

Part II. Planning and Developing SEMS

Section A

Field Response Level

1. Who should use ICS?

All agencies with response personnel who may be involved in incidents at the field level should use the Incident Command System (ICS). SEMS regulations require local government emergency response agencies to use ICS at the field level in order to be eligible for state reimbursement of response related personnel costs. State agencies must use ICS for field level response. Volunteer and private agencies that may be assisting or cooperating agencies at an incident should use ICS.

A first step in planning for SEMS at the field level is to determine which agencies and departments have field level response personnel. Some agencies respond to emergencies on a day-to-day basis. Other agencies will become involved in emergency response to major incidents, or emergencies occurring on or affecting people on the agencies' property or facilities. All such agencies should use ICS in their field response. All state and local government agencies should review their operations to determine if they have personnel who may become involved in emergencies at the field level.

Some local governments and state agencies contract for emergency response services. Agencies that contract for emergency services should ensure that their contracts include provisions for compliance with SEMS requirements.

Local Government Emergency Response Agencies at the Field Level

SEMS regulations define an emergency response agency as any organization responding to an emergency, or providing mutual aid support to such an organization, whether in the field, at the scene of an incident, or to an operations center. Local government agencies and departments that typically have personnel who may respond to emergencies in the field include, but are not limited to:

- Fire Services
- Law Enforcement
- Emergency Medical Services
- Public Works

- Street and Road
- Transportation
- Water/Wastewater
- Levee Maintenance/Flood Control
- Coroner/Medical Examiner
- Utilities
- Environmental Health
- Parks and Recreation
- School Districts

The above list is provided only as examples of agencies that may have emergency responsibilities at the field level. Other agencies may be involved occasionally in field level emergency response. It is the responsibility of local government agencies to review their operations to determine if they have emergency response personnel.

State Emergency Response Agencies at the Field Level

The State Emergency Plan describes the roles of state emergency response agencies. It is the primary source used to identify state agencies who may respond to emergencies at the field level. Some of these agencies are frequently involved in emergency responses; others may become involved in particular circumstances. State agencies and departments with field emergency response personnel who should use ICS, include, but are not limited to, the following agencies:

- Air Resource Control Board
- Alcoholic Beverage Control
- CALTRANS
- Conservation Corps
- Corrections
- Division of Oil and Gas (Conservation)
- Fish and Game
- Fire Marshal
- Forestry
- Food and Agriculture
- General Services
- Health Services
- Highway Patrol
- Industrial Relations
- Justice
- Mental Health
- Military Department
- Office of Emergency Services
- Office of Statewide Health Planning & Development
- Parks and Recreation
- State Lands Commission
- State Police
- State University
- University of California
- Water Resources
- Water Resources Control Board
- Youth Authority

2. Policies and Procedures

Agencies and departments that have field response personnel should adopt policies and procedures for using ICS. The policies should be communicated clearly to all personnel who may be involved in field level response. This includes personnel who directly respond to field incidents and those who may be coordinating with field responders from a departmental operations center or an EOC.

Field manuals and standard operating procedures should be updated to reflect the use of ICS. Manuals that include ICS positions checklists should be available to field personnel. Sample ICS position descriptions are included in Guidelines Part III.

3. Training

SEMS regulations require emergency response agencies to ensure that their emergency response personnel maintain minimum training competencies pursuant to the approved SEMS course of instruction. An approved SEMS field level curriculum is available that provides minimum training competencies for response personnel. Minimum competencies are identified as performance objectives in the approved SEMS courses. The approved SEMS course of instruction is described in Guidelines Part III. Agencies using an alternate training course should be able to demonstrate that the required competencies are being maintained.

Agencies should develop a training plan that provides for training all existing field personnel as rapidly as feasible. Agencies with large numbers of field personnel to be trained may have to establish priorities for training. First priority should generally be given to those who have supervisory responsibilities in the field. A program should also be kept in place to train new personnel as they are hired.

Emergency response agencies should document the training provided to emergency response personnel. SEMS training documentation may be integrated with an agency's normal training documentation system. Agencies that do not currently have a training documentation system should establish a record-keeping system for SEMS training.

It is recommended that a SEMS training record-keeping system include:

- An individual training record for each person, kept either in their personnel file or in a separate training record file. The name of the course, instructor, location, and date of the course should be included in the training record.
- Maintenance of the individual training record for as long as the person is employed in a position that involves an emergency response role. Records of personnel involved in an actual emergency should be kept at least until any training compliance issues have been resolved.
- Documentation of the agency's SEMS training program including copies of the training materials used, such as, instructor syllabus, lesson plans, student notebook, exercises, and tests.

4. Exercising

Exercises are the best method of testing plans and procedures, without experiencing an actual emergency. As soon as practical, agencies should begin using ICS in field exercises.

Agencies that routinely respond to emergencies should also conduct periodic exercises to prepare their personnel for major, non-routine incidents, such as, major hazardous materials spills, airliner crashes, building collapses, and multi-casualty incidents. Agencies that may be involved in major incidents and disasters, but do not routinely respond to emergencies, should participate in exercises to give their personnel experience with using ICS. It is particularly valuable to conduct multi-agency and multijurisdictional exercises. Exercises may be field level exercises or may be full scale exercises involving coordination with EOCs.

State and local government emergency response agencies should develop an exercise program that provides field level exercises periodically as needed by agency personnel. It is recommended that emergency response agencies participate in at least one field level exercise annually. This may be accomplished through participation in a full scale exercise. Actual major incident responses may meet the annual exercise need. State agencies with large numbers of field personnel are encouraged to conduct exercises within each of their regions or districts and participate in local government agency field exercises when appropriate.

5. Planning Checklist

The following planning checklist focuses on the specific SEMS items that should be considered by emergency response agencies in planning and developing the field response level. It is not intended to be an all encompassing emergency planning checklist for emergency response agencies.

Policies and Procedures

- Has the agency adopted policies for using ICS in field response as part of SEMS?
- Has the policy been communicated to all personnel?
- Have field manuals and standard operating procedures been updated to incorporate ICS?
- Do field manuals for all personnel include ICS position checklists?

Training

- Has the agency developed a training plan?

- Does the plan provide for training all existing emergency response personnel?
- Does the plan provide for training newly hired personnel?
- Does the training plan provide for use of the state approved SEMS training curriculum? or a an alternate program that provides for the same minimum training competencies?
- Have the necessary funds been budgeted to meet the training plan timetable?
- Has the agency considered joint training with other agencies to reduce costs?
- If training is provided in-house, has the agency identified qualified instructors and appropriate train-the-trainer courses for them?
- Has the agency qualified its courses for certification by POST, State Fire Academy, or other agency as appropriate?
- Has the agency developed a method for documenting the training program including records of all personnel trained?
- Has someone been designated with responsibility to monitor the implementation of the training plan to ensure that timetables are met and quality of training is ensured?

Exercising

- Has the agency developed a program for exercising on an annual or more frequent basis?
- Is the exercise program coordinated with other agencies for multi-agency or multi-jurisdictional field exercises?
- Does the exercise program provide for participation in full-scale exercises?