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# **Mobilization Centers:**

## A Standardized Emergency Management System Guide for State & Local Government

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The contents of this document have not been changed from the original document;  
however, the guidelines have been reformatted to meet the  
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 508 standards.

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# **MOBILIZATION CENTERS: A Guide for State and Local Government**

## **Introduction**

Effective emergency response requires efficient ordering, tracking and mobilization of resources. This guide and its related model Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) identifies the role and application of Mobilization Centers as one of many tools available to agencies responding to major emergencies and disasters. Following this guidance will help ensure that responding and coordinating agencies decrease response times of anticipated resources and increase the flexibility of interagency resource coordination in a manner consistent with SEMS.

## **Purpose and Scope**

Mobilization Centers are off-incident locations where emergency services personnel and equipment may be temporarily located, pending assignment to incidents, release, or reassignment. (See SEMS Guidelines under section 6, “Resources and Staging Areas”). The guidance provided, herein, is consistent with the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). State agencies must use SEMS, but local government is only required to use SEMS if they desire to receive reimbursement for disaster response-related personnel costs.

Mobilization Centers may include a combination of local, state and federal government resources. The participation of each government entity is dictated by the basis for their involvement in the emergency. For example, a government entity may have responded through a local mutual assistance agreement, the State’s Master Mutual Aid Agreement or tasked/acquired through the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services. In addition, any of the above government entities may have direct jurisdictional authority for the emergency, be a member of a Unified Command organization and assign resources directly to a mobilization center.

This document provides guidance and recommended actions for local government and Operational Area level resource coordination and direction for Regional and State level coordination. Nothing in this document is intended to mandate the creation of Mobilization Centers at any SEMS level. The establishment and use of Mobilization Centers is dictated by the needs of each emergency response and is developed at the discretion of the decision-makers at each Emergency Operations Center (EOC) level of SEMS. Mobilization Centers are not designed to replace day-to-day incident response systems or procedures

that are already in place under statewide Mutual Aid Plans or other mutual assistance agreements. In order to implement this guidance, jurisdiction and or discipline- specific procedures are required.

## General Concept

### **The SEMS Structure and Mobilization Centers:**

**Field Level:** As an emergency incident escalates, the expectation for additional resource requests increases. A Mobilization Center can be established to pre-position resources in anticipation of deployment to the Field level on a timely basis. In this situation, the Field level management communicates to the next level of SEMS the potential for increased resource needs. The appropriate Emergency Operations Center (EOC) initiates orders to fill the anticipated needs and assigns these resources to a Mobilization Center until requested for deployment by the incident.

**Local Government Level:** Local Government and other government entities (state and federal) with jurisdictional responsibility for an emergency incident typically pre-position resources at various locations in anticipation of assignment. These locations may include existing facilities; however, as the emergency escalates it may be necessary to establish a formal Mobilization Center to meet the service and supply needs of these pre-positioned resources. As an incident or Department Operations Center (DOC) requests resources, the Local Government Level assigns the resources attached to the Mobilization Center.

**Operational Area Level:** Operational Area EOCs may establish Mobilization Centers to pre-position resources as necessary to support anticipated incident needs of Local Government level EOCs within the Operational Area. The Operational Area EOC manager is responsible to establish and assign a manager for these centers.

**Regional Level (REOC):**Regional Emergency Operations Centers (REOCs) may establish Mobilization Centers to pre- position resources as necessary to support anticipated Operational Area needs. The OES Mobilization Center manager will be responsible to assure that the propositioned resources are ready for assignment to the Operational Area. An OES Administrative Officer, who will be responsible to assure that the pre-positioned resources are ready for assignment to an Operational Area, will manage the REOC Mobilization Center.

**State Level (SOC):** When more than one REOC is activated, the State Operations Center may establish Mobilization Centers to pre-position resources as necessary to support anticipated REOC needs. An OES Administrative Officer, who will be responsible to assure that the pre-positioned resources are ready for assignment to the REOC, will manage the SOC Mobilization Center.

## Agency-Specific Mobilization Centers

These Guidelines also allow for the creation of Mobilization Centers by a specific jurisdiction or agency. For example, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) and other fire agencies have utilized Mobilization Centers in support of large-scale fire operations. CDF Mobilization Centers operate under the policies of that agency and the management principles of SEMS.

OES may activate “OES Mobilization Centers” to pre-position emergency resources to minimize resource response time to emergencies and facilitate resource coordination, tracking and support. OES Mobilization Centers are primarily REOC assets; and, therefore, receive their authority and direction from the REOC Director. There may be occasions where the SOC will establish Mobilization Centers in support of multiple REOCs and would likewise be managed by the SOC in the same manner as REOC established centers.

The activation of OES Mobilization Centers does not affect the local jurisdiction resource ordering process. All request for resources will continue to be processed through the established SEMS levels. For example, requests from the Field Level are relayed from a unified ordering point to a Local EOC. If the Local EOC cannot fill the request, it is relayed to the Operational Area. If the Operational Area is unable to fill the request, it is passed to the REOC where the request may be filled by a resource attached to the OES Mobilization Center. If the resource does not exist at the Mobilization Center, the REOC may task a state agency to fill the request. Any request for OES Mobilization Center resources outside of this process will be referred to the appropriate SEMS level organization by the Center staff.

During major disasters, federal agencies may become involved in providing resources to support the federal, state and local government responses. Efforts should be made to incorporate the anticipated federal resources into a SEMS Mobilization Center. However, the responsible federal agencies may choose to place their resources in a federal pre-designated Disaster Support Area (DSA). OES will assume responsibility to coordinate the activities between a DSA and the SEMS structure to minimize confusion and maximize effective utilization of resources.

## Mobilization Center Functions

The establishment of Mobilization Centers should consider incorporating the following functions. These functions perform similar activities as described at the Field Level of SEMS; therefore, personnel certified to perform these functions under the ICS will be qualified to fill the same positions within a Mobilization Center.

| Unit Name            | Functions Performed  |
|----------------------|--|
| Facilities Unit:     | Provides sleeping, sanitary, subsistence, parking facilities, etc.   |
| Food Unit:           | Provides subsistence to assigned personnel.  |
| Check In Recorder:   | Assures that all resources are accounted for and checked into the Center                                       |
| Resources Unit:      | Maintains the status of all resources assigned to the Center.  |
| Communications Unit: | Provides a communications link between the Mobilization Center, appropriate EOC and assigned Center resources. |
| Supply Unit          | Orders personnel, equipment and supplies and receives and stores all supplies for the Center.                  |
| Ground Support Unit: | Provides fuels, minor repair and maintenance to vehicles at the center.  |

## Establishing and Managing Mobilization Centers

The appropriate SEMS EOC level establishes the Mobilization Centers and provides the management necessary to assure that the needs of the responding jurisdictions are met. A Center Manager will be assigned the responsibility to manage the Center. The bulk of the activity and staffing of the Center will typically be under the Logistics Section.

The appropriate EOC should identify the locations for the Centers and negotiate agreements for facility use. While facilities such as fairgrounds are ideal, special care should be taken to avoid jurisdictional conflicts and competing uses. Before entering into an agreement, determine that it meets all of the needs of the functions that will be supported. Items to consider include:

- Telephone lines available or close by
- Electricity including capacity to hook up back up power
- Potable water
- Indoor sleeping space for the anticipated number of personnel

- Kitchen facilities or adequate space for portable kitchens.
- Adequate, secure parking with large parking spaces for trucks and heavy equipment,
- Indoor office space for staff of Supply Unit, Resource Status Unit etc.
- Indoor rest and recreation area for staff not on duty or sleeping
- Adequate sanitation facilities

## **Mobilization Center Management by a facilitating Agency**

Mobilization Centers may be managed by another agency on behalf of the responsible EOC or jurisdiction as provided through interagency agreement or by a state agency that is tasked by OES. In situations where center management is facilitated by an agency on behalf of another, the responsible jurisdictional agency should assign an Agency Administrator to provide policy direction to the facilitating Center Manager and ensure that the Center carries out its mission in concert with the jurisdictional agencies priorities and procedures. Attached is a model Standard Operating Procedure for the Activation and Management of a Mobilization Center.

## **General Authorities**

**Authorities:** California Government Code §8607(d) By December 1, 1996, all state agencies shall use the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) as adopted pursuant to subdivision (a), to coordinate multiple jurisdiction or multiple agency emergency and disaster operations.

California Government Code §8607(e) (1) By December 1, 1996, each local agency, in order to be eligible for any funding of response-related costs under disaster assistance programs, shall use the Standardized Emergency Management System as adopted pursuant to subdivision (a) to coordinate multiple jurisdiction or multiple agency operations.

California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 2, Article 4. §2403 (b) There are five designated levels in the SEMS organization: field response, local government, operational area, regional, and state. Each level is activated as needed. (1) "Field response level" commands emergency response personnel and resources to carry out tactical decisions and activities in direct response to an incident or threat.

California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 2, Article 4. §2405 (a) Emergency response agencies operating at the field response level of an incident shall utilize the Incident Command System, incorporating the functions, principles and components of ICS.

California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 2, Article 3. §2402 (g)



“Emergency Response Agency” means any organization responding to an emergency, whether in the field, at the scene of an incident, or to an EOC, in response to an emergency, or providing mutual aid support to such an organization.

California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 2, Article 4. §2407(c) Communications and coordination shall be established between a local government EOC, when activated, and any state or local emergency response agency having jurisdiction at an incident occurring within that local government’s boundaries. §2407(d) Local government shall use multi-agency or inter- agency coordination to facilitate decisions for overall local government level emergency response activities.

California Government Code §8616. During any state of war emergency or state of emergency when the need arises for outside aid in any county, city and county, or city, such aid shall be rendered in accordance with approved emergency plans.

California Government Code §8618. Unless otherwise expressly provided by the parties, the responsible local official in whose jurisdiction an incident requiring mutual aid has occurred shall remain in charge at such incident, including the direction of personnel and equipment provided him through mutual aid.

The state has broad authority under the Emergency Services Act to address any local need in a declared emergency if the conditions warrant. California Government Code §8614 states:

Each department, division, bureau, board, commission, officer, and employee of each political subdivision of the state shall render all possible assistance to the Governor and to the Director of the Office of Emergency Services in carrying out the provisions of this chapter.

The emergency power which may be vested in a local public official during a state of war emergency or a state of emergency shall be subject or subordinate to the powers herein vested in the Governor when exercised by the Governor. Ordinances, orders, and regulations of a political subdivision shall continue in effect during a state of war emergency or a state of emergency except as to any provision suspended or superseded by an order or regulation issued by the Governor.