

North Central Texas
Council of Governments

ICS/ICS-LIKE EOC HANDBOOK DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

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IEM is a global consulting firm for emergency management, security, strategic performance, and sustainability. We combine objective, scientific analysis with a broad spectrum of experience to provide practical, effective solutions for public and private sectors.

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- Marcie Bruner, North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)
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- Candice Forsyth, NCTCOG
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I. Purpose

The ICS/ICS-like EOC Handbook Development Guide serves as a “how to” manual to accompany the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Incident Command System (ICS)/ICS-like Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Handbook Templates. The ICS/ICS-like EOC Handbook Templates were developed in line with National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) guidance, subject matter expertise, and industry best practices related to the operation of an EOC using an ICS or ICS-like organizational structure. In turn, handbook templates were developed for each of the following EOC sections: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration.

The templates establish common elements and a structure for each jurisdiction’s EOC handbook. The handbooks serve to enhance the capabilities of the region’s EOCs during activation, operations, and demobilization by creating consistency among the region’s EOCs operational procedures.

In total, three sets of EOC Handbook Templates were developed to accommodate the most common organizational structures in the NCTCOG jurisdictions: ICS/ICS-like, Incident Support, and Departmental. All three sets of handbook templates contain shared elements to further establish a similar approach for EOC handbooks despite differences in organizational and operational approaches. For convenience of access, the handbooks are posted online at <https://nctcog.org/ep/resources/eoc-handbook-templates>.

The templates provide a starting point for any North Central Texas jurisdiction to develop its own EOC handbooks no matter if the jurisdiction activates its EOC every month or every few years, no matter whether the jurisdiction has an emergency management staff of one or twenty. The templates provide a flexible starting point, allowing jurisdictions to tailor their handbooks based on organizational and operational needs.

II. Using the ICS/ICS-like EOC Handbook Templates

Each ICS/ICS-like EOC handbook template includes instructions highlighted in grey to ensure users can easily identify directions. All directions should be deleted before finalizing the handbooks. Grey highlights are also used to indicate when a user should insert jurisdiction-specific content, such as (Name of Jurisdiction) to tailor the handbook. In some cases, placeholder content is used to provide examples, such as EOC floor plans and EOC organizational charts. Jurisdiction-specific content should be used to replace placeholders.

Handbook Layout

The ICS/ICS-like handbook templates cover general topics followed by position- and unit-specific sections. The general topics focus on providing clear background information to assist EOC personnel to understand the purpose of the EOC and its organizational elements along with providing information specific to the jurisdiction’s EOC. Please note, the command handbook contains all four section chief positions, which are also presented in their specific sections’ handbooks. The position- and unit-specific portion of the handbook templates provide position and unit descriptions, responsibilities, and checklists.

Developing Introductory Materials

The ICS/ICS-like EOC handbook templates present standard introductory content that requires basic editing and tailoring by each jurisdiction. Below, each piece of the introductory materials is presented, defining its purpose and how to tailor the section.

Cover Page

The cover page identifies the title and date of approval for the EOC handbooks. The jurisdiction name and date information should be edited by the jurisdiction prior to finalizing the handbooks.

Approval and Implementation

The approval and implementation page outlines the purpose of the plan, noting it supersedes previous EOC handbooks/manuals, documents the current handbooks' approval, and implements the handbooks for use in the particular jurisdiction. The jurisdiction must update several pieces of information to ensure the approval and implementation page is accurate.

Record of Changes

The record of changes serves to document updates to the handbooks, ensuring the most up-to-date versions are in use. Each jurisdiction will document internal changes to handbooks once implemented.

Record of Distribution

The record of distribution serves to document who has received a copy of the Handbook. The distribution should include primary and backup personnel that are intended to fill positions with checklist within the handbook.

Handling Instructions

The handling instructions note the intended and allowable uses for the EOC handbooks in line with the Texas Public Information Act. The jurisdiction may edit the handling instructions based on direction by legal advisors.

Table of Contents

The table of contents serves as easy navigation tool reflecting the order of content in the EOC handbook. Each item listed in the table of contents is hyperlinked to the section it represents. To use the hyperlinks, press control and click on the link. Updating the table of contents after finalizing all other content will allow an accurate reflection of page numbers. To update, go to the table of contents and place the cursor within it, then press F9.

Developing EOC Operations Section

The EOC Operations section of the EOC handbook templates define the purpose of the handbooks in line with emergency response priorities; document applicable emergency response systems, laws, and authorities; and present ICS fundamentals, including key concepts and definitions. The section is divided into three overarching sections: Introduction and Purpose; Emergency Response, ICS Fundamentals, and Community Lifelines Integration; and EOC Concept of Operations. This is followed by the EOC General Responsibilities Checklist, EOC Activation Checklist, and EOC Demobilization Checklist. Below, each subsection of the EOC Operations Section is presented, defining its purpose and how to tailor the section.

Introduction and Purpose

The introduction and purpose subsections are defined below, and information on how to tailor each subsection is provided.

Introduction

The introduction section defines the reason for establishing the handbooks and how they support overarching public safety priorities. The section only requires inserting applicable jurisdiction information, but it can be edited further based on a jurisdiction's desired content.

Purpose

The purpose section establishes a foundational description of the handbooks and defines the goal of the handbooks. The section only requires inserting applicable jurisdiction information, but it can be edited further based on a jurisdiction's desired content.

Emergency Response, ICS Fundamentals, and Community Lifelines Integration

The emergency response, ICS fundamentals, and community lifelines integration sub-sections are defined below, and information on how to tailor each subsection is provided.

Emergency Response Systems, Laws, and Authorities

The emergency response systems, laws, and authorities section includes authorities established in the jurisdiction's emergency operations plan and applicable state and federal laws providing the legal basis for emergency operations and activities addressed in the EOC handbooks. Jurisdictions should document applicable local laws, statutes, ordinances, regulations, etc.

Incident Command System (ICS) Overview

The ICS overview section provides a brief description of ICS and its use in the EOC and in the field. The section is intended to act as a reference for EOC personnel. The section only requires inserting applicable jurisdiction-specific information, but it can be edited further based on a jurisdiction's desired content.

Unified Command

The unified command section provides a brief description of unified command, its design, and its purpose. The section is intended to act as a reference for EOC personnel. The section does not require editing, but it can be edited based on a jurisdiction's desired content.

Unified Coordination

The unified coordination section provides a brief description of unified coordination and its purpose. The content also includes a brief overview of the authorities of local elected officials and mutual aid. The section is intended to act as a reference for EOC personnel. The section does not require editing, but it can be edited based on a jurisdiction's desired content.

Disaster District Committees

The disaster district committees section provides a brief description of disaster district committees and defines their purpose. The section is intended to act as a reference for EOC personnel. The section does not require editing, but it can be edited based on a jurisdiction's desired content.

ICS Organizational Elements – Roles and Responsibilities

The ICS terms section provides a brief description of key ICS terms with a focus on organizational elements and locations. The section is intended to act as a reference for EOC personnel. The section does not require editing, but it can be edited based on a jurisdiction's desired content.

Planning P

The Planning P section provides a brief description of the ICS operational planning cycle. The section is intended to act as a reference for EOC personnel. The section also provides context for understanding the synchronization of field and EOC planning efforts. If the jurisdiction adheres strictly to the ICS planning cycle, the provided graphic does not require editing. In turn, if a jurisdiction uses a tailored Planning P, an accurate graphic should be inserted to replace the placeholder graphic. For example, some jurisdictions develop an EOC Action Plan in the EOC, rather than an Incident Action Plan, which should be reflected in the Planning P graphic.

ICS/EOC Interface

The ICS/EOC interface section focuses on describing how the EOC interfaces with incident command in the field while defining the differences in roles and responsibilities of the two organizations. In turn, it should be noted that some incidents may result in an EOC activation without an incident command (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic). The provided content is aligned with best practice as defined in NIMS and FEMA's G-191 ICS/EOC Interface Workshop. Each jurisdiction may edit the content based on local practices.

FEMA Community Lifeline Integration into Situational Awareness

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) established the concept of community lifelines to provide a construct to evaluate, and communicate about, the impacts of an emergency or disaster incident on key areas of a community required for life safety. The community lifeline integration section focuses on explaining how these lifelines are used to build situational awareness and inform the decision-making process.

EOC Concept of Operations

Starting with the EOC Concept of Operations (CONOPS) section, each section of the handbook template requires an increased level of development and inputs based on individual jurisdictions' operations. Each subsection of the CONOPS is presented below, defining its purpose and how to tailor the section. Many elements of the more general content may be copied directly from each jurisdictions' emergency operations plan (basic plan section). The CONOPS is focused on describing the jurisdictions approach to EOC operations. The CONOPS section explains what should happen, when, and at whose direction.

Overview: Emergency Response Organization, Assignments, and Responsibilities

The overview section introduces the role and purpose of the EOC within the context of emergency response and provides context for the broad assignments and responsibilities of the EOC as an organization. The provided content aligns directly with ICS as described in NIMS, but the content may require editing to match the individual approach of each jurisdiction's EOC.

Activation Levels

Each EOC has specific levels of activation, which should be reflected in this section. The placeholder table in this section provides a three-level approach for EOC activations in line with NIMS. The State of Texas uses four operational levels (Level IV: Normal Conditions; Level III: Increased Readiness Conditions; Level II: Escalated Response Conditions; and Level I: Emergency Conditions). The content may require editing to match the activation levels of each jurisdiction's EOC.

Activation Triggers

Activation triggers are used to determine when to activate an EOC and which level of activation is appropriate. Triggers for activation are highly specific to each jurisdiction. The content in this section is provided as a placeholder, and it should be edited for jurisdictions seeking to more clearly articulate when they activate the EOC and at what level.

ICS/ICS-like EOC Organization Chart

The EOC organization chart is focused on ensuring all EOC personnel understand the organization and where his/her role fits within that structure. The provided EOC organization chart is for an example of a fully activated EOC that uses an ICS or ICS-like model. The example graphic uses the commonly used colors for each EOC section, which also match the covers of each section's EOC handbooks (i.e., white = command, red = operations, etc.). A customized graphic can be developed based on the jurisdiction's organization chart to replace the example. Some jurisdictions may choose to provide an organization chart for each level of EOC activation to demonstrate changes in staffing.

ICS/ICS-like EOC Layout

The ICS/ICS-like EOC layout section provides examples based on the positions and units in the organization chart. The EOC layout is a tool to help orient staff. Since coordination is an essential element among and within each EOC section, orienting staff is essential. A customized graphic should be developed based on the jurisdiction's EOC layout to replace the examples.

EOC Organization: Emergency Response Positions, Units, and Responsibilities

The EOC organization section focuses on providing a description of each functional area, including roles and responsibilities. The language provided in the template is aligned with ICS as defined in NIMS. If a jurisdiction is strictly aligned, very little editing may be required. In turn, each jurisdiction should review the content closely to ensure differences in roles and responsibilities are assigned to appropriate functional areas.

Developing EOC General Responsibilities Checklist

The general responsibilities checklist provides activation and demobilization tasks that should be completed by every EOC staff member, such as signing in and out of the EOC. The goal is to prevent repeating these general checklist items in each of the subsequent position-specific checklists. In turn, the general checklist is referenced in each position-specific checklist to ensure each staff member completes these required tasks as well. The general responsibilities checklist should be edited to match the actual operations of each jurisdiction's EOC.

Developing EOC Activation Checklist

The EOC activation checklist is focused on necessary actions when activating an EOC, such as notifying the jurisdiction's leadership, appropriate partners, and the Texas Department of Emergency Management. The checklist is commonly completed by staff responsible for activating and opening the EOC. The list of tasks is based on best practice and input from the emergency management staff in the North Central Texas region. The checklist should be edited to include jurisdiction-specific tasks.

Developing EOC Demobilization Checklist

The EOC demobilization checklist is focused on necessary actions when deactivating an EOC, such as notifying the jurisdiction's leadership, appropriate partners, and the Texas Department of Emergency Management. The checklist is commonly completed by staff responsible for deactivating and closing the EOC. When

demobilization is complete, the EOC should be in a steady state and prepared for the next activation. The list of tasks is based on best practice and input from the emergency management staff in the North Central Texas region. The checklist should be edited to include jurisdiction-specific tasks.

Developing the EOC Director, Command Staff, Section Chiefs, Units, and Positions, Roles and Responsibilities, and Checklists

This section provides information on the development of the EOC Director, Command Staff, Section Chiefs, units, and positions, roles and responsibilities, and checklists.

Introduction

The introduction defines the EOC Director, Command Staff, and Section Chiefs, Units and Positions, Roles and Responsibilities, and Checklists section of the handbooks. The section only requires inserting applicable jurisdiction information, but it can be edited further based on a jurisdiction's desired content.

EOC Director, Command Staff, and Section Chiefs and Units and Positions

Specific information for the EOC Director, Command Staff, and Section Chiefs and Units and Positions is included in this section of the handbook. For the EOC Director, Command Staff, and Section Chiefs and Units and Positions the roles and responsibilities are defined, followed by activation, operations, and demobilization checklists. The content should be edited to match each jurisdiction's specific operations, which may include removing/adding positions based on the individual organizational structure. Checklist tasks can be swapped, eliminated, or consolidated based on specific jurisdiction's EOC positions.

Beyond the position-specific checklists, the EOC handbook templates provide a place to list applicable job aids. Provided job aids include a set of fillable PDF ICS forms (customized and standard) and two attachments that are part of the Planning Section Handbook Template. The attachments in the Planning Section Handbook Template include the Damage Assessment Process and the Demobilization Plan Process. Guidance for the development of inventory lists, procurement methods, and resource guides are outlined in Sections III and IV of this development guide. Additional jurisdiction and position-specific job aids can be used to supplement the provided job aids. For example, user guides (e.g., WebEOC User Guide) can be developed for specific jurisdictions' EOCs. Individuals filling positions in EOCs should work with the emergency management staff or corresponding Section Chief to develop supplemental documents and job aids required to fulfill responsibilities and complete checklist tasks.

Developing Handbook Maintenance, Revision, and References Section

The maintenance, revision, and references section establishes a standard method and timeline for reviewing and updating the EOC handbooks to ensure accuracy of content and alignment with actual EOC operations. Over time the handbook is envisioned to be refined based on lessons learned from actual events and exercises. The section also includes the references used in the development of the handbook. The section only requires inserting applicable jurisdiction information, but it can be edited further based on a jurisdiction's desired maintenance and revision process.

Developing Appendices

The appendices provide a glossary of ICS terms and a set of EOC-focused ICS forms. The section does not require editing, but it can be edited based on each jurisdiction's specific operations that may involve adding additional appendices.

III. Creating Inventory Lists

One of the major tasks accomplished in an EOC is the coordination of resources. The establishment of inventory lists by discipline can greatly improve the resource management process. Resources can be organized using a standard set of categories, which should be reduced or increased based on each jurisdiction's available resources. Standard resource categories include:

- Communications
- Emergency Management
- Emergency Medical Services
- Fire
- Hazardous Materials
- Incident Management
- Law Enforcement
- Mass Care
- Mass Casualty Response
- Public Information
- Public Works
- Transportation

Developing Inventory Lists

The inventory identification process can be accomplished at the start of an EOC activation, but it is highly recommended to complete the task of identifying resources and building resource inventory lists as a preparedness activity that can be supplemented during an EOC activation. Attempting to locate all resources hastily can result in delayed actions and the provision of support, but keep in mind that not every resource need can be pre-identified. During an EOC activation, review of existing inventory lists and resource guides or response directories may provide a starting point for considering available resources. In turn, based on the availability of those resources and the demands of a specific incident, it may be necessary to establish an incident-specific inventory list. As a preparedness activity, leveraging representatives from partner agencies to develop an inventory list will ensure accuracy of information. All pre-existing inventory lists or resource manuals should be revisited at least once annually to maintain accurate lists and points of contact.

To create an inventory list during an EOC activation, all EOC sections may be requested to identify available resources based on the needs of the emergency response, though the most significant list is commonly developed by the Operations Section personnel. EOC Directors work with individuals from each EOC section

to determine the kinds of resources necessary to document in the inventory list, and the EOC section chiefs work with their section personnel to build section-specific inventory lists. Inventory lists are commonly organized by discipline (e.g., Fire, Law Enforcement, Public Works).

As a preparedness activity or during an EOC activation, the following data points should be considered for each resource when establishing an inventory list:

1. Identify available resources, documenting the following information:
 - a. Resource name (e.g., Mobile Emergency Response Communication Trailer)
 - b. Resource capability description including NIMS Resource Type if known and/or applicable
 - i. Define what the resource does.
 - ii. Define the resource's capacities/equipment (e.g., towable communications trailer with VHF/UHF/HF Amateur Radio).
 - iii. Personnel and supporting resources
 - c. Ownership
 - d. Location
 - e. Estimated deployment and arrival timeframes
 - f. Resources needed to support continued operations (e.g., fuel, staff)
 - g. Resource point of contact
2. Document resource request processes:
 - a. Document the process to request resources that are dispatched.
 - b. For resources leveraged via mutual aid, document request process outlined in agreements.

Mutual Aid and Procurement

When developing an inventory list, it may be clear there is a need to establish (during preparedness phase) or activate established mutual aid agreements to meet the needs of an emergency response. Mutual aid agreements can provide access to resources and capabilities from partner jurisdictions. Additionally, the North Central Texas Region's Emergency Managers Working Group maintains the Regional Response Directory to document resources available via mutual aid to local jurisdictions in North Central Texas during an emergency response or incident. The directory is indexed by resource categories.

In some cases, the development of inventory lists demonstrates available local resources and regional assets cannot fill unmet needs. In those circumstances, documenting resources, equipment, and supplies that can be procured via an expedited contract by discipline is important. Each EOC section should document any standing resource procurement avenues in coordination with the Finance/Administration Section, including open contracts and pre-approved vendors.

For procurement needs, the North Texas Share Program may be leveraged for developing cooperative purchasing with other local governments through existing contracts. More information on the program is available at North Texas Share (<https://www.northtexashare.org/about-north-texas-share/>).

IV. Resource Tracking Guides

During an EOC activation, resource tracking is used to ensure effective emergency response by understanding the availability and status of resources during an emergency operation. Additionally, documented resource tracking information is routinely used to support cost recovery efforts.

The Resource Tracking Unit is responsible for coordinating with other Logistic Section units to gather and consolidate resource and resource location status information. When a resource is requested by field operations or to support an EOC managed element, the tracking process is enacted. Each EOC will track resources using different systems and processes, but a general approach for resource tracking is established below. Further development in a jurisdiction-specific tracking guide is required.

1. Document resource requests in the incident management software or in hard copy log.
2. Establish communication channels to ensure resource tracking and effective status communication with resource requestors and incident command.
3. Monitor and track resources from the time of deployment through return to station. All changes in status should be documented using the incident management software or in a hard copy log, such as an ICS 210: Resource Status Change form.
 - a. In some cases, resources that can be dispatched may be tracked via Computer-aided dispatch programs on specific computer consoles or online portal.
 - b. All tracking information should be time-stamped, including deployment and arrival times of resource at designated deployment location. Timestamps are important for documenting usage when reimbursement or contracted resources are involved.
4. Communicate with incident staging manager or other staff associated with the deployment location (e.g., shelter manager) to track status. In some cases, a resource may remain under EOC management. If a resource is deployed to a staging area managed by and directly support field ICS operations, once it has arrived, it becomes the responsibility of incident command.
5. When a resource is no longer needed, the field staff should notify the EOC. Document demobilization, which takes place in the field, and track the return of resources to normal stations or storage locations.
6. The resource, if appropriate, will be resupplied and refit for service. The EOC should be contacted when the resource is ready for service. All expendable supplies and associated costs should be communicated to the EOC Tracking Unit and documented in the incident management software or in a hard copy log. If the EOC Tracking Unit is not activated, the information should be provided to the Logistics Section Chief or other designated unit or personnel to document.

Please note, some resources are deemed consumables, such as water or disposable personal protective equipment. Consumables should be tracked until deployment is complete. Additionally, resource tracking may require active assessment of resource levels for any resources under EOC management.

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Appendix A: References

(Name of Jurisdiction) Emergency Operations Plan

Community Lifelines Implementation Toolkit, Version 2.0, (2019) FEMA

FEMA Incident Stabilization Guide (Operational Draft), (2019) FEMA

G0191: ICS/EOC Interface Workshop Student Manual, (2013) FEMA

National Incident Management System, 3rd ed., (2017) FEMA

National Response Framework, (2019) FEMA

NIMS Emergency Operations Center Skillsets User Guide, (2018) FEMA

State of Texas Emergency Management Plan, Basic Plan, (2020) TDEM

Texas Emergency Management Executive Guide FY2019 edition, TDEM

Texas Government Code, Chapter 418, Emergency Management (amended), (1975)

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Appendix B: Abbreviations

EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
ICS	Incident Command System
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NCTCOG	North Central Texas Council of Governments

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