



*Fire and Rescue Division*



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# California Fire Service and Rescue Emergency Mutual Aid System

# Election Process

Region and Operational Area  
Fire and Rescue Coordinators

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# ELECTION PROCESS

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Fire and Rescue Coordinators

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**CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES  
FIRE AND RESCUE DIVISION**

**ELECTION PROCESS**

**OPERATIONAL AREA FIRE AND RESCUE COORDINATOR  
REGIONAL FIRE AND RESCUE COORDINATOR**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

On January 1, 2009, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) merged with the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) under provisions set forth under Assembly Bill 38 and became the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA). In 2013, the agency was renamed the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES); herein throughout the remainder of this document, all current references to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA) will now reflect the name change, Cal OES, while historical references will remain as OES and Cal EMA, respectively.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, Fire and Rescue Division, is charged with the coordination and implementation of fire and rescue mutual aid activities during multi-jurisdictional/multi-incident emergencies. Over the years, a system to accomplish the dispatch and utilization of mutual aid resources has been developed to meet the specific needs of the Fire Service. This office is responsible for overall coordination and management of the "system". It was developed by the Fire Service and is, therefore, your system.

Any organization, by virtue of large numbers of individual units or geographical expanse, must contain a recognized chain of command to operate effectively. For this reason, responsibility for monitoring fire activities within each county is vested in an Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator. This same responsibility for mutual aid regions is vested in a Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator.

Much of the success of any "system" depends upon the capability of the individuals serving at the various levels in the chain of command, and acceptance by their peers. Since this "system" belongs to the Fire Service, it is appropriate that California's Fire Service have a voice in the selection of Operational Area and Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinators.

**2. PRE-REQUISITE**

In order to maintain the integrity of the Statewide Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid System, the following prerequisites shall apply:

Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinators shall be a Fire Chief or Chief Fire Officer with jurisdictional authority for fire suppression activities in one or more Operational Areas within the Mutual Aid Region.

Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinators shall be a Fire Chief or Chief Fire Officer with jurisdictional authority for fire suppression activities within the Operations Area, and shall be a participative member of the California Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid System.

Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinators and Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinators have many responsibilities. The most important of which are effective and timely communications and service to the field. All levels of dispatching and coordination throughout the Region and Operational Areas involving the various agencies must provide for continuous and adequate communication. With the current emphasis on joint agency dispatch centers, and the automated resource ordering and status system, many communications processes are becoming automated. Center coordinators and dispatchers must ensure that responsible officials are kept current on resource activity and availability as it impacts the Region or Operational Areas

**3. TERM**

Elections for both Regional and Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinators must be conducted at least once each three years. Elections may be held more frequently if necessary or desirable. It is not uncommon for incumbents to be reconfirmed annually.

**4. VACANCY/EXPIRED TERM (OPERATIONAL AREA)**

When a vacancy occurs or a term expires for an Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator, the Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator, working in cooperation with the organized County/Operational Area Fire Chiefs' Association, will call for and, if necessary, conduct an election. Notification of such action should be through the Association's normal procedure; e.g., mail, regular meeting, etc. During a vacant period the Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator will appoint, on an interim basis, an Acting Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator, utilizing the 1<sup>st</sup> Alternate and/or the 2<sup>nd</sup> Alternate, until the formal election process is completed.

**5. NOMINATIONS (OPERATIONAL AREA)**

Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinators, including the 1<sup>st</sup> Alternates and 2<sup>nd</sup> Alternates, must be nominated by the fire chiefs of the Operational Area in which the election is to be conducted.

**6. ELECTION PROCESS (OPERATIONAL AREA)**

Since Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinators, 1<sup>st</sup> Alternates, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Alternates are most frequently chosen during the deliberations of organized county/operational area fire chiefs' associations, rules of order and common courtesy should dictate that advance notification of the intent to conduct an election be delivered to all fire chiefs. Whenever it is apparent that a majority of those eligible to vote cannot attend, or when a majority is not present at a scheduled meeting, it is strongly advised that solicitation of nominations and voting be conducted by conference call.

It is important that the results of the election reflect a majority vote of all those eligible. Each Fire Chief within the Operational Area shall be allowed one vote. This is intended to prevent multiple votes by an individual who may represent more than one fire jurisdiction within an operational area by contract, JPA, or other form of agreement.

The Operational Area Fire and Rescue Election Process shall include a method, established by members of the Operational Area and delineated in the Operational Area Mutual Aid Plan or other appropriate document, to determine tie breaker procedures should the balloting result in a tie vote.

At the conclusion of the election, the Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator will notify the Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator of the outcome. Notification should be in writing and include the names, departments, and telephone numbers of those elected.

**7. VACANCY/EXPIRED TERM (REGION)**

When a vacancy occurs or term expires for a Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator, the State Fire and Rescue Coordinator (Chief, Cal OES Fire and Rescue Division) shall notify each Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator within the respective region that an election is pending. During a vacant period, the State Fire and Rescue Coordinator will (with the approval of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Alternate Regional Coordinators) appoint on an interim basis, an "Acting" Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator to serve until the formal election process is completed.

**8. NOMINATIONS (REGION)**

Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinators, 1<sup>st</sup> Alternates, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Alternates are nominated by the Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinators within the

Mutual Aid Region. The State Fire and Rescue Coordinator will solicit nominations for each position from each Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator within the region.

**9. ELECTION PROCESS (REGION)**

Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator elections, including 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Alternate, will be conducted during the annual region meeting or at a special meeting. Whenever it is apparent that a majority of those eligible to vote cannot attend, or when a majority is not present at a scheduled meeting, solicitation of nominations and actual balloting will be conducted by conference call. Each Operational Area will be allowed to cast one vote delivered by the Operational Area Coordinator or a designated Alternate Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator.

**10. OPERATIONAL AREA FIRE AND RESCUE COORDINATOR**

Duties and Responsibilities

- A) Organizes and acts as chairperson of an Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinating Committee composed of the Alternate Area Fire and Rescue Coordinators and/or fire chiefs within the operational area. The committee may include others as deemed necessary by the chairperson. This committee shall meet at least once each year and may hold additional meetings as deemed necessary by the chairperson.
- B) In cooperation with the Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinating Committee, will:
  - I) Organize, staff, and equip area fire and rescue dispatch centers in accordance with the principles enumerated in the California Fire and Rescue Emergency Mutual Aid Plan.
  - II) Select and submit to the Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator the names of individuals to serve as the alternates at Operational Area Fire and Rescue Dispatch Centers.
  - III) Aid and encourage the development of uniform fire and rescue operational plans within the Area.
  - IV) Aid and encourage the development of countywide fire and rescue communication nets operation on the approved fire frequency for the county. The communication net should tie the communications facilities of the county to the Operational Area Fire and Rescue Dispatch Center and alternate dispatch centers.

- V) Maintain an up-to-date inventory system of fire and rescue apparatus and personnel within the area for use in dispatching. Compile and forward this information to the respective Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator annually.
  - VI) Maintains the dispatching procedure for all state-owned Cal OES fire apparatus and communication vehicles assigned within the area.
  - VII) Provide fire and rescue coordination to the Cal OES Operational Area disaster preparedness official.
- C) Responsible for assisting local, region, and state officials in planning, requesting, and utilizing mobilization centers as needed for staging strike teams and personnel where appropriate.
  - D) During a "State of War Emergency", shall report to the area Emergency Operations Center to serve on the staff of the Operational Area Disaster Preparedness Director. An authorized representative may serve on this staff in place of the Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator, if necessary.
  - E) During a "State of Emergency" declared by the Governor, or as may be necessary, shall report to the area Emergency Operations Center or such other location as directed by the Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator. If necessary, an authorized representative may assume this duty.
  - F) Will be responsible for coordinating the dispatch of Cal OES and/or local fire and rescue resources within the operational area on major mutual aid operations.
    - I) If the emergency is within the jurisdiction of the Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator and overloads the communication facilities, assigns dispatching of mutual aid equipment to an alternate fire and rescue dispatch center.
    - II) Shall keep the Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator informed of all operations.
    - III) Evaluates requests for assistance from local agencies; determines the resources from the operational area which can provide the timeliest assistance, and initiates appropriate response thereof. Determines if the timeliest assistance is from an adjacent operational area and if so, requests assistance from that Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator not to exceed five engine companies or individual resources, and notifies the Regional

Fire and Rescue Coordinator of this action. When resources are needed from more than one adjacent area, either for timely response or when the need is beyond operational area capability, the request must be made to region.

- IV) Determines approximate time commitment and justification of resources committed to a local agency, periodically evaluates the justification and commitment to the local agency of these resources, and notifies the region.
- V) The Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator will advise the requesting jurisdiction of the origin of resources responding to the request for assistance.
- VI) Shall notify and advise the Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator, in a timely manner, of the need to establish mobilization centers and/or staging areas.
- G) The Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinators are not responsible for any direct fire or other emergency operations except those which occur within the jurisdiction of its own department, agency, etc. The local official in whose jurisdiction the emergency exists shall remain in full charge of all fire and rescue resources, staffing, and equipment furnished for mutual aid operations.

## **11. REGIONAL FIRE AND RESCUE COORDINATOR**

### Duties and Responsibilities

- A) Organizes and acts as chairperson of a Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinating Committee, composed of Alternate Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinators and the Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinators within the region. This committee may include others as deemed necessary by the chairperson. This committee shall meet at least once each year and may hold additional meetings as deemed necessary by the chairperson.
- B) Upon receipt of information of an emergency within the region which may require regional mutual aid, or upon request of the State Fire and Rescue Coordinator, assumes the responsibility for coordination and dispatch of regional mutual aid resources.
- C) In cooperation with the Fire and Rescue Coordinating Committee, will:



- I) Organize, staff, and equip a Regional Fire and Rescue Dispatch Center in accordance with the principles enumerated in the California Fire Service and Rescue Emergency Mutual Aid Plan.
  - II) Select and submit to the State Fire and Rescue Coordinator, the names of individuals to serve as alternates at the Regional Fire and Rescue Dispatch Centers.
  - III) Aid, encourage, and approve the development of uniform fire and rescue emergency plans within the region, through the Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinators.
  - IV) Encourage and assist with the development of countywide fire and rescue radio communication networks, tying local fire departments to an Operational Area Fire and Rescue Dispatch Center.
  - V) Maintain an up to date inventory system of fire and rescue apparatus and personnel within the region for use in dispatching. Compile and forward this information to the State Fire and Rescue Coordinator annually.
- D) During a "State of War Emergency", the Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator or the authorized representatives shall report to the Regional Emergency Control Center, acting as Fire and Rescue liaison to the Cal OES Regional Manager.
  - E) During a "State of Emergency" proclaimed by the Governor, or as may be necessary, the Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator or the alternate will report to the Regional Emergency Control Center or other locations as directed by the State Fire and Rescue Coordinator.
  - F) Is responsible for coordinating the dispatching of Cal OES and/or local fire and rescue resources within the region on major mutual aid operations.
  - G) If the emergency exists within the jurisdiction of the Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator and overloads the communication facilities, the Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator assigns dispatching of mutual aid equipment to an Alternate Regional Fire and Rescue Dispatch Center.
    - I) Keeps the State Fire and Rescue Coordinator informed of all operations within the region.
    - II) Evaluates requests for assistance from operational Areas; determines the region resources from the region which can provide the timeliest assistance, and initiates appropriate response thereof. Determines if the timeliest assistance is from an adjacent region

and if so, requests assistance from that Region Fire and Rescue Coordinator (not to exceed five engine companies or individual resources), and must notify the State Fire and Rescue Coordinator of this action. When resources are needed from more than one adjacent region, either for timely response or when the need is beyond region capability, the request must be made to the State.

- III) Determines approximate time commitment and justification of resources committed to operational area. Shall periodically evaluate the justification and commitment to the Operational Area of these resources, and notify the State.
- IV) The Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator will advise the requesting area of the source of all assistance responding to the area.
- V) Shall notify and advise the State Fire and Rescue Coordinator, in a timely manner, of the need to establish mobilization centers and/or staging areas.
- H) Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator will monitor and coordinate backup coverage within an area or region when there is a shortage of resources.
- I) Calls for and conducts elections within the respective Operational Areas for Operational Area Fire and Rescue Coordinator. These elections will be held every three years and when a vacancy occurs or at the request of the State Fire and Rescue Coordinator. Communications, dispatch requirements, and capabilities will be considered in electing coordinators.
- J) The Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinators are not responsible for any direct fire or other emergency operations except those which occur within the jurisdiction of its own department, agency, etc. The local official in whose jurisdiction the emergency exists shall remain in full charge of all fire and rescue resources furnished for mutual aid operations.
- K) Assists with planning, utilizing, and requesting mobilization centers as needed for staging strike teams during mutual aid operations.

## 12. **DEFINITIONS**

- A) Operational Area - An intermediate level of the State's fire and rescue services organization, normally consisting of all fire and rescue organizations within the county. (Exception: Los Angeles County and the Tahoe Basin.)

- B) Mutual Aid Region - A subdivision of the State's fire and rescue services organization, established to facilitate the coordination of mutual aid and other emergency operations within a geographical area of the State, consisting of two or more county operational areas.
  
- C) Alternates - As noted in "Duties and Responsibilities", each Operational Area and each Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinator will elect a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> alternate. Alternates should be capable of assuming all duties of the position in the event the Operational Area or Regional Fire and Rescue Coordinators are saturated with emergency activity within their own jurisdiction. This, however, does not preclude the delegation of responsibility "in-house" to a qualified subordinate in the absence of the elected coordinator.