

State of California

**Foundation for the
Standardized Emergency Management System
SEMS**

California Emergency Management Agency



[2010]

Foundation for the Standardized Emergency Management System California Emergency Management Agency January 2010

Introduction

During the revision of the State Emergency Plan (SEP) in 2008 and 2009, emergency management stakeholders throughout California expressed concern that the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), the state's emergency response structure, was not being applied consistently at all levels and they often had difficulty in finding the official system description sources for reference when attempting to correct the problems. To remedy this, the Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (now Cal E·M·A) instructed staff to develop a summary foundation document that would overview the fundamental system precepts and reference the source material for additional specificity. In addition, a core group of subject matter experts were formed within Cal E·M·A to maintain consistency and accuracy in application of the components of SEMS during the revision and maintenance of the State Emergency Plan (SEP) and the development of the related California Emergency Functions.

A combination of hard-to-find and imprecise SEMS design documentation, inaccurate interpretation, inadequate training and poor preparedness planning, among others over the past decade, has resulted in SEMS morphing into different configurations throughout state government and its political subdivisions. A recent survey by Cal E·M·A staff revealed that many state agencies and local government emergency managers have customized and adapted many of the uniform components of SEMS to fit their unique organizational needs instead of adapting their organizational emergency response structure to fit the SEMS design. This problem is also revealed in many after action reports that reflect numerous episodes of chaotic emergency response because disparate emergency response agencies were not able to effectively function in a standardized, collaborative and unified manner.

This issue was further convoluted by the Federal government's action to nationalize standardized emergency management through a rewrite of the National Response Plan (NRP) into the new National Response Framework (NRF) and development of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) following the September 11, 2001 Twin Towers event. Although the federal NRF and NIMS components were successfully integrated into the California SEP and SEMS, a common misperception persists that SEMS, NIMS and the Incident Command System (ICS) are three separate and distinct systems. As a result, training efforts are often misdirected by treating each of these topics as separate components of emergency response instead of treating them as interwoven elements of a single and comprehensive emergency response structure that makes up California's SEMS.

The Incident Command System, as developed in California during the 1970s, underlies the core precepts of both SEMS and its integrated NIMS components. Therefore, achieving a solid understanding and successful application of SEMS first requires a thorough knowledge of the fundamental principles that form ICS. With few exceptions, the material found herein reflects a verbatim extraction from the official state and federal integrated source documents. Any departure from or clarification of the quoted reference material is explained by footnotes. In addition, internet hyperlinks to the official source reference documents are inserted within selected headings and key sections are highlighted to focus on essential subject matter.

Questions and comments regarding this document should be forwarded the Cal E·M·A Preparedness Branch in Sacramento at SEMS_Foundation@oes.ca.gov.

Source Documents/References

The references below are linked to the appropriate internet website at selected headings throughout this document¹

1. **Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS)**
 - a. **Guidelines**, September 2006
 - b. **Approved Course of Instruction (ACI)**, 2003
 - i. Introduction
 - ii. Field (Incident Command System (ICS) 100, 200, 300 & 400)
 - iii. Emergency Operations Center (G611)
 - iv. Executive
2. **California Government Code Section 8607**
3. **California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Section 2401, Standardized Emergency Management System**
4. **California State Emergency Plan (SEP), July 1, 2009**
5. **National Incident Management System (NIMS) Document, December, 2008**
6. **National Response Framework (NRF) January 2008, US Department of Homeland Security**

Incident Command System (SEMS Guidelines System Description Section A & B and National Incident Management System Document December 2008)

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard incident management concept. It is a management protocol originally designed in the 1970s for the Fire Service agencies in California and subsequently required through state legislation in 1993 as an element of the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) to cover all California State agencies and its political subdivisions. In 2004 ICS was required to be implemented nationally as an element of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) through Presidential Directive (HSPD-5 & 8). ICS is based upon a flexible, scalable emergency response organization providing a common framework within which representatives from responsible agencies can work together effectively. Responsible representatives may be drawn from multiple agencies that do not routinely work together, and ICS is designed to give standard response and operation procedures to reduce the problems and potential for miscommunication on such incidents.

Overview (SEMS Guidelines System Description Section A & B and National Incident Management System Document December, 2008)

ICS consists of procedures for the management of the overall incident(s) and the mechanism of controlling personnel, facilities, equipment, and communications. It is a system designed to be used or applied from the time an incident occurs until the requirement for management and operations no longer exist. ICS is interdisciplinary and organizationally flexible to meet the following management challenges:

- Meet the needs of incidents of any kind or size (expands or contracts)
- Allow personnel from a variety of agencies to meld rapidly into a common management structure with common terminology
- Provide logistical and administrative support to operational staff.

¹ Specific areas of the document have been highlighted to emphasize the key principles presented.

- Be cost effective by avoiding duplication of efforts.

ICS consists of procedures for controlling personnel, facilities, equipment, and communications. It is a system designed to be used or applied from the time an incident occurs until the requirement for management and operations no longer exist.

The Command and Management component within NIMS is designed to enable effective and efficient incident management and coordination by providing flexible, standardized incident management structure. The structure is based on three key organizational constructs: the Incident Command System (ICS), Multiagency Coordination Systems (MACS), and Public Information.

Plans should integrate all relevant departments, agencies, and organizations (including the private sector and NGOs, where appropriate) to facilitate coordinated emergency management and incident response activities. Where appropriate, these plans should incorporate a clearly defined process for seeking and requesting assistance from necessary department(s), agency(ies), and/or organizations.

History of and Basis for ICS (National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) History of ICS 1994, SEMS Guidelines System Description Section A & B and National Incident Management System Document December, 2008)

Need for a Common Incident Management System

The complexity of incident management, coupled with the growing need for multi-agency and multifunctional involvement on incidents, has increased the need for a single standard incident management system that can be used by all emergency response disciplines.

Factors affecting emergency management and which influence the need for a more efficient and cost-effective incident management system are listed below. Not all of these will apply to every incident.

- Population growth and spread of urban areas.
- Language and cultural differences.
- More multijurisdictional incidents.
- Legal changes mandating standard incident management systems and multi-agency involvement at certain incidents.
- Shortage of resources at all levels, requiring greater use of mutual aid.
- Increase in the number, diversity, and use of radio frequencies.
- More complex and interrelated incident situations.
- Greater life and property loss risk from natural and human- caused technological disasters.
- Sophisticated media coverage demanding immediate answers and emphasizing response effectiveness.
- More frequent cost-sharing decisions on incidents.

These factors have accelerated the trend toward more complex incidents. Considering the fiscal and resource constraints of local, state and federal responders, the Incident Command System (ICS) is a logical approach for the delivery of coordinated emergency services to the public. ICS resulted from the obvious need for a new approach to the problem of managing rapidly moving wildfires in the early 1970s. At that time, emergency managers faced a number of problems.

- Too many people reporting to one supervisor.
- Different emergency response organizational structures.
- Lack of reliable incident information.
- Inadequate and incompatible communications.
- Lack of a structure for coordinated planning between agencies.
- Unclear lines of authority.
- Terminology differences between agencies.
- Unclear or unspecified incident objectives.

Designing a standardized emergency management system to remedy the problems listed above took several years and extensive field testing. The Incident Command System was developed by an interagency task force working in a cooperative local, state, and federal interagency effort called FIRESCOPE (Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies). Early in the development process, four essential requirements became clear:

1. The system must be organizationally flexible to meet the needs of incidents of any kind and size.
2. Agencies must be able to use the system on a day-to-day basis for routine situations as well as for major emergencies.
3. The system must be sufficiently standard to allow personnel from a variety of agencies and diverse geographic locations to rapidly meld into a common management structure.
4. The system must be cost effective.
5. Initial ICS applications were designed for responding to disastrous wildland fires. It is interesting to note that the characteristics of these wildland fire incidents are similar to those seen in many law enforcement, hazardous materials, and other kinds of situations.
 - They can occur with no advance notice.
 - They develop rapidly.
 - Unchecked, they may grow in size or complexity.
 - Personal risk for response personnel can be high.
 - There are often several agencies with some on-scene responsibility.
 - They can very easily become multijurisdictional.
 - They often have high public and media visibility.
 - Risk of life and property loss can be high.
 - Cost of response is always a major consideration.

Emergency managers determined that the existing management structures — frequently unique to each agency — did not scale to dealing with massive mutual aid responses involving dozens of distinct agencies and when these various agencies worked together their specific training and procedures clashed. As a result, a new command and control paradigm was collaboratively developed to provide a consistent, integrated framework for the management of all incidents from small incidents to large, multi-agency emergencies including catastrophic events.

In the United States, ICS has been tested by more than 30 years of emergency and non-emergency applications. All levels of government are required to maintain differing levels of ICS training and private sector organizations regularly use ICS for management of events. ICS is widespread in from law enforcement to every-day business, as the basic goals of clear communication, accountability, and the efficient use of resources is common to emergency management as well as daily operations.

ICS is mandated by law for all Hazardous Materials responses nationally and for many other emergency operations in most states. In practice, virtually all EMS and disaster response agencies utilize ICS, in part after the United States Department of Homeland Security mandated the use of ICS for emergency services throughout the United States as a condition for federal

preparedness funding. In 2007, the precepts of ICS became the foundation for development of the National Response Framework (NRF), a structure for deployment of Federal government controlled resources to assist the states and responsible federal agencies during disasters.

ICS is widely used in the United Kingdom and the United Nations recommended the use of ICS as an international standard. New Zealand has implemented a similar system, known as the Coordinated Incident Management System, Australia has the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System and British Columbia, Canada, has BCERMS developed by the Provincial Emergency Program.

NIMS is based on the premise that the utilization of a common incident management framework will give emergency management/response personnel a flexible yet standardized system for emergency management and incident response activities. NIMS is flexible because the system components can be utilized to develop plans, processes, procedures, agreements, and roles for all types of incidents and is applicable to any incident regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity. Additionally, NIMS provides an organized set of standardized operational structures, which is critical in allowing disparate organizations and agencies to work together in a predictable, coordinated manner.

Legal Authority (California Government Code Section 8607)

The California Government Code

8607. (a) By December 1, 1993, the Office of Emergency Services, in coordination with all interested state agencies with designated response roles in the state emergency plan and interested local emergency management agencies shall jointly establish by regulation a standardized emergency management system for use by all emergency response agencies. The public water systems identified in Section 8607.2 may review and comment on these regulations prior to adoption.

This system shall be applicable, but not limited to, those emergencies or disasters referenced in the state emergency plan. The standardized emergency management system shall include all of the following systems as a framework for responding to and managing emergencies and disasters involving multiple jurisdictions or multiple agency responses:

- 1) The Incident Command Systems adapted from the systems originally developed by the FIRESCOPE Program, including those currently in use by state agencies.
- 2) The multiagency coordination system as developed by the FIRESCOPE Program.
- 3) The mutual aid agreement, as defined in Section 8561, and related mutual aid systems such as those used in law enforcement, fire service, and coroners operations.
- 4) The operational area concept, as defined in Section 8559.

(b) Individual agencies' roles and responsibilities agreed upon and contained in existing laws or the state emergency plan are not superseded by this article.

(c) By December 1, 1994, the Office of Emergency Services, in coordination with the State Fire Marshal's Office, the Department of the California Highway Patrol, the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, the Emergency Medical Services Authority, and all other interested state agencies with designated response roles in the state emergency plan, shall jointly develop an approved course of instruction for use in training all emergency response personnel, consisting of the concepts and procedures associated with the standardized emergency management system described in subdivision (a).

(d) By December 1, 1996, all state agencies shall use the standardized emergency management system as adopted pursuant to subdivision (a), to coordinate multiple jurisdiction or multiple agency emergency and disaster operations.

(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. (2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), local agencies shall be eligible for repair, renovation, or any other nonpersonnel costs resulting from an emergency.

(f) The office shall, in cooperation with involved state and local agencies, complete an after-action report within 120 days after each declared disaster. This report shall review public safety response and disaster recovery activities and shall be made available to all interested public safety and emergency management organizations.

California Code of Regulations, (CAC Title 19 Section 2401)

2401. Purpose and Scope.

These regulations establish the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) based upon the Incident Command System (ICS) adapted from the system originally developed by the Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies (FIRESCOPE) program including those currently in use by state agencies, the Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS) as developed by FIRESCOPE program, the operational area concept, and the Master Mutual Aid Agreement and related mutual aid systems.

SEMS is intended to standardize response to emergencies involving multiple jurisdictions or multiple agencies. SEMS is intended to be flexible and adaptable to the needs of all emergency responders in California. SEMS requires emergency response agencies use basic principles and components of emergency management including ICS, multi-agency or inter-agency coordination, the operational area concept, and established mutual aid systems. State agencies must use SEMS. Local government must use SEMS by December 1, 1996 in order to be eligible for state funding of response-related personnel costs pursuant to activities identified in California Code of Regulations, Title 19, s2920, s2925, and s2930. Individual agencies' roles and responsibilities contained in existing laws or the state emergency plan are not superseded by these regulations.

State of California Emergency Plan (SEP July 1, 2009)

There are four major parts to the State of California Emergency Plan (SEP). The basic plan describes the fundamental systems, strategies, policies, assumptions, responsibilities, and operational priorities that California will utilize to guide and support emergency management efforts. The Base Plan establishes a comprehensive emergency management concept of operations and outlines the relationships and responsibilities for state government and its political subdivisions. It describes the emergency services that are provided by governmental agencies and how resources are mobilized. It outlines the methods for carrying out emergency operations and the process for rendering mutual aid. It describes the system for providing public information and emphasizes the need for continuity planning to ensure uninterrupted government operations.

Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 5

On February 28, 2003, the President issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive–5 (HSPD–5), Management of Domestic Incidents, which directed the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop and administer a National Incident Management System (NIMS). This system provides a consistent nationwide template to enable Federal, State, tribal, and local governments, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work together to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity. This consistency provides the foundation for utilization of NIMS for all incidents, ranging from daily occurrences to incidents requiring a coordinated Federal response.

HSPD–5 also required the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop the National Response Plan (NRP, which has been superseded by the National Response Framework (NRF)). The NRF is a guide to how the nation conducts all-hazards incident management.

HSPD–5 requires all Federal departments and agencies to adopt NIMS and to use it in their individual incident management programs and activities, as well as in support of all actions taken to assist State, tribal, and local governments. The directive requires Federal departments and agencies to make adoption of NIMS by State, tribal, and local organizations a condition for Federal preparedness assistance (through grants, contracts, and other activities). NIMS also recognizes the role that the private sector and nongovernmental organizations have in preparedness and activities to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents.

Foundations (SEMS Guidelines “4. Features Common to All Organizational/Response Levels” and National Incident Management System Document December, 2008)

ICS is used to organize on-scene operations for a broad spectrum of emergencies from small to complex incidents, both natural and manmade. The field response level is where emergency management/response personnel, under the command of an appropriate authority, carry out tactical decisions and activities in direct response to an incident or threat. Resources from the Federal, State, tribal, or local levels, when appropriately deployed, become part of the field ICS as prescribed by the local authority.

ICS is founded upon a number of key concepts, including: Unity of Command (Chain of Command)

Unity of Command means that each individual participating in the operation reports to only one supervisor. This eliminates the potential for individuals to receive conflicting orders from a variety of supervisors, thus increasing accountability, preventing freelancing, improving the flow of information, helping with the coordination of operational efforts, and enhancing operational safety. General Staff members may exchange information with any person within the organization. Direction takes place through the chain of command. This is an important concept in ICS.

If a General Staff or Command Staff position is not activated, the Incident Commander will have responsibility for that functional activity. Command and General Staff functions should not be combined. Subordinates must be delegated the authority to manage their assigned functions in accordance with the action plan objectives.

Clear Text (Common Terminology)

Clear Text (Common terminology) describes the format and phrasing of all incident communications. As an emergency response organization is often made of individuals who normally do not work together as a team, when they come together the use of common terminology is viewed as an essential element in team building and communications, both internally and with other organizations responding to the incident. Using standardized position titles in the ICS organization provides for:

- standardization in multi-agency incidents
- clear understanding in ordering resources
- most qualified personnel to be used

The Incident Command System promotes the use of common terminology, and has an associated glossary of terms that help bring consistency to position titles, the description of resources and how they can be organized, the type and names of incident facilities, and a host of other subjects. The most apparent implementation of this concept is in radio communication; 10-

codes (e.g. "10-4" to mean "I understand"), acronyms, and potentially arcane abbreviations are not to be used on the radio. Radio prowords (e.g. "Wilco" to mean "I understand and will comply") are generally accepted due to their universality.

The ability of emergency management/response personnel from different disciplines, jurisdictions, organizations, and agencies to work together depends greatly on their ability to communicate with each other. The use of common terminology is about the ability of emergency management/response personnel to communicate clearly with one another and effectively coordinate activities, no matter what the size, scope, location, or complexity of the incident. The use of plain language (clear text) in emergency management and incident response is a matter of public safety, especially the safety of emergency management/response personnel and those affected by the incident. It is critical that all those involved with an incident know and utilize commonly established operational structures, terminology, policies, and procedures. This will facilitate the achievement of interoperability across agencies/organizations, jurisdictions, and disciplines, which is exactly what NIMS is seeking to achieve.

Management by Objective

Management by Objective is the heart of management planning. In principle, all actions at an incident should be directed toward satisfying a major goal of the incident. The Incident Commander and Planning Section are responsible for the development of strategic objectives that clearly define what the incident team is working to achieve during operations. Based upon the information presented at the initial incident planning meeting and the analysis of incident potential and impacts, the Incident Commander and Section Chiefs should have a clear understanding of the major goals that need to be completed. Objectives are usually written, and any event with a written Incident Action Plan must have the objectives included in that written plan.

Flexible/Modular Organization

Flexible/Modular Organization describes the ability of an Incident Command structure to expand and contract efficiently as needed by the incident scope or available personnel. Only positions that are required for an adequate response should be filled, and ICS sections are kept as small as possible to accomplish incident objectives and monitor progress, within effective span-of-control. The level of response necessary for a specific incident dictates how and when the organization develops, and in many instances not all sections need to be activated. Only in the largest and most complex operations would the full ICS organization be staffed. Examples of expansion may consider:

- Unified Command
- Area Command
- Complex
- Camps
- Replicate Command and General Staff Sections

Span-of-control

Span of control is the most fundamentally important management principle of ICS. It applies to the management of individual responsibilities and response resources. The objective is to limit the number of responsibilities being handled by, and the number of resources reporting directly to, an individual. ICS considers that any single person's span of control should be between three and seven, with five being ideal. In other words, one manager should have no more than seven people working under them at any given time.

When span-of-control problems arise around an individual's ability to address responsibilities, they can be addressed by expanding the organization in a modular fashion. This can be

accomplished in a variety of ways. An Incident Commander can delegate responsibilities to a deputy and/or activate members of the Command Staff. Members of the Command Staff can delegate responsibilities to Assistants, etc. There may be exceptions, usually in lower-risk assignments or where resources work in close proximity to each other.

Coordination

Coordination on any incident or event is possible and effective due to the implementation of the following concepts:

Incident Action Plan

Incident Action Plans include the measurable strategic operations to be achieved and are prepared around a time frame called an Operational Period. Incident Action Plans may be verbal or written (except for hazardous material incidents where it has to be written), and are prepared by the Planning Section. The IAP insures that everyone is working in concert toward the same goals set for that operational period. The purpose of this plan is to provide all incident supervisory personnel with direction for actions to be implemented during the operational period identified in the plan. Incident Action Plans provide a coherent means of communicating the overall incident objectives in the context of both operational and support activities. The consolidated IAP is a very important component of the ICS that reduces freelancing and ensures a coordinated response. At the simplest level, all Incident Action Plans must have four elements:

- What do we want to do?
- Who is responsible for doing it?
- How do we communicate with each other?
- What is the procedure if someone is injured?

Comprehensive Resource Management

Comprehensive Resource Management is a key management principle that implies that all assets and personnel during an event need to be tracked and accounted for. It can also include processes for reimbursement for resources, as appropriate. Resource management includes processes for:

- Categorizing resources
- Ordering resources
- Dispatching resources
- Tracking resources
- Recovering resources

Comprehensive Resource Management ensures that visibility is maintained over all resources so they can be moved quickly to support the preparation and response to an incident, and ensuring a graceful demobilization. It also applies to the classification of resources by type and kind, and the categorization of resources by their status.

- Assigned resources are those that are working on a field assignment under the direction of a supervisor.
- Available resources are those that are ready for deployment, but have not been assigned to a field assignment.
- Out-of-service resources are those that are not in either the "available" or "assigned" categories. Resources can be "out-of-service" for a variety of reasons including:

resupplying after a sortie (most common), shortfall in staffing, personnel taking a rest, damaged/inoperable.

Integrated Communications

The use of a common communications plan is essential for ensuring that responders can communicate with one another during an incident. Communication equipment, procedures, and systems must operate across jurisdictions (interoperably). Developing an integrated voice and data communications system, including equipment, systems, and protocols, must occur prior to an incident.

Effective ICS communications include three elements:

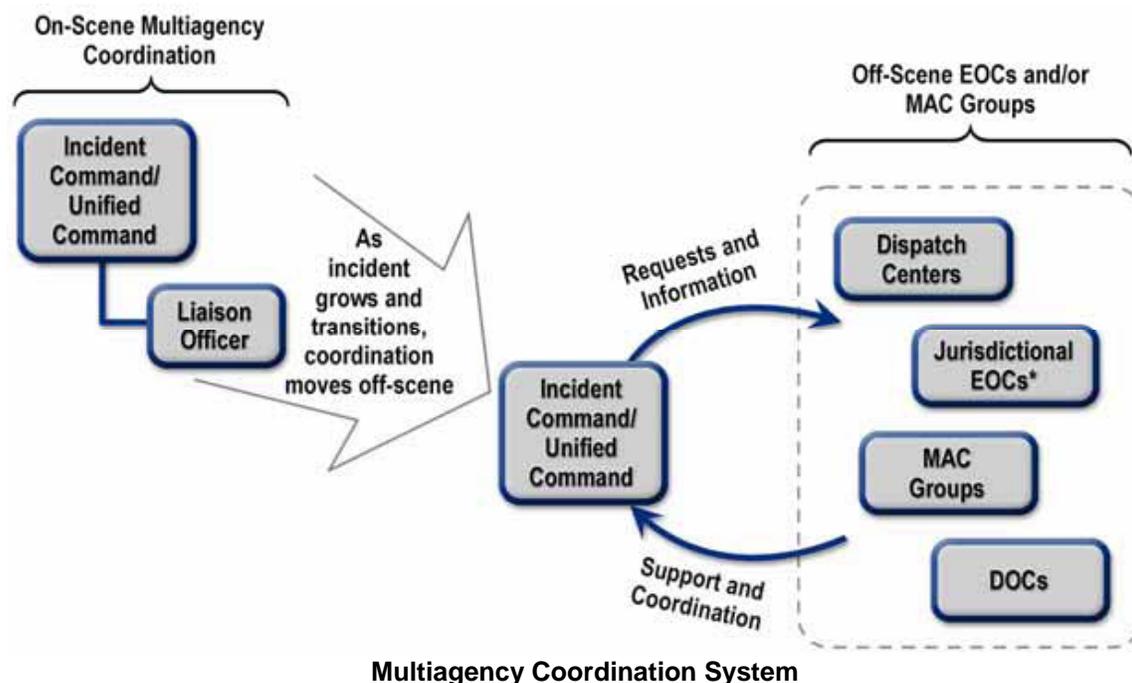
- Modes: The "hardware" systems that transfer information.
- Planning: Planning for the use of all available communications resources.
- Networks: The procedures and processes for transferring information internally and externally.

Composition

Multiagency Coordination (SEMS ACI Module 17: Field Level and Local government Coordination and National Incident Management System Document December, 2008 “Multiagency Coordination Systems”)²

The Incident Command System (ICS), Multiagency Coordination Systems (MACS), and Public Information are the fundamental elements of incident management. These fundamental elements provide standardization through consistent terminology and established organizational structures

Multiagency Coordination System(s) (MACS): Multiagency coordination systems provide the architecture to support coordination for incident prioritization, critical resource allocation, communications systems integration, and information coordination. The elements of multiagency coordination systems include facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications. Two of the most commonly used elements are EOCs and MAC Groups. These systems assist agencies and organizations responding to an incident.



Multiagency coordination is a process that allows all levels of government and all disciplines to work together more efficiently and effectively. Multiagency coordination occurs across the different disciplines involved in incident management, across jurisdictional lines, or across levels of government.

² Inter-agency Coordination under SEMS and Multiagency Coordination under ICS and NIMS are synonymous. Various SEMS documents utilize both terms for the same purpose.

Primary Functions of the MAC System

a. Situation Assessment

This is the collection, processing, and display of all information needed. It may take the form of consolidating agency/jurisdiction situation reports, obtaining supplemental information, and preparing maps and status boards.

b. Incident Priority Determination

Establishing the priorities among ongoing incidents within the defined area of responsibility is another component of MACS. Typically, a process or procedure is established to coordinate with Area and/or Incident Commands to prioritize the incident demands for critical resources. Additional considerations determining priorities include the following:

- Life threatening situations
- Threat to property
- High damage potential
- Incident complexity
- Environmental impact
- Economic impact; and
- Other criteria established by the multiagency coordination system

c. Critical resource acquisition and allocation

Designated critical resources will be acquired if possible from the involved agencies or jurisdictions. Agencies or jurisdictions may shift resources internally to match priority needs as a result of incident priority decisions. Resources available from incidents in the process of demobilization may be shifted, for example, to higher priority incidents.

d. Support relevant incident management policies and interagency activities

A primary function of MACS is to coordinate, support, and assist with policy level decisions and interagency activities relevant to incident management activities, policies, priorities, and strategies.

e. Coordination with other MACS

A critical part of MACS is outlining how each system will communicate and coordinate with other MACS at the same level, the level above, and the level below. Following incidents, those involved in multiagency coordination functions may be responsible for incorporating lessons learned into their procedures, protocols, business practices, and communications strategies. These improvements may need to be coordinated with other appropriate preparedness organizations.

f. Coordination with elected and appointed officials

Another primary function outlined in MACS is a process or procedure to keep elected and appointed officials at all levels of government informed. Maintaining the awareness and support of elected and appointed officials of jurisdictions within the affected area is extremely important, as scarce resources may need to move from one agency or jurisdictions' incident(s) to another of higher priority.

g. Coordination of summary information

By virtue of the situation assessment function, personnel implementing the multiagency coordination procedures may provide summary information on incidents within their area of responsibility, and provide agency/jurisdictional contacts for media and other interested agencies.

Multiagency Coordination (MAC) Group: Typically, administrators/executives, or their appointed representatives, who are authorized to commit agency resources and funds, are brought together and form MAC Groups. MAC Groups may also be known as multiagency committees, emergency management committees, or as otherwise defined by the System. It can provide coordinated decision-making and resource allocation

among cooperating agencies, and may establish the priorities among incidents, harmonize agency policies, and provide strategic guidance and direction to support incident management activities.

Public Information (National Incident Management System Document December, 2008 “Command and Management - Public Information”)

Public Information consists of the processes, procedures, and systems to communicate timely, accurate, and accessible information on the incident’s cause, size, and current situation to the public, responders, and additional stakeholders (both directly affected and indirectly affected). Public information must be coordinated and integrated across jurisdictions and across agencies/organizations; among Federal, State, tribal, and local governments; and with the private sector and NGOs. Well developed public information, education strategies, and communications plans help to ensure that lifesaving measures, evacuation routes, threat and alert systems, and other public safety information is coordinated and communicated to numerous audiences in a timely, consistent manner. Public Information includes processes, procedures, and organizational structures required to gather, verify, coordinate, and disseminate information.

a. Public Information Officer

The Public Information Officer (PIO) supports the IC structure as a member of the Command staff. The PIO advises IC on all public information matters relating to the management of the incident. The PIO handles inquiries from the media, the public, and elected officials, emergency public information and warnings, rumor monitoring and response, media monitoring, and other functions required to gather, verify, coordinate, and disseminate accurate, accessible, and timely information related to the incident, particularly regarding information on public health, safety, and protection.

b. Joint Information System (JIS)

The Joint Information System (JIS) provides the mechanism to organize, integrate, and coordinate information to ensure timely, accurate, accessible, and consistent messaging activities across multiple jurisdictions and/or disciplines with the private sector and NGOs. It includes the plans, protocols, procedures, and structures used to provide public information. Federal, State, tribal, territorial, regional, local, and private sector Public Information Officers and established Joint Information Centers (JICs) are critical supporting elements of the JIS. Key elements include the following: interagency coordination and integration;

- gathering, verifying, coordinating, and disseminating consistent messages;
- support for decision makers; and
- flexibility, modularity, and adaptability.

c. Joint Information Center (JIC)

The Joint Information Center (JIC) is a central location that facilitates operation of the JIS. It is a location where personnel with public information responsibilities perform critical emergency information functions, crisis communications, and public affairs functions. JICs may be established at various levels of government, at incident sites, or can be components of Federal, State, tribal, territorial, regional, or local MACS (e.g., MAC Groups or EOCs).

Typically, an incident-specific JIC is established at a single, on-scene location in coordination with Federal, State, and local agencies (depending on the requirements of the incident) or at the national level, if the situation warrants. Informational releases are cleared through IC/UC, the EOC/MAC Group, and/or Federal officials in the case of federally coordinated incidents to ensure consistent messages, avoid release of conflicting information, and prevent negative impact on operations. This formal process for informational releases ensures the protection of incident-sensitive information. Agencies may issue their own releases related to their policies,

procedures, programs, and capabilities; however, these should be coordinated with the incident-specific JIC(s).

Incident Command (SEMS ACI “Introductory Course” and National Incident Management System (NIMS), National Incident Management System Document December, 2008, “Command and Management” & Appendix B “ICS”)

Single Incident Command – A single agency with responsibility for overall management of the incident including development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and release of resources.

Unified Command - Unified Command is a team effort process, allowing all agencies with responsibility for an incident, either geographical or functional, to establish a common set of incident objectives and strategies that all can subscribe to. This is accomplished without losing or abdicating agency authority, responsibility, or accountability.

Advantages of Unified Command:

- A single integrated incident organization
- Collocated (shared) facilities
- A single planning process and Incident Action Plan
- Shared planning, logistical, and finance/ administration operations
- A coordinated process for resource ordering

Area Command/Unified Area Command - An organization established to oversee the management of multiple incidents that are each being handled by a separate ICS organization or to oversee the management of a very large or evolving incident that has multiple incident management teams engaged. An agency administrator/executive or other public official with jurisdictional responsibility for the incident usually makes the decision to establish an Area Command. An Area Command is activated only if necessary, depending on the complexity of the incident and incident management span-of-control considerations.

Complex: - Two or more individual incidents located in the same general area and assigned to a single Incident Commander or to Unified Command.

Command Staff

As incidents became more complex, difficult, and expensive, the need for an organizational manager became more evident. Thus in ICS, and especially in larger incidents, the Incident Commander manages the organization and not the incident.

Safety Officer - The Safety Officer's function is to identify, assess and/or anticipate hazardous and unsafe situations, and to develop and recommend measures for assuring personnel safety. Working through the chain of command, the Safety Officer will correct unsafe situations.

Public Information Officer - The Public Information Officer is responsible for developing information about the incident for the news media, incident personnel, and other appropriate agencies and organizations.

Liaison Officer - The Liaison Officer will be the point of contact for Agency Representatives assigned to the incident by assisting or cooperating agencies.

General Staff

Operations Section Chief - The Operations Section Chief is tasked with directing all actions to meet the incident objectives. The Incident Action Plan provides the necessary guidance. The need to expand the Operations Section is generally dictated by the number of tactical resources involved and is influenced by span of control considerations.

Planning Section Chief - The Planning Section Chief is tasked with the collection and display of incident information, primarily consisting of the status of all resources and overall status of the incident. Under the direction of the Planning Section Chief, the Planning Section collects situation and resources status information, evaluates it, and processes the information for use in developing action plans. Dissemination of information can be in the form of the Incident Action Plan, formal briefings, or through map and status board displays.

ICS allows for organizational flexibility, so the Intelligence/Investigations Function can be embedded in several different places within the organizational structure:

- Within the Planning Section. This is the traditional placement for this function and is appropriate for incidents with little or no investigative information requirements, nor a significant amount of specialized information.
- As a Separate General Staff Section. This option may be appropriate when there is an intelligence/investigative component to the incident or when multiple investigative agencies are part of the investigative process and/or there is a need for classified intelligence.
- Within the Operations Section. This option may be appropriate for incidents that require a high degree of linkage and coordination between the investigative information and the operational tactics that are being employed.
- Within the Command Staff. This option may be appropriate for incidents with little need for tactical information or classified intelligence and where supporting Agency Representatives are providing the real-time information to the Command Element.

Logistics Section Chief - The Logistics Section Chief is tasked with providing all resources, services, and support required by the incident. The Logistics Section is responsible for providing:

- Facilities
- Transportation
- Communications
- Supplies
- Equipment maintenance and fueling
- Food Services (for responders)
- Medical services (for responders)
- All off-incident resources

Finance/Administration Section Chief - The Finance/Administration Section Chief is tasked with tracking incident related costs, personnel records, requisitions, and administering procurement contracts required by Logistics. Due to the specialized nature of the administration and finance function, the Finance/Administration Section Chief is usually a member of the jurisdiction or agency requiring financial services.

Command transfer

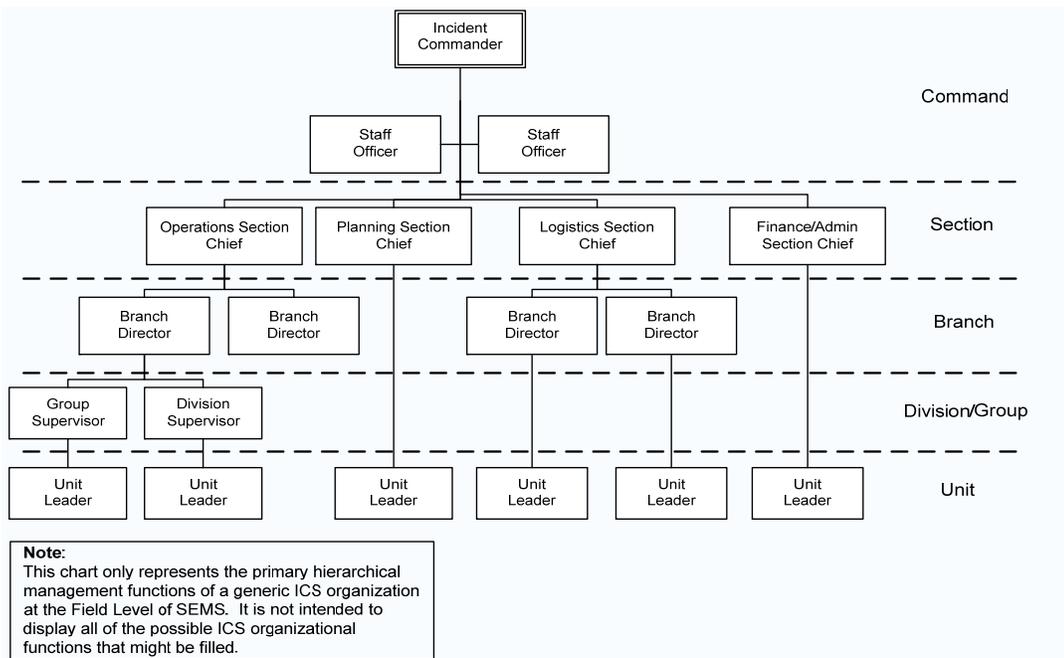
A role of responsibility can be transferred during an incident for several reasons: As the incident grows a more qualified person is required to take over as Incident Commander to handle the ever-growing needs of the incident, or in reverse where as an incident reduces in size command can be passed down to a less qualified person (but still qualified to run the now-smaller incident) to free up highly-qualified resources for other tasks or incidents. Other reasons to transfer command include jurisdictional change if the incident moves locations or area of responsibility, or normal turnover of personnel due to extended incidents. The transfer of command process always includes a transfer of command briefing, which may be oral, written, or a combination of both.

Design (SEMS ACI Field Course “Organizational Overview” and National Incident Management System Document December, 2008, Component IV “Command and Management”)

Function Titles

ICS is organized by levels, with the supervisor of each level holding a unique title (e.g. only a person in charge of a Section is labeled "Chief"; a "Director" is exclusively the person in charge of a Branch). Levels (supervising person's title) are:

- Incident Commander
- Section (Chief)
- Branch (Director)
- Division (Supervisor) - A Division is a unit arranged by geography, along jurisdictional lines if necessary, and not based on the makeup of the resources within the Division.
- Group (Supervisor) - A Group is a unit arranged for a purpose, along agency lines if necessary, or based on the makeup of the resources within the Group.
- Unit, Team, or Task Force (Leader) - Such as "Communications Unit," "Medical Strike Team," or a "Reconnaissance Task Force." A Strike Team is composed of same resources (four ambulances, for instance) while a Task Force is composed of different types of resources (one ambulance, two fire trucks, and a police car, for instance).
- Individual Resource. This is the smallest level within ICS and usually refers to a single person or piece of equipment. It can refer to a piece of equipment and operator, and less often to multiple people working together.



Basic Incident Command System Functional Hierarchy

Facilities

ICS uses a standard set of facility nomenclature. ICS facilities include: **Pre-Designated Incident Facilities: Response operations can form a complex structure that must be held together by response personnel working at different and often widely separate incident facilities.** These facilities can include:

Incident Command Post (ICP): The ICP is the location where the Incident Commander operates during response operations. There is only one ICP for each incident or event, but it may change locations during the event. Every incident or event must have some form of an Incident Command Post. The ICP may be located in a vehicle, trailer, tent, or within a building. The ICP will be positioned outside of the present and potential hazard zone but close enough to the incident to maintain command. The ICP will be designated by the name of the incident, e.g., Trail Creek ICP.

Staging Area: Established for the temporary location of available resources. A Staging Area can be any location in which personnel, supplies, and equipment can be temporarily housed or parked while awaiting operational assignment.

Base: Location from which primary logistics and administrative functions are coordinated and administered. The Base may be collocated with the Incident Command Post. There is only one Base per incident, and it is designated by the incident name. The Base is established and managed by the Logistics Section. The resources in the Base are always out-of-service.

Camps: Locations, often temporary, within the general incident area that are equipped and staffed to provide sleeping, food, water, sanitation, and other services to response personnel that are too far away to use base facilities. Other resources may also be kept at a camp to support incident operations if a Base is not accessible to all resources. Camps are designated by geographic location or number. Multiple Camps may be used, but not all incidents will have Camps.

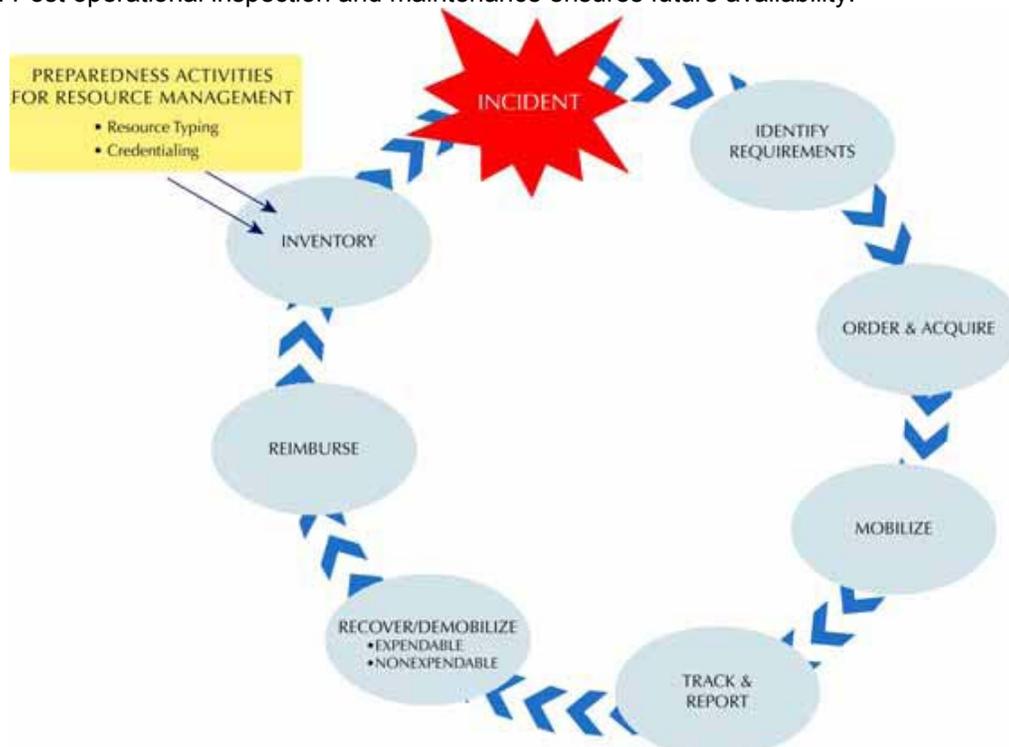
Helibase: Location from which helicopter-centered air operations are conducted. Helibases are generally used on a more long-term basis and include such services as fueling and maintenance. The Helibase is usually designated by the name of the incident, e.g. Trail Creek Helibase.

Helispot: are more temporary locations at the incident, where helicopters can safely land and take off. Multiple Helispots may be used. Each facility has unique location, space, equipment, materials, and supplies requirements that are often difficult to address, particularly at the outset of response operations. For this reason, responders should identify, pre-designate and pre-plan the layout of these facilities, whenever possible.

Resource Management - (SEMS ACI Field Level Module 9 and Incident Resource Management and National Incident Management System Document December, 2008, Component III “Resource Management”)

NIMS, as integrated into SEMS includes standardized procedures, methodologies, and functions in its seven-step resource management process. This process reflects functional considerations, geographic factors, and validated practices within and across disciplines and are continually adjusted as new lessons are learned.

Maintenance of resources is important throughout all aspects of resource management. Maintenance prior to deployment ensures their availability and capability. Maintenance during the deployment phase ensures continued capabilities (e.g., ensuring adequate fuel supplies during use). Post operational inspection and maintenance ensures future availability.



Resource Management During an Incident

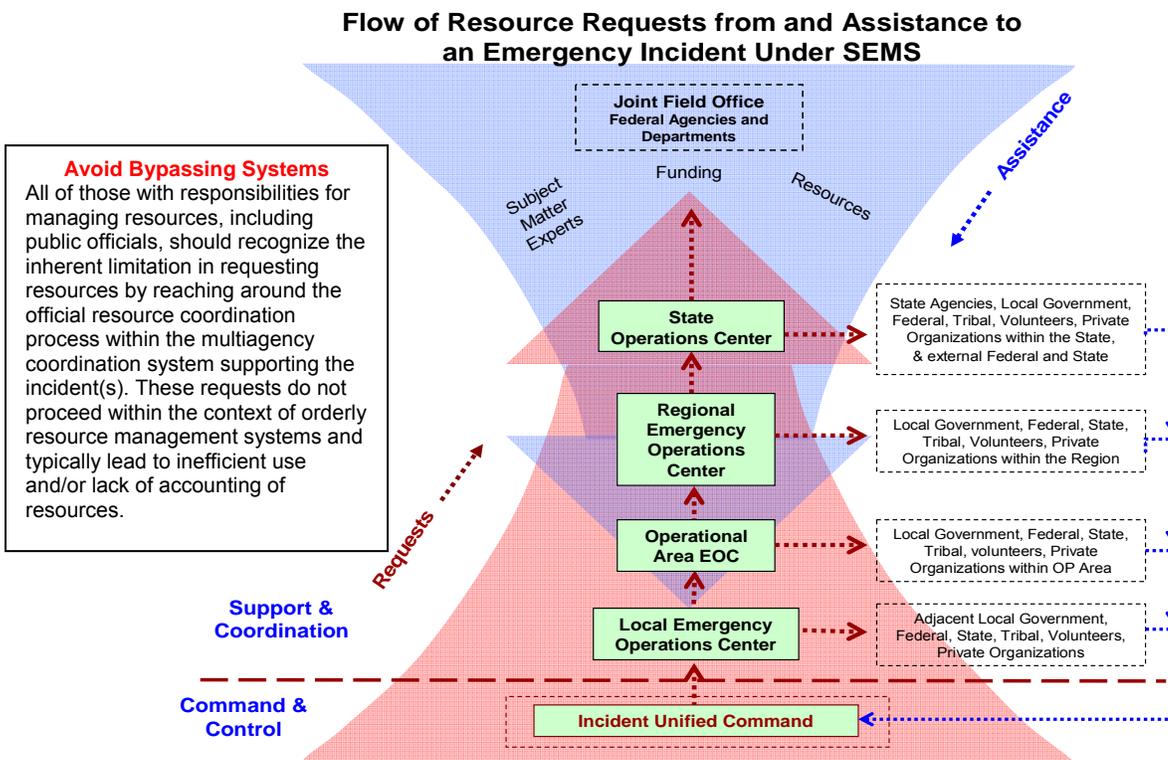
1. Identify Requirements

When an incident occurs, those with resource management responsibilities should continually identify, refine, and validate resource requirements. This process involves accurately identifying (1) what and how much is needed, (2) where and when it is needed, and (3) who will be receiving or using it. Resources to be identified in this way include equipment, facilities, and personnel and/or emergency response teams. If a requestor is unable to describe an item by resource type or classification system, those with resource management responsibilities should provide technical advice to enable the requirements to be defined and translated into a specification. Specific resources for critical infrastructure/key resources may need to be identified and coordinated through mutual aid agreements and/or assistance agreements unique to those sectors, and should be accessible through preparedness organizations and/or MACS.

2. **Order and Acquire**³

Requests for resources that cannot be obtained locally are submitted using standardized resource ordering procedures. These requests are generally forwarded first to an adjacent locality or sub state region and then to the State.

The decision cycles for placing and filling resource orders are different for field/incident personnel with resource management responsibilities and resource coordination processes (such as MACS). The IC will develop resource requests based on priorities considering current and successive operational periods. Decisions about resource allocation are based on organization or agency protocol and possibly the resource demands of other incidents. Requested resources will be mobilized only with the consent of the jurisdiction that is being asked to provide the resources. Discrepancies between requested resources and those available for delivery must be communicated to the requestor.



³ The resource requesting and assistance flow chart is adapted from the NIMS handbook to reflect requesting and receiving resources under the SEMS structure. Consistent with the NRF, SEP and SEMS, all resources (local, state, federal, tribal governments and private), are considered, with few exceptions, elements of the “community” and efforts should focus on directly accessing them during a disaster based on immediate need and closest resources concept. This would require significant preplanning and development of appropriate interagency agreements/contracts and related intergovernmental operational plans.

- 3. Mobilize**
Emergency management/response personnel begin mobilizing when notified through established channels. At the time of notification, they are given the date, time, and place of departure; mode of transportation to the incident; estimated date and time of arrival; reporting location (address, contact name, and phone number); anticipated incident assignment; anticipated duration of deployment; resource order number; incident number; and applicable cost and funding codes. The resource tracking and mobilization processes are directly linked. When resources arrive on scene, they must be formally checked in. This starts the on-scene check-in process and validates the order requirements. Notification that the resources have arrived is made through the appropriate channels.
- 4. Track and Report**
Resource tracking is a standardized, integrated process conducted prior to, during, and after an incident by all emergency management/response personnel and their affiliated organizations, as appropriate. This process provides a clear picture of where resources are located; helps staff prepare to receive resources; protects the safety and security of equipment, supplies, and personnel; and enables their coordination and movement. Those with resource management responsibilities use established procedures to track resources continuously from mobilization through demobilization. Managers should follow all procedures for acquiring and managing resources, including reconciliation, accounting, auditing, and inventorying.
- 5. Recover and Demobilize**
Recovery involves the final disposition of all resources, including those located at the incident site and at fixed facilities. During this process, resources are rehabilitated, replenished, disposed of, and/or retrograded. Demobilization is the orderly, safe, and efficient return of an incident resource to its original location and status. It can begin at any point of an incident, but should begin as soon as possible to facilitate accountability of the resources.

The demobilization process should coordinate between incident(s) and multiagency coordination systems for the reassignment of resources if necessary, and to prioritize critical resource needs during demobilization.
- 6. Reimburse**
In many cases, resources rendered may or may not be reimbursed based upon pre-incident agreements. When applicable, reimbursement provides a mechanism to recoup funds expended for incident-specific activities. Reimbursement processes play an important role in establishing and maintaining the readiness of resources and should be in place to ensure that resource providers are reimbursed in a timely manner. They should include mechanisms for collecting bills, validating costs against the scope of the work, ensuring that proper authorities are involved, and accessing reimbursement programs. Reimbursement mechanisms should be included in preparedness plans, mutual aid agreements, and assistance agreements.
- 7. Inventory**
Resource management uses various resource inventory systems to assess the availability of assets provided by jurisdictions. Preparedness organizations should inventory and maintain current data on their available resources. The data are then made available to communications/dispatch centers and EOCs and organizations within MACS. The fact that resources are identified within an inventory system is not an indication of automatic availability. The jurisdiction and/or owner of the resources has the final determination on availability.

a. **Credentialing**

The credentialing process is an objective evaluation and documentation of a person's current license or degree; training or experience; competence or certification; and the ability to meet nationally accepted minimum standards, to provide particular services and/or functions or perform particular procedures during an incident.

b. **Identifying and Typing Resources**

Resource typing is categorizing, by capability, the resources requested, deployed, and used in incidents. Measurable standards identifying the capabilities and performance levels of resources serve as the basis for categories. Resource users at all levels utilize these standards to identify and inventory resources. Resource kinds may be divided into subcategories to define more precisely the resource capabilities needed to meet specific requirements. Resource typing is a continuous process designed to be as simple as possible to facilitate frequent use and accuracy in obtaining needed resources.

National Response Framework (NRF) (National Response Framework – 2008)

The Framework provides structures for implementing national-level policy and operational coordination for domestic response. It can be partially or fully implemented in the context of a threat, in anticipation of a significant event, or in response to an incident. Selective implementation allows for a scaled response, delivery of the exact resources needed, and a level of coordination appropriate to each event. The Framework incorporates organizational structures that promote on-scene initiative, innovation, and sharing of essential resources drawn from all levels of government and the private sector. It is not always obvious whether a seemingly minor incident might be the initial phase of a larger, rapidly growing threat. Response must be quickly scalable, flexible, and adaptable.

Communities, tribes, States, the Federal Government, NGOs, and the private sector should each understand their respective roles and responsibilities, and complement each other in achieving shared goals. Each governmental level plays a prominent role in developing capabilities needed to respond to incidents. This includes developing plans, conducting assessments and exercises, providing and directing resources and capabilities, and gathering lessons learned. These activities require that involved organizations understand their roles and responsibilities, and how they fit within and are supported by the Framework.

Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) (SEMS ACI – Introductory Course G606 and ACI – Emergency Operations Center Course G611 and National Incident Management System Document December, 2008 - Glossary)

Background

As a result of the 1991 East Bay Hills Fire in Oakland, Senate Bill 1841 was passed by the legislature and made effective January 1, 1993. The law is found in Section 8607 of the Government Code. The intent of this law is to improve the coordination of state and local emergency response in California.

The statute directed the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES), in coordination with other state agencies and interested local emergency management agencies, to establish by regulation the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). The SEMS Regulations took effect in September of 1994.

Purpose and Scope of the SEMS Law

The basic framework of SEMS incorporates the use of the Incident Command System (ICS), multiagency coordination, and the State's Master Mutual Aid Agreement and mutual aid program. SEMS provides for a five level emergency response organization, activated as needed, to provide an effective response to emergencies involving multiple agencies or jurisdictions.

The use of SEMS facilitates:

- The flow of emergency information and resources within and between involved agencies at all SEMS organizational levels.
- The process of coordination between responding agencies.
- The rapid mobilization, deployment, use, and tracking of resources.

SEMS is designed to be flexible and adaptable to the varied emergencies that can occur in California, and to meet the emergency management needs of all responders. By law, State agencies must use SEMS when responding to emergencies involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies. Local governments are strongly encouraged to use SEMS, and they must use SEMS in order to be eligible for state funding of response related personnel costs. While local governments are not required to take the SEMS Approved Courses of Instruction, they are required to ensure through training, that responders can successfully implement SEMS when necessary.

SEMS is a management system. It is based on a proven system that has been in use for over twenty years. SEMS provides an organizational framework and guidance for operations at each level of the State's emergency management system. It provides the umbrella under which all response agencies may function in an integrated fashion.

Four Components of SEMS

SEMS integrates several of the State's primary emergency response programs. The primary components within SEMS are:

1. **The Incident Command System (ICS)**

ICS was developed as a part of the FIRESCOPE program, (Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies), during the 1970's, by an inter-agency working group representing local, state and federal fire services in California.

After field tests, ICS was adopted by the fire services in California as the standard all hazards response system. ICS also has been adopted nationally by the federal land management agencies as the standard for response to all wildland fires.

A National, generic version of ICS was developed by a multi-discipline working group. This system is used in the SEMS Field Response Level Course. A module on Mutual Aid and a module addressing coordination between the field and other SEMS levels have been added to that curriculum.

2. **Inter-agency Coordination [Multiagency Coordination]⁴**

Inter-agency coordination as it applies to SEMS, means the participation of various agencies and disciplines involved at any level of the SEMS organization working together in a coordinated effort to facilitate decisions for overall emergency response activities, including the sharing of critical resources and the prioritization of incidents.

⁴ Inter-agency Coordination under SEMS and Multiagency Coordination under ICS and NIMS are synonymous. Various SEMS documents utilize both terms for the same purpose.

The cooperative and collaborative working relationship between police, fire, public works, and parks departments in an EOC is an example of Inter-agency Coordination as intended in SEMS. Another example would be the collaborative operational coordination that might occur between municipal police, county sheriff, California Highway Patrol, and National Guard elements that are involved in the same response.

SEMS Guidelines and the Approved Courses of Instruction all describe how inter-agency coordination takes place at various SEMS levels.

3. **The Master Mutual Aid Agreement**

A Master Mutual Aid Agreement in California was originally signed in 1950. Under this agreement, cities, counties and the State joined together to provide for a comprehensive program of voluntarily providing services, resources and facilities to jurisdictions when local resources prove to be inadequate to cope with a given situation.

Written mutual aid plans and operating procedures have been developed for several discipline specific mutual aid systems that function on a statewide basis within the Master Mutual Aid Agreement. Examples of these are fire and law enforcement.

The mutual aid systems, current and planned, form essential links within SEMS. A comprehensive discussion of mutual aid is contained in SEMS Guidelines, and Module Sixteen of the Field Level Course of Instruction is devoted to the subject of Mutual Aid.

4. **Operational Areas**

An Operational Area is one of the five organizational levels in SEMS. An Operational Area consists of a county, and all political subdivisions within the county area. The governing bodies of each county and of the political subdivisions in the county shall organize and structure their operational area. The county [governing body] will be the lead agency for the operational area unless another arrangement is established by agreement.⁵ Overall responsibility for the formation of the Operational Area rests with the Chairman of the Boards of Supervisors in each county.

Operational Areas facilitate the coordination of resources between its member jurisdictions. Operational Areas also serve as a communication and coordination link between the Region and State level EOCs and local government EOCs within the Operational Area.

Organizational/Response Levels and Activation Requirements

SEMS regulations describe five organizational response levels. The following is a brief description of each level:

1. **Field Response Level**

The field response level is the level where emergency response personnel and resources carry out tactical decisions and activities under the command of an appropriate authority in direct response to an incident or threat. SEMS regulations require the use of ICS at the field response level of an incident. The Field Response level is described in the SEMS Guidelines, and in the Field Level Approved Course of Instruction.

2. **Local Government Level**

Local governments include cities, counties, and special districts. Local governments

⁵ It is important to distinguish between a county government's role in governing over and controlling the unincorporated areas of the county and a county government's role as an Operational Area Coordinator in facilitating emergency management collaboration of all jurisdictions within the boundaries of a county.

manage and coordinate the overall emergency response and recovery activities within their jurisdiction. In SEMS, the local government emergency management organization and its relationship and connections to the Field Response level may vary depending upon factors related to geographical size, population, function, or complexity. The local government level is described further in the SEMS Guidelines.

3. **Operational Area Level**

Under SEMS, the Operational Area means an intermediate level of the state's emergency services organization, which encompasses the county and all political subdivisions located within the county. The Operational Area manages and/or coordinates information, resources, and priorities among local governments within the operational area, and serves as the coordination and communication link between the local government level and the regional level.

It is important to note, that while an operational area always encompasses the entire county area, it does not necessarily mean that county government itself manages and coordinates the response and recovery activities within the county. In most cases, the county EOC will function as both the Operational Area EOC and the EOC for the county. The governing bodies of the county and the political subdivisions within the county make the decision on organization and structure within the Operational Area. The operational area level is described more fully in the SEMS Guidelines.

4. **Region Level**

Because of its size and geography, the state has been divided into six Mutual Aid Regions. The purpose of a mutual aid region is to provide for the more effective application and coordination of mutual aid and other emergency related activities. The Office of Emergency Services (OES) provides administrative oversight over the mutual aid regions through three Administrative Regional Offices.

In SEMS, the regional level manages and coordinates information and resources among operational areas within the mutual aid region, and also between the operational areas and the state level. The regional level also coordinates overall state agency support for emergency response activities within the region. The regional level is described further in the SEMS Guidelines.

5. **State Level**

The state level of SEMS operates the State Operations Center at OES Headquarters in Sacramento. It is responsible for coordinating resource requests and resolving priority issues that might arise at the region level, between the three OES Administrative Regions. The State Operations Center is also responsible for coordinating with FEMA and other federal agencies involved in the implementation of the Federal Response Plan in California. The state level is described further in the SEMS Guidelines.

Role of Emergency Operation Centers (EOC) Under SEMS

Emergency Operations Center (EOC): The physical location at which the coordination of information and resources to support incident management (on-scene operations) activities normally takes place. An EOC 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.

EOCs do not directly manage or “command” incidents. This would imply setting incident objectives, determining strategy and tactics and assigning and supervising tactical resources. Within the SEMS organizational structure, this is the role of the on-scene incident commanders using the component elements of the Incident Command System. Field Incident Commanders requests for additional resources, or a request to deviate from agency policy, will be directed to a

higher authority within the discipline which has primary incident responsibility. This communication may be to the Department Operations Center or to the appropriate departmental authority within the EOC depending upon how the jurisdiction is set up.

General Criteria to Activate an EOC

Whether EOCs are activated at various SEMS levels will be determined by the requirements of the emergency. At least five general criteria exist to indicate when an EOC should be activated:

- Resources beyond local capabilities are required.
- The emergency is of long duration.
- Major policy decisions will or may be needed.
- A local or state emergency is declared.
- Activation of an EOC will be advantageous to the successful management of an emergency.

EOC Requirements

Listed below are several operating requirements for EOCs. These may not be appropriate for all EOCs depending upon jurisdictional requirements.

1. The EOC will be activated for any major emergency or important event that requires multiple (more than two) department simultaneous operations over some period of time. Activation guidelines will be part of the EOC procedures. SEMS Guidelines require activation of EOCs under certain conditions. These will be discussed in Chapter Two.
2. Staff must ensure that the EOC facility is capable of activation within one hour and able to maintain full operation status under all emergency conditions. In those cases where the EOC can be collocated with a jurisdiction's joint dispatch facility, the activation period can be significantly reduced.
3. Safe access into the facility for operating personnel must be assured, as well as providing a secure facility from all potential hazards.
4. Internal EOC operations will follow the five primary SEMS functions of Management, Operations, Planning/Intelligence, Logistics, Finance/Administration.
5. Provisions must be made within the EOC for inclusion of other agency representatives, and communications they may require.
6. The EOC will operate primarily in an information processing, policy and priority setting and coordination role. The EOC does not provide tactical direction to field elements of the various departments unless that is established by a jurisdictional policy.
7. The EOC will assist in coordinating the allocation of designated and/or critical resources between departments, and be the central location for locating and requesting supplemental and out-of-jurisdiction resources when necessary. Resources obtained through mutual aid systems will continue to be processed through procedures established by those systems.
8. Functional work stations within the EOC organization should have the capability to directly communicate by telephone and or radio to designated external DOCs, or field command posts as required for information exchange.

9. The EOC will be the primary point for developing situation and damage assessment information, setting public information standards and guidelines for departments or agencies, and/or approving official information for distribution to media and the public.
10. The EOC will provide for coordination of damage assessment, and recovery activities required by the emergency as determined by agency policy.

Establishing an Inter-agency [Multiagency] Coordination Group

In some situations, it may be useful to formally establish an inter-agency [multiagency] coordination group to develop consensus on priorities, resource allocation and response strategies. A formal inter-agency [multiagency] coordination group can be especially useful when a particular response problem or issue requires coordination with numerous agencies not usually represented in the EOC. Such a group may be established through a temporary ad-hoc arrangement during an emergency or may be developed through pre-event planning for certain contingencies as a working in conjunction with the EOC Director is primarily responsible for establishing Inter-agency [multiagency] Coordination Groups.

An inter-agency [multiagency] coordination group may work within the EOC or at another location. An inter-agency coordination group may also coordinate efforts through conference calls. Whether physically at the EOC or at another location, the inter-agency coordination group should remain connected to the EOC. Priorities and objectives developed through the group should be incorporated into the action plan developed at the EOC. Objectives agreed to by the group should be implemented through the EOC.

Mutual Aid Systems and EOCs

California has an extensive mutual aid program that is made up of several discipline specific statewide mutual aid systems. These systems, all of which operate within the framework of the state's master mutual aid agreement, allow for the progressive mobilization of resources to and from emergency response agencies, local governments, operational areas, regions, and state. EOCs are an important element in this program, but vary in how they will interact with specific mutual aid systems.

Two of the more heavily utilized mutual aid systems, fire and law enforcement provides mutual aid coordination through systems, which include operational area and regional coordinators. Because these systems function on a 24-hour a day, 365-day a year basis, the coordination is normally accomplished within the facilities operated by the elected coordinators rather than at EOCs.

Unified Command [Field Level] and EOC Coordination

At the SEMS Field Response level, Unified Command may be established for some multi-jurisdictional or multi-agency incidents. Unified Command may be used when more than one agency has some significant jurisdiction over that incident. Under Unified Command each agency with significant jurisdictional responsibility will assign an Incident Commander and appropriate resources to the incident.

ICS field response organizations will normally communicate with DOCs or EOCs through dispatch centers. Dispatch centers do not have command authority over incidents; they have dispatch authority as determined by agency or jurisdiction policy. Because of the communications systems involved, agency dispatch centers often function in an intermediate role between Incident Commanders in the field and DOCs or EOCs. Also, in some cases under heavy load conditions, agencies may elect to move into an "expanded dispatch" mode which may provide a higher level authority at the agency dispatch facility.

[Responsible] Incident Commanders form a Unified Command, and work from a single Incident Command Post. They develop a set of common objectives, strategies, and a single Incident Action Plan. They select an Operations Section Chief for the incident from one of the jurisdictions or agencies and give that Operations Section Chief authority to implement the operations portion of the action plan and to command tactical resources.

Coordination between Levels of SEMS

Incident interactions with dispatch centers, DOCs, or an EOC will generally take two forms under Unified Command:

- Policy and Authority Interactions
- Resource Ordering Interactions

1. Policy and Authority Interactions

Under Unified Command, the Incident Commanders will maintain communications with their respective department or agency. Each Incident Commander will receive an appropriate delegation of authority to govern those agencies interactions at the incident.

2. Resource Ordering Interactions

Resource ordering under a Unified Command will be determined based on the policies of the agencies and disciplines involved, and the resource requirements of the incident. Single point resource ordering from the incident takes place when all orders are placed from the incident to a single agency dispatch center, DOC, or an EOC. This is a preferred method, because logistics staff at the incident do not have to determine which agencies are responsible for ordering which resources. The selected agency for receiving the order could be the one with the greatest resource involvement or be closest to the incident. Multi-point ordering is also used under Unified Command. In this method, each agency essentially orders the resources for which it has responsibility, after the overall resource requirements are determined as part of the Incident Action Planning process.

EOC Organizational Span of Control⁶

The EOC organization will expand (or contract) as necessary to meet the operational requirements. The hierarchy of organizational elements that can be developed as needed within the EOC organization is:

- Director
- Section
- Branch
- Group
- Unit

Personnel supervising EOC Sections will carry a position title of Section Coordinator. Persons supervising branches, groups, or units will have the title of Coordinator unless otherwise designated.

The span of control within the EOC organization should be maintained within the range of one supervisor for every three to seven positions. If the span of control exceeds seven, activation of another organizational level (e.g., Branch, Group, or Unit) should be considered. If the span of

⁶ The illustrations herein are generic representations of all EOC levels under SEMS. Span of Control and workload situations will dictate the arrangement of individual EOC organizations.

control is under three, consideration should be given to deactivating or consolidating organizational elements.

Not all positions in the organization need be activated at the time of REOC activation. For example, a branch may be activated without first activating the section which contains the branch. Functional need and span of control are the primary considerations in organization development. The duties of functional positions not activated will always be the responsibility of the next higher position in the organization.

Information Transfer

As the Regional EOC organization grows, effective internal information transfer must take place. Two principles are essential to effective handling.

- There is freedom within the organization to exchange information. Any person in any unit or organization may make contact with any other person to exchange information.
- Orders, directives, resource requests, and status changes must follow the REOC Organization unless otherwise indicated in the REOC Action Plan.

The EOC Organization

