcement

- Tuolumne County Sheriff's Office

### Representing Fire Services

- Orange County Fire Department

### Representing Utilities

- East Bay Municipal Utilities District
- Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

### Representing State Agencies

- Emergency Medical Services Authority
- Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
- State Fire Marshal
- California Highway Patrol
- Military Department
- Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training

Using a facilitated round table process, the advisory committee began meeting March 16, 1993, to develop the Standardized Emergency Management System and to write the proposed regulations. In this process, the committee considered the current structure and responsibilities of the full range of emergency management in California. They identified five emergency management levels (field, local government,

operational area, regional, and state) and the responsibilities and methods of operations the levels have in common and those which are unique. The committee then developed and approved regulations addressing the levels, responsibilities, and methods of operations, and incorporating ICS, multi-agency or inter-agency coordination, the operational area concept, and mutual aid.

OES also established an internal SEMS Coordination Committee. The Statewide Emergency Planning Committee (SWEPC), a standing committee with membership from 48 state agencies, has also met to provide input to the system and regulations.

The proposed regulations were subject to a review and public hearing process. Comments received in the process were considered by the Advisory Committee. The final adopted regulations became effective September 2, 1994 as Title 19, Division 2, Chapter 1 of the California Code of Regulations.

### **Guidelines and Training Course Development**

The SEMS Advisory Committee continues in existence to assist in the development of an approved course of instruction for SEMS, guidance materials, and other activities related to implementation of the system. The committee established a Guidelines and Training Working Group to develop SEMS guidelines and the Approved SEMS Course of Instruction. Working group membership includes representatives from:

- Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
- Commission on Peace Officer's Standards and Training
- Kern County Emergency Medical Services Department
- Orange County Fire Department
- Governor's Office of Emergency Services
- Rancho Cucamonga Office of Emergency Services
- California Highway Patrol
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
- California Emergency Medical Services Authority
- State Fire Marshal's Office
- East Bay Municipal Utilities District
- City of San Diego Emergency Management Office
- City of Los Angeles Police Department

State OES contracted with consultants to assist the working group in developing guidelines and training courses. The working group and consultants developed draft SEMS Guidelines and SEMS Training Courses for review by the Advisory Committee. Advisory Committee members also asked a limited number of additional local government and agency representatives to review and comment on the draft guidelines. Comments were addressed and the final draft Guidelines and Training Courses were provided to OES.