

Emergency Management Terms and Concepts

Emergency or Crisis – Elements of a crisis include, an event that poses a threat, has an element of surprise, a limited response time, interrupts operations, and threatens the safety of people. (Zdiarski, E. L., Dunkel, N.W., & Rollo, J.M., 2007). In the scope of emergency management, crisis is often a better term to describe an event that needs a non-routine response, but government agencies and society in general are often more comfortable with the term emergency. For example, the Federal government definition of an emergency is: “Absent a Presidentially declared emergency, any incident(s), human-caused or natural, that requires responsive action to protect life or property. Under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, an emergency means any occasion or instance for which, in the determination of the President, Federal assistance is needed to supplement State and local efforts and capabilities to save lives and to protect property and public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe in any part of the United States” (U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration [FEMA], 2005).

Emergency Management - Emergency management is the managerial function charged with developing a structure for organizations or communities to reduce their vulnerability to hazards and respond to disasters. The function helps protect populations by coordinating and integrating all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from threatened or actual natural disasters, acts of terrorism, or other man-made disasters. All-hazards emergency management leads to the development of a single system in which organizations use an *Emergency Management Cycle (process)* to be prepared for the variety of events they might face (International Association of Emergency Managers [IAEM], 2008).

Emergency Management Cycle (process) – An all-hazards, circular, four part process that begins at any point in the continuum of the process, but usually starts with *mitigation*, which are steps to prevent a crisis event or lessen its impact, leading to *preparedness* involving the planning for various crisis or emergencies, followed by *response* process, if they occur, then *recovery* a effort aimed at returning to a previous state, including resumption of normal activities. Recovery may be a multi-stepped process with many intermediate steps that lead to eventual recovery. After a crisis, the process should be started again with a post event evaluation that can lead to further mitigation and planning efforts (Lindell et al, 2006).

Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) – In 1978, President Jimmy Carter reorganized the national emergency response effort. This created the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), whose director reported directly to the President. Now the director reports as an Under Secretary to the Department of Homeland Security. (Lindell, Prater, and Perry, 2006). The primary mission of FEMA is to reduce the loss of life and property and

protect the nation from all hazards; including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters, by leading and supporting a national, risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation (U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration [FEMA], 2008).

Emergency Management Agency (local and state) – Various Federal regulations have required state and local governments to develop emergency planning and response committees, aimed at considering specific issues. Often their roles have been expanded to meet local needs for emergency management based on perceived local risks and resources. Agencies from outside the community, such as state emergency management agencies and FEMA, have a great deal of influence on local emergency management policies and practices (Lindell et al, 2006). Because the emergency management process is fundamentally a local issue, the local government is often the lead agency, until the request specific assistance from state or Federal agencies. State law or executive policy often dictates how this will happen.

Local emergency management agencies typically have horizontal linkages with personnel in police, fire, emergency medical services, public works, and emergency management/homeland security departments. At the municipal level, all of these departments report to (i.e., have a vertical linkage with) their jurisdiction's chief administrative officer (CAO), such as a mayor or city manager, who has direct supervisory authority over them. The CAO is responsible for ensuring these departments perform their assigned duties within the requirements of the law and accomplish these functions within the time and funds allocated to them. Accordingly, the CAO has the authority to hire, fire, allocate funds, and evaluate performance. However, the CAO typically is not an expert in public safety, emergency medicine, or emergency management and, therefore, cannot provide these departments with guidance on how to perform their missions most effectively. Thus, city and county agencies frequently have vertical linkages with corresponding agencies at the state (and sometimes federal) level that provide technical, and sometimes financial, assistance. Because agencies at higher (state and federal) levels of government lack the legal authority to compel performance by the corresponding agencies at lower (county and city) levels, their relationship is sometimes represented as a "dotted line" relationship in organizational charts. In turn, the agencies at the state level report to the governor in a line relationship just as the agencies at the local level report to their jurisdictions' CAOs (Lindell et al, 2006).

Incident Command Structure (ICS) – A standardized and very flexible all-hazards incident management system designed to provide an integrated organizational structure that reflects the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents through the life cycle of the event. Its management tools allow for the integration of resources across jurisdictional or organizational boundaries. ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and

communications operating within a common organizational structure, designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. It is used for all kinds of emergencies and is applicable to small as well as large and complex incidents. ICS is used by various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private, to organize field-level incident management operations. It has been used by firefighters, hazardous materials teams, rescuers and emergency medical teams for several decades. (FEMA, 2005). Important characteristics of ICS include: common terminology, a modular organizational structure, provisions for the establishment and transfer of incident command, unified command, manageable spans of control, comprehensive resource management, and common communications systems (U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration [FEMA], 2004).

National Incident Management System (NIMS) – As part of this restructuring mandated by Homeland Security Presidential Directive HSPD-5, the National Response Plan (NRP) with its foundation in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a requirement for all governmental agencies. NIMS is a framework for incident management at all jurisdictional levels regardless of the cause, size or complexity of the incident. Building upon the Incident Command System (ICS), the NIMS provides the nation's first responders and authorities with the same foundation for incident management for terrorist attacks, natural disasters and other emergencies (U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration [FEMA], 2008). NIMS standardizes terminology and procedures at the national level in order to maximize the effectiveness of response to the very largest disasters or incidents of national significance. After 2005, no Federal preparedness assistance is to be provided to jurisdictions that have failed to adopt the NIMS. Private sector organizations are encouraged to develop emergency response plans that include information-sharing and incident-reporting protocols that fit in with local, state, and federal response plans (Lindell et al, 2006).

Incident Commander (IC) - An individual designated to be responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and the release of resources. The agency that the individual represents is usually dictated by the type of incident and related Emergency Operations Plans. In large, multi-agency response efforts several lead persons may represent their agency/organization, but they report to only one IC. In a university, this role is usually designated depending on the type of incident. Police agencies often take the IC role for a majority of event types routinely encountered. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site (FEMA, 2005).

Command Post or Incident Command Post (ICP) - The location at which the primary tactical-level, on-scene incident command functions are performed. This is the physical location of the Incident Commander and the much of the incident command personnel. The ICP may be located

with other incident specific facilities or the EOC and, as possible, is identified by a green flashing light (FEMA, 2005).

Public Information Officer (PIO) - A member of the Incident Command Staff responsible for interfacing with the public and media or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements. In a university, university relations or news service often serves this role. They can be part of a Joint Information Center (JIC), which is established to coordinate all incident-related public information activities. The JIC is a central point of contact for all news media for the event and should include PIO's from all participating agencies (FEMA, 2005).

Incident Action Plan (IAP) - An oral or written plan containing general objectives reflecting the overall strategy for managing a specific incident. This can be part of the response to an emergency event developed prior to a large event that may require a multi-agency emergency response. Development of this incident specific plan should include all agencies who will be part of the response. Large events on a university that might benefit from an IAP are large gatherings, sporting events, or special visitations. The IAP should include the identification of operational resources, assignments, and may also include information providing direction and management oversight of the incident during one or more operational period (FEMA, 2005).

Staging Area - A location or locations established by the Incident Command Structure (usually controlled by the Operations Section of the command or management structure) during an event where resources (human or physical) can be placed while awaiting assignment in efforts to respond to recovery from a crisis event. This is often the location that support resources such as those supplied by a Student Affairs organization, not involved in the initial response, will be asked to report (FEMA, 2005).

Emergency Operations Center (EOC) - A physical location for the coordination of information and resources in support of an incident requiring the implementation of the Incident Command Structure. It is a multi-agency coordination center that may be a temporary facility or may be located in a more central or permanently established facility, perhaps at a higher level of organization within a jurisdiction or organization. It does not have to operate using ICS, but supports its implementation for the incident. EOCs may be organized by major functional disciplines (e.g., fire, law enforcement, and medical services), by jurisdiction (e.g., Federal, State, county, organization), or some combination thereof. Core functions include: coordination; communications; resource dispatch and tracking; and information collection, analysis and dissemination (FEMA, 2005 and FEMA, 2008).

WebEOC® - A Emergency Operations Center (EOC) software package developed by ESi used, among other commercial products, by Federal agencies, state agencies, local jurisdictions, and universities to create a virtual EOC. It utilizes the internet to create a web-based crisis

information management system. It allows for the functions of an EOC to be located across a jurisdiction, state or region (ESi, 2008).

Family Assistance Center – A family assistance center is designed to facilitate the exchange of information and to address the families' needs. Families and friends may spend many long hours waiting anxiously for information about their loved ones. The family assistance center provides the families with accurate information in an appropriate manner and setting. Families travel to emergency sites and can be away from home for some time. Other families could be displaced as a result of a disaster. The family assistance center addresses the basic physical needs, including food, shelter, transportation, telephones, and emergency services, that these families often will have (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009).

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) - A Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is part of a Federal program that seeks to create educated local response teams for emergencies that may impact their area. Through local agencies or universities the teams are trained in basic disaster response skills. CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood and university following an event, when professional responders are not immediately available to help and also in support of emergency response agencies by taking an active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community (U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration [FEMA], 2007). Many university service learning opportunities exist in the CERT concept.

American Red Cross – This premier emergency response non-governmental organization (NGO) was founded in 1881. In addition to offering neutral humanitarian care to the victims of war, it distinguishes itself by also aiding victims of disasters. In addition to domestic disaster relief, the American Red Cross provides services in other areas including: helping the needy; supporting military members and their families; the collection of blood and blood products; health and safety programs; and international relief programs (American Red Cross, 2008).

University Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) – A university organization that normally supports highly technical functions including, disposal of hazardous materials, proper handling of chemical, radiological, and biological materials, interpretation of federal regulations, insuring a safe working environment for personnel, emergency planning, and assuring fire safety in residence halls. In emergency situations it often performs the Safety Officer role in the Incident Command Structure and acts as Incident Commander in fire and hazardous materials incidents (College Safety Health and Environmental Management Association [CSHEMA], 2008).

University Police and Public Safety – A specialized university organization serving as the primary campus law enforcement agency providing the basic functions for the criminal justice services and many related service functions which can serve to reduce the opportunity for crime. It provides supportive service functions including: educational programming, crime prevention,

analysis and enhancement of physical facilities such as lighting, access control, and escort services serve to reduce individual apprehensions of crime and facilitate functioning of the community (International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, 2008). In emergency situations it provides primary response to most incidents, develops the initial incident command structure, and often acts as the Incident Commander for most types of university crisis situations.

Crisis Communications Plan – A plan that details how an organization will communicate with employees, local authorities, customers and other stakeholders during and after a crisis. This formal plan should delegate communication responsibilities, especially related to who will serve as the public spokesperson and how critical information will be communicated within the organization. The role of senior leadership in the process should be clearly defined and communicated to all parties prior to an emergency. If not formalized in some other emergency planning documents this plan should include methods and responsibilities for communication with state and local government agencies, particularly emergency management officials.

Business Continuity Planning (BCP) – A management process that helps an organization maintain its operations/services in the face of a disruptive event. Its goal is to develop the ability to continue the operations of an organization and the the delivery of its services during a crisis or other disruption. This is often accomplished through the use of a Business Continuity Plan (BCP), which is a documented set of procedures and information intended to deliver continuity of critical functions in the event of a disruption. Resources to be used and operational procedures that function outside of normal processes are key elements to the plan. Sometimes this term is used just in conjunction with only Information Technology aspects of operation (also called Disaster Recovery Planning), but many times its use is related to all functions across an organization (Her Majesty's Government, Cabinet Office, 2008).

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) – A planning process that ensures continuity of essential government functions across the Federal Executive Branch. This has expanded to other Federal branches, along with state and local governments. Oversight and coordination of this effort is provided for in Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 67, which establishes the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as the lead agency for Federal Executive Branch COOP. Included in this responsibility is the requirement to formulate guidance and establish common standards for agencies to use in developing viable, executable COOP plans; facilitate interagency coordination as appropriate; and oversee and assess the status of COOP capabilities. The term may be seen in public universities as they may operate within state government programs (U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration [FEMA], 2008).

Disaster Recovery Plan – A process or plan usually related to Business Continuity Planning for Information Technology (IT) systems and processes. This term is usually limited to IT operations and the recovery of those systems following a disruptive crisis.

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