



*Cal* OES

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

# Incident Management Assistance Team **Concept of Operations**

Version Control #1.0

Date: 07/25/2025

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

This Concept of Operations is approved by Cole Glenwright, Incident Management Assistance Team Leader. Any proposed changes may be discussed at any time with the Incident Management Assistance Team. This document will be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate.



Approved by Cole Glenwright on 07/25/2025

# Concept of Operations

## Incident Management Assistance Team

### Contents

1	Executive Summary.....	6
2	Introduction .....	7
2.1	Objective .....	7
2.2	Guiding Principles.....	7
2.3	Organization .....	9
2.4	IMAT Role within Cal OES .....	10
3	Readiness Phase.....	11
3.1	Training and Credentialing.....	11
3.2	Exercise Program.....	11
3.3	Integration with the State Operations Center .....	11
3.4	Partnership Development .....	12
3.5	Disaster Planning .....	13
3.6	Support to the California Specialized Training Institute.....	13
3.7	Support to Other Programs .....	13
4	Mobilization Phase .....	14
4.1	Deployment Trigger Events.....	14
4.2	Request Process .....	14
4.2.1	Request by an Operational Area .....	15
4.2.2	Request by Region Leadership .....	15
4.2.3	Deployments Ordered by Cal OES Executive Management.....	16
4.2.4	Emergency Management Assistance Compact Request .....	17
4.3	Preposition Assignments .....	17
4.4	Deployment Notification .....	17
4.5	Travel Operations .....	18
4.5.1	Ground Travel.....	18
4.5.2	Air Travel.....	19
4.5.3	Travel Arrangements.....	19
4.5.4	Lodging .....	19
4.5.5	Equipment Mobilization .....	19
4.6	Supporting Personnel .....	20
5	Operational Phase .....	20

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

5.1	Command and Control.....	20
5.2	Operational Safety.....	20
5.3	Operational Parameters.....	21
5.4	Mission Classes.....	22
5.4.1	Mission Class #1: Augment Local or Operational Area EOC .....	22
5.4.2	Mission Class #2: Direct State Operations .....	26
5.4.3	Mission Class #3: Single Resource Request .....	28
5.4.4	Mission Class #4: Emergency Management Assistance Compact Mission .....	28
5.5	Training for Local Government Personnel.....	29
5.6	Transition to Recovery and Demobilization .....	29
5.7	Administrative Functions During Disaster Operations.....	30
6	Post-Deployment Phase .....	30
6.1	Reconstitution.....	30
6.2	After Action Review .....	31
6.3	Improvement Plans .....	31

## Concept of Operations

Incident Management Assistance Team

## Document Change Control

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## 1 Executive Summary

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The Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) is a resource of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) that deploys in support of local and State emergency managers to help coordinate the response to major emergencies and disasters. The team aims to enhance the capability and coordination of emergency management response operations at the field, local, Operational Area, and State levels, and in other states when requested, through the deployment of trained and experienced personnel.

The IMAT is a California Emergency Operations Center (EOC) credentialed team of eleven fulltime staff organized in accordance with the five sections of the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). At the direction of the Assistant Director for Headquarters Response, the IMAT may deploy in support of a local government, an Operational Area (OA), a Cal OES Administrative Region, another state agency, a component of Cal OES, or another state, through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). Deployment request and approval processes ensure the IMAT deploys only when requested by the agency having jurisdiction and approved by Cal OES executive management.

When deployed, the IMAT may play a variety of roles. The IMAT can augment a local or OA EOC, assisting local personnel in executing disaster response operations while also enhancing coordination with the State Operations Center (SOC) and strengthening the capacity of local personnel to respond to future events. The IMAT fills this role in support of and in coordination with the Cal OES Regional Response. The IMAT may also lead state-managed disaster response operations if the scale or complexity of a response operation necessitate direct state engagement. Additionally, the IMAT can deploy its credentialed personnel as single resources to fill critical vacancies in local EOCs, similar to an Emergency Management Mutual Aid (EMMA) request, or to the SOC. Through EMAC, the IMAT can deploy and provide incident management assistance to other states. In any scenario, the IMAT provides leadership throughout the response phase of a disaster and ensures a successful transition to recovery. Command and control of the IMAT is always vested in Cal OES Headquarters Response. The IMAT implements a robust safety program to protect all resources under its charge and ensures continuous improvement through an after action review process.

When not assigned to an incident, the IMAT builds and maintains operational capability within its fulltime staff through a year-round training, credentialing, and exercise program. To increase its operational effectiveness, the IMAT develops strong relationships with the SOC, other internal Cal OES partners, and a network of external partners at all levels of government and at nongovernmental entities, such as utility providers and humanitarian groups. The IMAT leverages its experience and expertise to support Cal OES' disaster planning efforts and continually expands its internal understanding of adopted disaster plans. The IMAT also partners with the California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI) to identify local training needs and help ensure relevant training is available to local governments. IMAT members serve as subject matter experts to a variety of internal working groups and interagency efforts. Additionally, the IMAT is also available to provide leadership and project management support to other parts of the agency as directed by Cal OES' executive management.

# Concept of Operations

## Incident Management Assistance Team

### 2 Introduction

This section defines the objective and guiding principles of the IMAT, explains the organization of the IMAT, and describes the IMAT's role within Cal OES.

#### 2.1 Objective

The objective of the IMAT is to deploy in support of local and State emergency managers to help coordinate the response to major emergencies and disasters. The team aims to enhance the capability and coordination of emergency management response operations at the field, local, and OA levels, and in other states when requested, through the deployment of trained and experienced personnel. This Concept of Operations (CONOPs) describes how the IMAT program accomplishes this objective including the program's administration, deployment process, disaster operational roles, and post-deployment activities.

#### 2.2 Guiding Principles

The IMAT Program is guided by six principles, which help inform and direct all program operations:

1. **Survivor-Focused:** The IMAT undertakes all missions with a commitment toward improving outcomes for disaster survivors and understands that disaster survivors are the ultimate customer of emergency management.
2. **Response Capability:** The IMAT maintains a consistent state of readiness for response-phase operations and provides decisive crisis leadership. The IMAT is trained and equipped to respond quickly and operate effectively in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments.
3. **Strategic Foresight:** The IMAT provides strategic foresight to local emergency managers, assisting them in anticipating and preparing for the response and recovery phases of disasters. The IMAT develops this ability through an aggressive commitment to training, ongoing reviews of prior disasters, engagement in the disaster planning process, and lived experience in the field.
4. **Team of Teams Mentality:** The IMAT exercises a "team of teams" mentality in engaging partners and building coalitions to resolve challenges. As defined by General Stanley McChrystal, the team of teams framework uses trust, common purpose, shared consciousness, and empowered execution to maximize team potential.
5. **Customer Service:** The IMAT provides excellent customer service to all its customers, including local government staff, partner state agencies, and the people of California.



*Survivors arrive at an evacuation center during the 2021 Caldor Fire.*

6. **Incident Command System Expertise:** The IMAT embraces the Incident Command System (ICS) as the premier tool for disaster response and actively seeks to properly employ ICS on every mission. The IMAT continually increases its knowledge of and familiarity with ICS through training, exercises, and engagement with partner agencies.

**Figure 1: IMAT Guiding Principles**



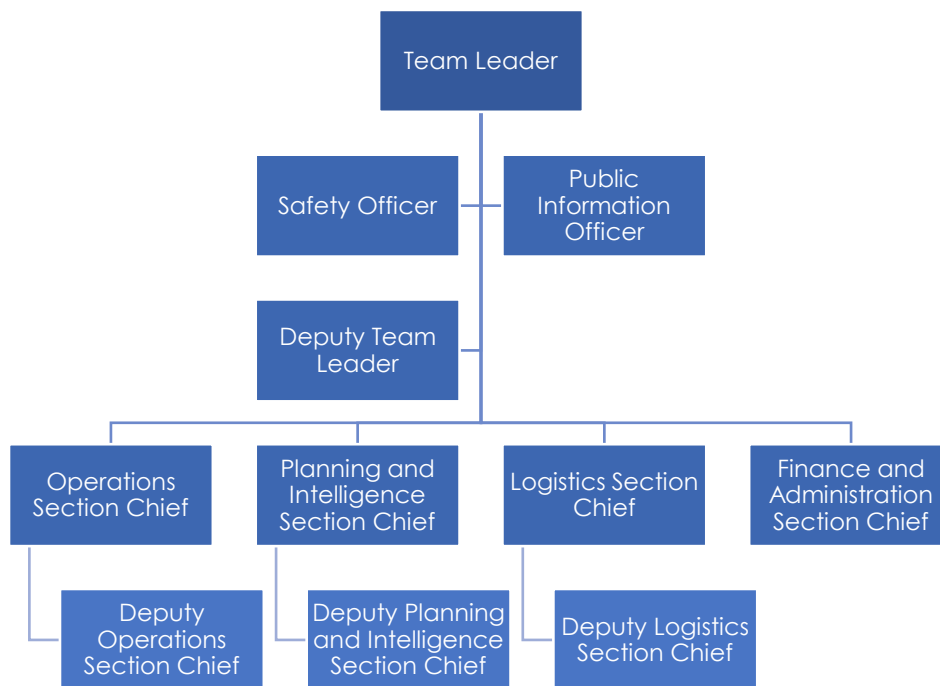
## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

#### 2.3 Organization

The IMAT is organized in accordance with the SEMS. The IMAT consists of five sections—Management, Operations, Planning and Intelligence, Logistics, and Finance and Administration, each of which is illustrated in Figure 2. The specific role of each section during different mission types is described more fully in Section 5, Disaster Operations.

**Figure 2: IMAT Operational Organizational Chart**



- A. Management Section:** The Management Section, which may be referred to as the Command Section in field settings, includes the Team Leader, Deputy Team Leader, Safety Officer, and Public Information Officer. The Team Leader is responsible for the overall IMAT program, including readiness and disaster operations, with support from the Deputy Team Leader. The Safety Officer is responsible for advising the Team Leader on all matters relating to safety and operational risk management, including the health and safety of all IMAT members and other personnel assigned to support the IMAT, and implementing the IMAT's safety program. The Public Information Officer leads all public information functions of the IMAT. The Public Information Officer represents the Cal OES Office of Crisis Communications and Public Affairs in the field and generally does not speak on behalf of requesting agencies.
- B. Operations Section:** The Operations Section includes the Operations Section Chief and Deputy Operations Section Chief, who are jointly responsible for the planning and delivery of tactical, support, and other response operations. Depending on the mission type, the Operations Section may expand to include additional components necessary to accomplish incident objectives.
- C. Planning and Intelligence Section:** The Planning and Intelligence Section (P&I Section) includes the Planning and Intelligence Section Chief and the Deputy Planning and Intelligence Section

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

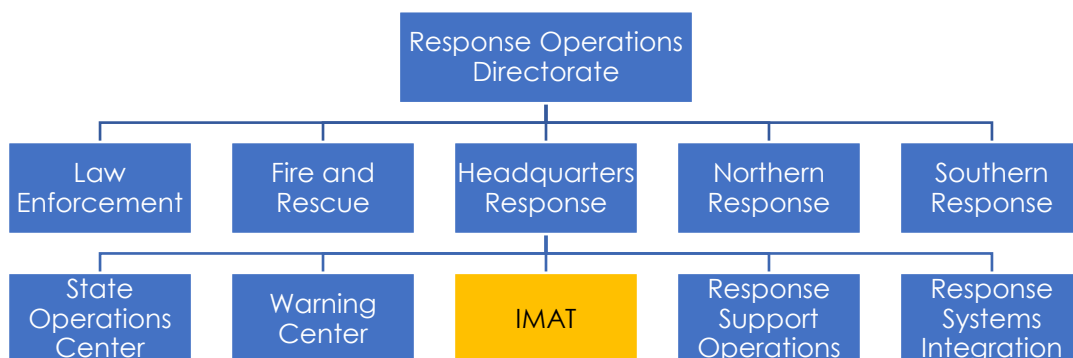
Chief. The P&I Section is responsible for the collection, evaluation, validation, and dissemination of information about the incident and status of resources in coordination with partners. In addition, the P&I Section is responsible for the Incident Action Planning Process and planning for the demobilization of resources.

- D. Logistics Section:** The Logistics Section includes the Logistics Section Chief and the Deputy Logistics Section Chief. The Logistics Section provides resources and services needed to support the IMAT and the incident response. This includes facilitating resource requests with SOC Operations and SOC Logistics on behalf of affected local agencies and OAs, in coordination with Regional Response. The Logistics Section is also responsible for acquiring, assigning, and managing IMAT Program-owned resources, such as vehicles and deployment equipment. Depending on the mission type, the Logistics Section may also coordinate with or include representatives from Cal OES Disaster Logistics and Cal OES Tactical Communications.
- E. Finance and Administration Section:** The Finance and Administration Section (F&A Section) is staffed by the Finance and Administration Section Chief. The F&A Section assists the local agency in identifying and managing costs related to the incident, preparing for cost recovery processes, securing travel accommodations for the IMAT, and managing administrative processes related to pay and travel reimbursement. The F&A Section does not have the authority to make financial decisions on behalf of other agencies beyond specifically agreed upon parameters.

## 2.4 IMAT Role within Cal OES

The IMAT functions within the larger Cal OES Response Directorate and supports the work of other response components. As a division of Headquarters Response Operations, the IMAT works closely with the SOC and acts as an extension of the SOC in some circumstances. As a field resource, the IMAT coordinates with Regional Response Operations to provide unified support to local government. The IMAT also supports other elements of Cal OES, including providing technical expertise to the Planning, Preparedness, and Prevention Directorate and transitional continuity to the Recovery Directorate. The IMAT Logistics Section maintains a strong relationship with Disaster Logistics. The role of the IMAT within the Response Directorate is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: IMAT Role within the Response Directorate**



### 3 Readiness Phase

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This section describes IMAT Program activities undertaken during “steady state” or non-deployed periods to ensure readiness for response operations. These activities are intended to strengthen the IMAT Program and increase its effectiveness.

#### 3.1 Training and Credentialing

The IMAT maintains an onboarding and annual training program intended to ensure its personnel possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to accomplish the program's objective. Each IMAT member is expected to obtain and maintain a Type I California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI) Emergency Operations Center (EOC) credential and a Type III or higher National Qualification System (NQS) credential. IMAT members use NQS Position Task Books (PTBs) to document their experience performing their roles. IMAT members attend trainings offered by CSTI, Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Emergency Management Institute (EMI), and other training providers to fulfill these requirements.

#### 3.2 Exercise Program

The IMAT builds and maintains knowledge, skills, and abilities through a defined exercise program. The exercise program includes two primary components:

1. **Weekly Tabletop Exercises:** As time allows, the IMAT conducts a weekly tabletop exercise to build familiarity with the Incident Action Planning Process and study prior disasters. All tabletop exercises within a month follow a single historic incident, progressing through the incident one operational period per week. The IMAT discusses, if the incident occurred today: (1) how the IMAT would deploy, (2) what emergency plans would be applicable, (3) what partners the IMAT would coordinate with, (4) what the initial response priorities would be, and (5) what State or Federal resources would need to be procured. The deliverable from each exercise is a completed Incident Action Plan or EOC Action Plan. At the end of the month, the IMAT then meets with staff who responded to the actual incident to confirm or adjust assumptions and learn from their experience, when possible. This may also include engagement with the AAR Committee and formal AAR process if applicable.
2. **Quarterly Mobilization Exercises:** The IMAT conducts quarterly mobilization exercises which develop the IMAT's ability to rapidly deploy and implement ICS in a deployed environment. Mobilization exercises may be internal to the IMAT or involve stakeholders. Exercises are generally held offsite and require the team to complete all actions described in the Mobilization and Operational phases of their SOPs.

The IMAT also participates in exercises facilitated by others, including other components of Cal OES and partner areas, when relevant.

#### 3.3 Integration with the State Operations Center

IMAT members build and maintain close working relationships with their counterparts in the SOC to enhance and streamline coordination during disasters. Each IMAT member is expected to have a

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

detailed knowledge of SOC standard operating procedures (SOPs) and operational norms, both of their section and the SOC overall. This is accomplished through regular joint exercises, integration into SOC planning processes and meetings, shadowing during activations, and assignment of IMAT members to SOC positions when requested by the permanent SOC Incident Support Team (IST). In general, IMAT members will not fill SOC positions unless the position cannot be filled by the Permanent IST or the assigned rotating (Red/White/Blue) IST, unless otherwise directed.

As the duties of IMAT sections and SOC sections differ, it is important that IMAT members understand the function of the SOC overall, not just their corresponding section. For example, when deployed, the IMAT Logistics Section works closely with the SOC Operations Section to order resources that will be mission tasked by the SOC. Thus, it is critical that the IMAT Logistics Section not only understand the role of their corresponding SOC Logistics Section, but also understand the interconnectivity and processes of SOC Operations Section.



*IMAT personnel support the SOC during an activation.*

### **3.4 Partnership Development**

The IMAT is responsible for developing and strengthening relationships with a multitude of partners. This may include holding introductory meetings, conducting tours of Cal OES or partner agency facilities, participating in joint trainings and exercises, and supporting disaster planning efforts. Internally, the IMAT will develop partnerships with other Response Directorate components, key units within the Planning, Preparedness, and Prevention Directorate (such as the Disaster Planning Unit), operational units of the Recovery Directorate (such as the Debris Operations Unit and the Individual Assistance Unit), and key stakeholders in the Logistics Management Directorate (such as Tactical Communications and Disaster Logistics). Within state government, the IMAT will develop relationships with all agencies leading a State Emergency Support Function (ESF). The IMAT will also build relationships with Federal partners through coordination with FEMA Region IX, including with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) South Pacific Division, United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Region IX, and the United States Forest Service (USFS) Region 5.

In coordination with Regional Response Operations, the IMAT will build and maintain relationships with local government emergency management agencies, including through presentations at Mutual Aid Regional Advisory Committee (MARAC) Meetings, briefings for local government on the IMAT Program, and joint training and exercises. Relevant personnel from Regional Response Operations will be informed and present during all engagements by the IMAT with local government.

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

#### 3.5 Disaster Planning

As a field disaster response coordination group, the IMAT must possess a firm understanding of California's disaster plans, including the State Emergency Plan (SEP), catastrophic plans, and hazard-specific plans. The IMAT will work closely with the Planning, Preparedness, and Prevention Directorate to receive briefings on adopted plans, and IMAT members will be responsible for familiarizing themselves with the following plans:

- A. California State Emergency Plan
- B. Catastrophic Incident Base Plan Concept of Operations
- C. Southern California Catastrophic Earthquake Plan
- D. Northern California Catastrophic Flood Response Plan
- E. Bay Area Earthquake Plan
- F. Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake and Tsunami Response Plan
- G. Extreme Temperature Response Plan (Annex to State Emergency Plan)

The IMAT may also support Cal OES' disaster planning process by providing lessons learned and lived experiences to planning teams. The IMAT can help validate if a proposed response strategy is realistic and able to be implemented in the field. Furthermore, the IMAT can support planning working groups and provide feedback on drafted materials. The IMAT will familiarize itself with adopted OA EOPs to enhance its support to local government during disaster operations.



#### 3.6 Support to the California Specialized Training Institute

The IMAT works to continually strengthen local government emergency management capabilities through coordination with CSTI. When deployed in support of a local agency, the IMAT works to identify potential training needs for local government staff. The IMAT can provide just-in-time-training to local government personnel during the incident, which shall be based on approved CSTI curriculum, but not intended to replace formal training. The IMAT will also facilitate access to online CSTI courses, such as the G611 EOC Section courses. Following an incident, the IMAT will advise CSTI of any identified training needs at the local agency and assist in facilitating training as requested. IMAT personnel are not CSTI instructors but may support CSTI course delivery if requested by CSTI, particularly if the course is being provided to a local agency that the IMAT previously assisted.

#### 3.7 Support to Other Programs

When not deployed, the IMAT can provide expertise and assistance to other Cal OES program areas. IMAT personnel provide subject matter expertise to various agency working groups, projects, and other initiatives. This provides mutual benefit, offering experienced staff with field experience to agency projects while also ensuring the IMAT is kept abreast of new initiatives and programs that could be leveraged during disaster response. Additionally, when requested, the IMAT can provide leadership

and project management to high-priority agency initiatives, using its internal incident management processes and expertise to support project delivery. In either scenario, the supported program area is advised that the IMAT's primary function is disaster response, and at any time IMAT personnel may be deployed with little or no advance notice. While deployed, IMAT personnel pause involvement with other programs and focus exclusively on the disaster.

## 4 Mobilization Phase

This section describes the processes used for requesting and deploying the IMAT to incidents.

### 4.1 Deployment Trigger Events

While all deployments are initiated through the process described in Section 4.2, Request Process, certain events are likely to trigger an IMAT deployment. These events include:

1. An earthquake with a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) PAGER alert of orange or red.
2. A wildland or urban fire which has caused or is likely to cause significant damage to a developed area (e.g., major wildland urban interface fires).
3. Issuance of a Tsunami Warning by the U.S. Tsunami Warning System.
4. An event warranting the activation of Phase III of the State Extreme Temperature Plan (extreme heat or extreme cold event), particularly if the event will be focused on a vulnerable or isolated community.
5. A weather event that has caused or likely to cause significant urban or suburban flooding.
6. A major debris flow affecting homes or businesses.
7. A significant dam failure or potential failure.
8. A terrorism event warranting an emergency management response (e.g., an event requiring large scale evacuation, sheltering, or debris removal).
9. A significant winter storm that restricts transportation or isolates communities.
10. Any other emergency event requiring a significant response by state government.



*The 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise.*

This list is not exhaustive but intended to illustrate the type of events the IMAT is likely to respond to.

### 4.2 Request Process

The IMAT deploys in accordance with SEMS and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). This section describes various ways the IMAT can be requested and details the deployment approval process.

# Concept of Operations

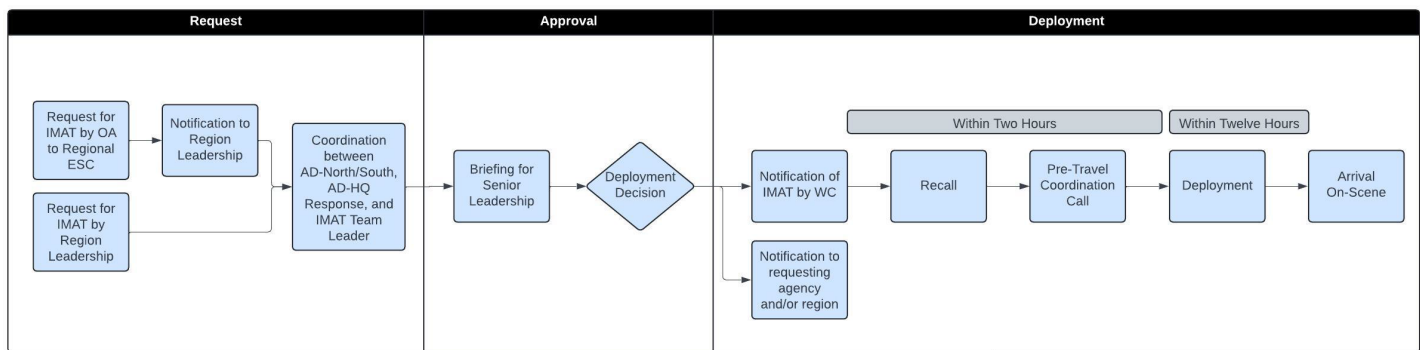
## Incident Management Assistance Team

This section primarily references how the IMAT will be deployed as a team or partial team. However, these processes may also be used for requesting single resources from the IMAT (for example, requesting a Planning and Intelligence Section Chief, which will be filled by the IMAT). Single resource requests are described further in Section 5.4.3, Single Resource Requests.

In certain circumstances, Cal OES executive management may directly order an IMAT deployment, based on executive-level coordination with the impacted jurisdiction or to support state operations.

This section describes how these various types of requests are fulfilled and tracked.

**Figure 4: IMAT Request and Deployment Processes for OA or Region Requests**



### 4.2.1 Request by an Operational Area

An OA may request the IMAT deploy to assist in managing local response operations for an actual or expected emergency event. To request the IMAT, the OA should:

1. Notify the assigned Regional Response Emergency Services Coordinator (ESC).
2. The ESC will notify Region Leadership, who will advance the request to the Assistant Director for Response North/South for concurrence.
3. If the relevant Assistant Director concurs with the request, they will contact the IMAT Team Leader and the Assistant Director of Headquarters Response (AD-HQ Response) to discuss the request. The IMAT Team Leader will ascertain more information about the type and nature of the proposed deployment.
4. The AD-HQ Response will then brief senior leadership on the request and receive direction on whether to authorize a deployment.
5. The AD-HQ Response will notify the Assistant Director for Response North/South and the IMAT Team Leader of the decision. The IMAT Team Leader will begin coordinating the deployment.

### 4.2.2 Request by Region Leadership

Cal OES Region Leadership may independently request the IMAT if, in their professional determination, an IMAT deployment is warranted to stabilize an incident or meet response objectives. This may include for regional-scale deployments where the IMAT is not supporting one specific jurisdiction but providing incident management assistance across a wide area. To request the IMAT, Region Leadership should:

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

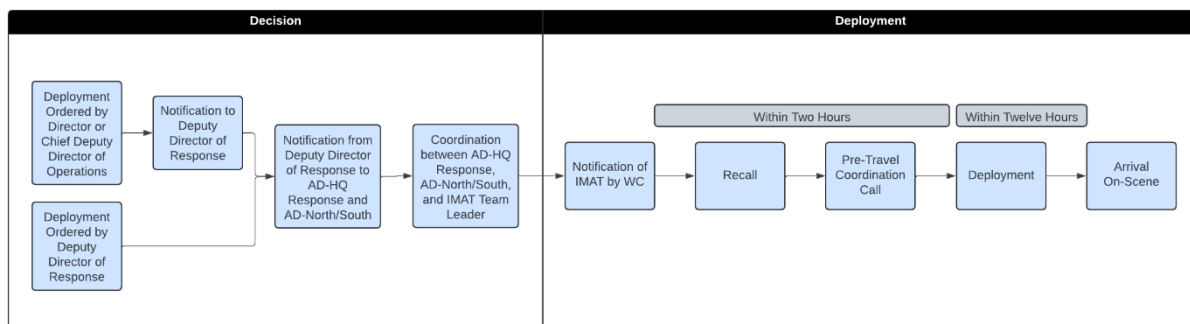
1. Seek concurrence from the Assistant Director for Response North/South.
2. If the relevant Assistant Director concurs with the request, they will contact the IMAT Team Leader and the AD-HQ Response to discuss the request. The IMAT Team Leader will ascertain more information about the type and nature of the proposed deployment.
3. The AD-HQ Response will then brief senior leadership on the request and receive direction on whether to authorize a deployment.
4. The AD-HQ Response will notify the Assistant Director for Response North/South and the IMAT Team Leader of the decision. The IMAT Team Leader will begin coordinating the deployment.

#### 4.2.3 Deployments Ordered by Cal OES Executive Management

Cal OES executive management may direct the IMAT deploy based on executive-level coordination with the impacted jurisdiction or other circumstances. These deployment orders will be fulfilled as follows:

1. If the deployment is being ordered by the Cal OES Director or Chief Deputy Director of Operations, they will notify the Deputy Director of Response of the deployment.
2. The Deputy Director of Response will notify the AD-HQ Response and the Assistant Director for Response North/South (whichever is appropriate).
3. The AD-HQ Response will notify the IMAT Team Leader, who will begin coordinating the deployment.
4. The IMAT Team Leader and the AD-HQ Response will provide a briefing on the planned IMAT deployment to the IMAT.

**Figure 6: IMAT Deployment Process for Deployments Ordered by Executive Management**



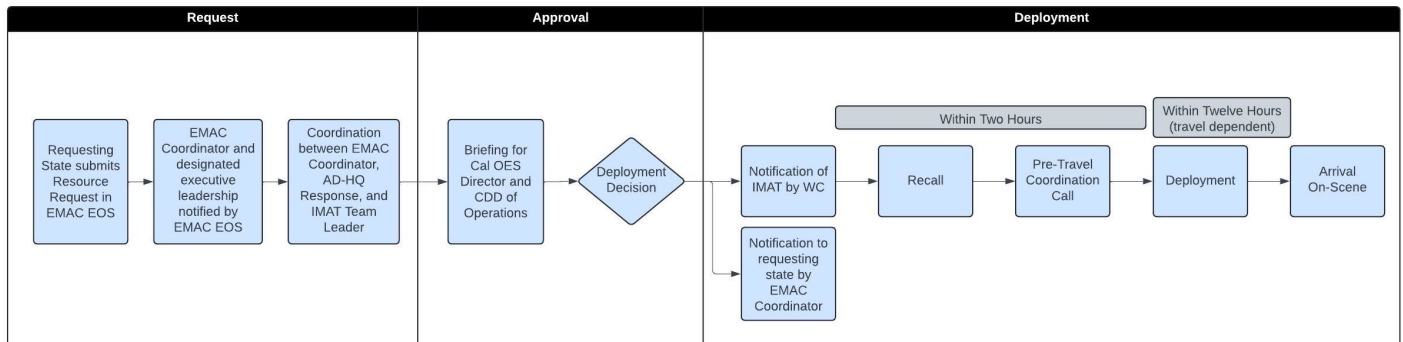
## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

#### 4.2.4 Emergency Management Assistance Compact Request

Requests for an IMAT deployment to another state through EMAC will follow the existing Cal OES EMAC SOP. The EMAC request and deployment process is shown below.

**Figure 6: IMAT Request and Deployment Processes for EMAC Operations**



#### 4.3 Preposition Assignments

When a disaster is expected to imminently impact, is impacting, or has impacted California, the IMAT may be prepositioned near the expected theater of operations. Requests for prepositioning will follow the request processes described in Section 4.2. Prepositions may also be ordered by the AD-HQ Response in anticipation of a request for assistance or other need for the IMAT. Prepositions may involve IMAT personnel staged at a Region office, other state facility, or local hotel in anticipation of a request from an OA or a need for state-managed operations. The IMAT can also be prepositioned at a local government facility if requested to preposition by the local government. The duration of a prepositioned assignment may vary based on the nature of the anticipated event, but generally the IMAT will not be prepositioned more than seven days in advance of the anticipated event or following an event occurring.

When prepositioned in anticipation of supporting a specific OA, the IMAT Team Leader may authorize engagement immediately upon receipt of a request for assistance from the OA through the Administrative Region. Prior to engagement, all coordination and communication between the IMAT and the OA will be through the Administrative Region.

#### 4.4 Deployment Notification

Once a deployment has been approved, the IMAT Team Leader sends an Everbridge notification to all IMAT members. The notification will advise the IMAT members of the deployment and provide reporting instructions. If the IMAT Team Leader or Deputy Team Leader are not able to promptly send an Everbridge notification, they may contact the Warning Center and request they send the notification instead.

Depending on the nature of the deployment, IMAT members may be directed to first report to Cal OES Headquarters, may deploy directly to the requesting location, or may rendezvous at staging area near the disaster site. IMAT members must acknowledge the notification and notify the IMAT Team Leader

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

with their estimated time of arrival. The IMAT shall be prepared to deploy within two hours of notification and must arrive onsite within 12 hours of notification, unless otherwise directed by the AD-HQ Response.

When practicable, the IMAT Team Leader will facilitate a Deployment Briefing in the State Operations Center between the IMAT, the affected Cal OES Administrative Region, and the AD-HQ Response prior to deployment. The briefing will review the Deployment Order and confirm the deployment reporting location and timeline, identify points of contact, and provide initial situational awareness for the IMAT. The AD-HQ Response and Deputy Director of Response may also provide leader's intent for the deployment. The briefing will be conducted virtually if team members are deploying directly from their homes.

#### 4.5 Travel Operations

Concurrent with the deployment notification process, the IMAT Team Leader or designee(s) will determine the opportune method of travel to the requesting jurisdiction. This will generally involve travel either by ground or by air.

##### 4.5.1 **Ground Travel**

Travel by ground is the default method for in-state operations, as it allows all required deployment gear to be transported with the team and provides for the use of the IMAT's specially equipped response vehicles during the assignment. Unless otherwise directed by the IMAT Team Leader, each IMAT member should travel in their own vehicle to ensure operational flexibility on-scene and redeployment capability. The IMAT Operations Section Chief or designee will coordinate sufficient parking with the requesting jurisdiction. In some cases, it may be advantageous to first rendezvous at the selected hotel and consolidate IMAT members into fewer vehicles to limit parking impacts at a local EOCs.



*IMAT response vehicles staged for deployment to the 2025 LA Fires.*

Whenever responding by ground, a land mobile radio frequency will be identified for "car-to-car" coordination. A satellite talkgroup will also be identified. These frequencies, or a separately designated frequency, may also be used for on-scene coordination within the IMAT. Land mobile radio may be used for coordination with the California State Warning Center.

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

#### 4.5.2 Air Travel

Travel by commercial airline is the default method for out-of-state operations or when ground travel would unreasonably delay operations. When determining if air travel is preferred, the IMAT Team Leader or designee will evaluate area road closures and airport closures. In certain cases, air travel may be preferred due to road closures or may be impractical due to airport closures. After a major disaster, both road closures and disruptions to airports are common. IMAT members will travel with all equipment designated for air responses by the IMAT Logistics Section Chief. Additional equipment may be shipped by FedEx or equivalent service if it is deemed essential but cannot practically be transported by IMAT members.



*Cal OES personnel deploying by air to Southern California for the 2023 Winter Storms response.*

In certain limited circumstances, travel by contract, government, or military aircraft may be preferred. The determination to use contract, government, or military aircraft will be made by the AD-HQ Response.

When travelling by air, a viable plan for ground transportation after landing must be established. Use of rental cars is the most frequent solution; the IMAT Logistics Section Chief will confirm that the state rental car provider (Enterprise) is operational at the landing location and has sufficient vehicles available. Unless otherwise directed by the IMAT Team Leader, IMAT members will rent 4x4 vehicles with high clearance, such as full-size SUVs, to ensure safety when driving in disaster areas or on rural roads.

#### 4.5.3 Travel Arrangements

Whenever practicable, the IMAT F&A Section will arrange all travel for the IMAT based on direction from the IMAT Team Leader and in coordination with the Cal OES Travel Unit, as needed. This will ensure consistency and allow other IMAT members to focus on pre-deployment tasks such as coordinating with partners and gathering situational awareness. The IMAT F&A Section Chief will also assist IMAT members prepare and submit travel advance requests if requested. The IMAT Team Leader or Deputy Team Leader will review and approve travel advance requests for IMAT members.

#### 4.5.4 Lodging

IMAT members will lodge in area hotels unless an alternate lodging option is required (such as a Responder Base Camp). Consideration will be given to not displacing disaster survivors at area hotels.

#### 4.5.5 Equipment Mobilization

The IMAT Logistics Section will be primarily responsible for ensuring all necessary equipment is mobilized to support the deployment. This includes ensuring that all IMAT members have been issued equipment,

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

distributing additional team equipment as needed, and coordinating with Disaster Logistics to order any supplemental equipment. For example, the IMAT Logistics Section may determine that a Mobile Command Vehicle should deploy with the IMAT if sufficient workspace is not available at a local EOC or may request Western Shelter tents be deployed to provide a workspace.

#### **4.6 Supporting Personnel**

In certain events, other Cal OES personnel may be deployed to support the IMAT. These may include Regional ESCs or members of an IST staffing additional ICS positions within the IMAT's structure, such as the Situation Unit within the IMAT's P&I Section or as Branch Directors within the IMAT's Operations Section. This may also include subject matter experts on specific hazards or programs, such as a technical expert on earthquakes from the Seismic Hazards Division for an earthquake event. When assigned to support the IMAT, these personnel will take functional direction from the appropriate IMAT Section Chief. The IMAT P&I Section is primarily responsible for tracking all supporting personnel, including deployment dates, assigned roles, and any accommodation requirements.

## **5 Operational Phase**

This section describes the role and mission of the IMAT during disaster operations.

#### **5.1 Command and Control**

Regardless of mission type, the IMAT is a Cal OES Headquarters Response resource, and command and control will be held by the AD-HQ Response. The IMAT does not become a resource of the Administrative Region when deployed. The IMAT is expected to take functional direction from the requesting agency (if applicable), as described more fully in this section.

In certain disasters, Cal OES may designate a Senior State Official (SSO), who will assume command and control of all Cal OES and Cal OES-tasked resources within a designated area. In this case, command and control of the IMAT would be held by the SSO.

For all in-state deployments, IMAT Management will coordinate on a daily basis with Region Management. Daily conference calls between IMAT Management and Region Management will be established to ensure shared situational awareness, coordinate staffing requirements, and address any unmet needs. The AD-HQ Response may be included in these calls if needed. Additionally, as described more fully in Section 5.4 Mission Classes, Regional Response personnel should be embedded into the IMAT structure as Liaison Officers whenever possible.

#### **5.2 Operational Safety**

The safety of IMAT members and other personnel assigned to support the IMAT is the priority of the IMAT Management Section. The IMAT Safety Officer is principally responsible for ensuring the safety of the IMAT and advising the IMAT Team Leader on any safety concerns. Standardized safety practices will be implemented on every deployment, including, but not limited to:

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

- A. Incident Safety Analysis (ICS 215A):** The IMAT Safety Officer will prepare an internal Incident Safety Analysis for each IMAT deployment, preferably prior to deployment. The Incident Safety Analysis will identify hazardous actions and conditions, and the appropriate mitigations, warnings, and remedies.
- B. Operational Risk Management:** Whenever the IMAT Safety Officer or IMAT Team Leader determines a deployment or assignment presents an acute or unusual risk, the IMAT Safety Officer will guide the team through an operational risk management exercise, using the “Green/Amber/Red” (or “GAR”) methodology.
- C. Personal Protective Equipment:** The IMAT Safety Officer will determine the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for each deployment and assignment. In general, all IMAT members will travel with Level “D” PPE, including a hard hat, high-visibility safety vest and jacket, eye protection, work boots, work gloves, and deployment uniforms.
- D. MissionEdge Daily Check-ins:** All IMAT members will complete daily check-ins through the MissionEdge system.
- E. Team Safety Checks:** The IMAT Safety Officer will perform morning and evening safety checks of all personnel and document the outcome. Safety checks may be completed via text message, radio communication, or in-person, as designated by the IMAT Safety Officer. The IMAT Safety Officer will also validate that IMAT members are adhering to mitigations prescribed in the Incident Safety Analysis, including use of proper work/rest cycles, hydration, driving safety, and any other necessary mitigation.
- F. Redundant Communication:** All IMAT personnel will carry redundant communication systems, such as a Cal OES cell phone and portable radio, or a Cal OES cell phone and a Cal OES satellite phone. Communication systems installed in agency vehicles (mobile radios and satellite phones) will satisfy this requirement. A communication plan employing the “Primary, Alternate, Contingency, Emergency” model will be developed when appropriate.

### 5.3 Operational Parameters

The following operational parameters apply to all IMAT deployments:

1. IMAT personnel may take functional direction from the requesting agency. However, ultimate operational control will remain with the AD-HQ Response.
2. IMAT personnel may not commit public funds on behalf of a local agency. A local government employee must approve all purchases, resource orders, or other mechanisms that could commit the local agency's funds to a disaster. If IMAT personnel are serving in EOC positions where purchases or resource orders are generally processed (such as Logistics Section Chief or Finance and Administration Section Chief), specific protocols shall be developed with the local agency detailing approval processes including written purchasing approval, ordering processes, and contracting requirements.
3. IMAT personnel may not directly participate in the local agency's request for reimbursement from Cal OES through the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA), as such participation could violate the grantee-grantor relationship. IMAT personnel may provide guidance and technical assistance on eligible work but cannot directly participate in the process or represent the local agency before Cal OES or any other funding agency (including FEMA).

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

4. IMAT personnel may not represent themselves as employees of a local agency to members of the public, other public employees, or other incident cooperators.

#### 5.4 Mission Classes

This IMAT is designed to be inherently flexible, able to apply the principles of ICS to changing and evolving disaster situations. Accordingly, the Mission Classes described in this section are some, but not all, of the ways the IMAT may be deployed in a disaster. This CONOPs defines four Mission Classes:

**Figure 7: IMAT Mission Classes**

Mission Class #1	Mission Class #2	Mission Class #3	Mission Class #4
Augment Local or OA EOC	Direct State Operations	Single Resource Request	EMAC Mission

##### 5.4.1 Mission Class #1: Augment Local or Operational Area EOC

In a large or complex disaster, the operational, logistical, and technical requirements of response often exceed what a local or OA EOC can provide. Local or OA EOCs may struggle to obtain and maintain adequate staffing, may lack sufficient experienced personnel, and may require assistance navigating State or Federal resource request processes. Recent examples could include the 2021 Dixie Fire affecting Plumas and Lassen counties or the 2023 flooding of Pájaro in Monterey County, both of which required extended activations of County EOCs.

In these situations, the IMAT may augment a local or OA EOC. Generally, this will involve each IMAT member working alongside their local counterpart to assist them in completing their duties, sharing expertise, and assuming responsibility for coordinating with the SOC and other parts of State and Federal governments. As subject matter experts in ICS and EOC operations, the IMAT will assist the local government in operating its EOC in accordance with best practices—however, the IMAT will not endeavor to change processes established by local agencies.

If a local agency's staffing is degraded to the point that it can no longer staff all Management and General Staff positions, IMAT members may fill these roles, with the exception of EOC Director, which must be retained by the agency having jurisdiction. It is also strongly encouraged that the agency having jurisdiction provide a Finance and Administration Section Chief who is authorized to execute contracts and purchase orders on behalf of the jurisdiction and a PIO who can publicly represent the local agency.

When deployed to a local or OA EOC, the IMAT will work closely with the Regional ESC. As directed by Region Leadership, the Regional ESC may liaise between the IMAT and the local agency, may serve as a principal advisor to the IMAT Team Leader, or may redeploy for other duties.

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

The table below shows the duties of each IMAT section in this type of mission. Figure 8 shows the paths of coordination between the local EOC, the IMAT, and other parts of Cal OES.

IMAT Section	Duties
<b>Management (Team Leader and Deputy Team Leader)</b>	In coordination with the Regional ESC, serve as the principal liaison between Cal OES and the local jurisdiction. Provide expert guidance to the EOC Director. Supervise IMAT members and ensure the IMAT provides excellent customer service. Provide information to and receive direction from Cal OES senior leadership if requested. Provide recommendation on when to demobilize the IMAT.
<b>Management (Safety)</b>	Provide for the safety of the IMAT. Assist the EOC Safety Officer in providing for safety of the EOC and any EOC-led field or support operations.
<b>Management (Public Information)</b>	Embed with the EOC PIO or JIC to lend expertise and capability. Serve as the Cal OES representative on the local JIC, if established. Serve as the primary liaison between the local EOC and the Cal OES Office of Crisis Communication and Public Affairs. May serve as the EOC PIO if authorized by the local agency but may not represent themselves as an employee of the local agency or provide press conferences on behalf of the local agency.
<b>Operations</b>	Coordinate all Cal OES or mission tasked resources supporting the response operation to ensure their work aligns with the EOC's priorities and objectives. Provide expert guidance to the EOC Operations Section in planning and executing disaster operations.
<b>Planning and Intelligence</b>	Support the EOC P&I Section in implementing the Incident Action Planning Process, preparing an EOC Action Plan (EOC-AP), producing a Situation Status (SITSTAT) Report, and other reports as directed. Serve as the primary information conduit to SOC Planning and Intelligence. Liaise with Cal OES Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to produce GIS support products.
<b>Logistics</b>	Coordinate with the EOC Logistics Section on resource needs. If requested, may assist with inputting resource requests approved by the local agency into RRS and coordinating follow-up inquiries with the Region and SOC Operations. Liaise with Disaster Logistics and Tactical Communications on

## Concept of Operations

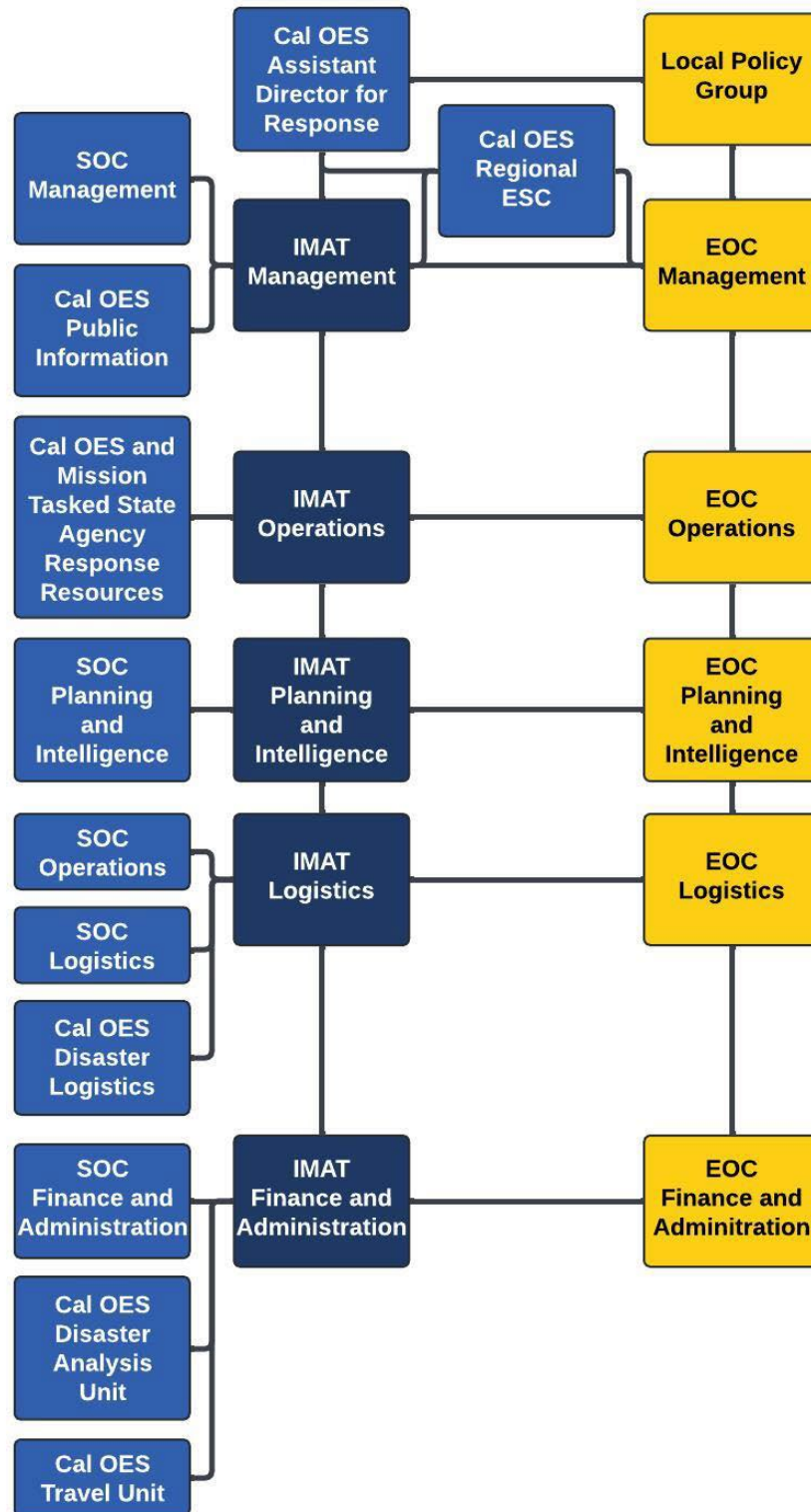
### Incident Management Assistance Team

	required assistance. Provide logistical support to IMAT operations.
<b>Finance and Administration</b>	Support the EOC F&A Section in developing cost projections and estimates for the response, liaise with the Disaster Analysis Unit on Initial Damage Estimates and Preliminary Damage Assessments, manage administrative functions of the IMAT. Assist the agency having jurisdiction prepare contracts and purchase orders; provide subject matter expertise on Federal procurement requirements and other Public Assistance policies. Implements purchasing authority only as authorized in writing by the agency having jurisdiction.

# Concept of Operations

## Incident Management Assistance Team

Figure 8: IMAT Coordination Map



## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

#### 5.4.2 Mission Class #2: Direct State Operations

Generally, SEMS provides that disaster operations are executed at the local or field level. However, in certain situations, a response operation may be so large, specialized, or technically complex that it requires direct management by the State. Similarly, the State may need to directly manage a response operation that addresses a regional issue. Recent examples of State-directed operations include the flood fight operation in the Tulare Basin during 2023, the establishment of mass vaccination sites for COVID-19, humanitarian operations along the US-Mexico border, or the execution of large-scale safety assessments after the 2019 Ridgecrest Earthquake. In the recovery phase, wildfire debris removal operations are frequently state-managed when the cost and complexity exceed what a local government can manage. In these cases, the IMAT may be deployed to directly manage an operation. The IMAT will function similarly to a traditional Incident Management Team (IMT), using field-level ICS to direct and control operations of Cal OES or mission tasked resources. When operating on a Class 2 Mission, the IMAT will generally establish a central coordination facility, which may be referred to as an Incident Command Post, Interim Operating Facility, or field office.

During Presidentially declared Major Disasters, Cal OES and FEMA establish a Joint Field Office (JFO) to direct unified State-Federal response and recovery operations, as described in the National Response Framework and the California Catastrophic Incident Base Plan. The IMAT may serve as the State Command and General Staff for the JFO during the response and early recovery phases, under the direction of a State Coordinating Officer and alongside a FEMA IMAT. The IMAT may also be assigned to an Interim Operating Facility (IOF), which is a precursor facility to a JFO, or an Area Field Office (AFO), which serve as satellite offices to a JFO covering a specific geographic area. When operating a JFO or other joint facility, the IMAT will work collaboratively with the SOC to transition duties, such as mission tasking and situation reporting, in a strategic and timely manner, in order to not



*Operations at the State-led COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Site at CSULA.*



*The JFO for the 2025 Los Angeles Fires in Pasadena, CA. The IMAT served as the initial State Command and General Staff for the JFO alongside FEMA Region 9 IMAT #1.*

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

to duplicate work or cause unneeded confusion. During response, the SOC and JFO may function concurrently for a period of time while the JFO is being established and to provide additional offsite incident management capability. Once the incident has been stabilized and long-term recovery operations commence, the IMAT will transfer management of the JFO to the Recovery Directorate.

The following tables describes general functions of each IMAT position on a Class #2 mission. Some functions may be altered in a JFO assignment; refer to [FEMA's Incident Management Handbook](#) for specific guidance on JFO operations.

IMAT Section	Duties
<b>Management (Team Leader and Deputy Team Leader)</b>	Serve as Incident Command for the operation. Establish incident objectives and approve resource orders. Take direction from the SOC and liaise with leadership of any mission tasked agencies to resolve problems and ensure mission orientation. In coordination with the Assistant Director for Response North/South, liaise with local government and other stakeholders. A Regional ESC should be assigned to serve as a Liaison Officer.
<b>Management (Safety)</b>	Provide for the safety of the IMAT and all operations personnel. May lead a safety team with representatives from mission tasked agencies or other Cal OES Directorates.
<b>Management (Public Information)</b>	Serve as the PIO for the operation, preparing incident-related information products for review and approval by the IMAT Team Leader. Take functional direction from the Cal OES Office of Crisis Communication and Public Affairs.
<b>Operations</b>	Provide direction and control to all Cal OES or mission tasked resources supporting the response operation. Identify the need for and organize incident resources into branches, divisions, and groups. Develop strategies, tactics, and work assignments for incident resources and monitor operational progress. In coordination with the Liaison Officer assigned from Regional Response, liaise with other responding agencies to deconflict and unify operations.
<b>Planning and Intelligence</b>	Manage the Incident Action Planning Process and produce an Incident Action Plan for the operation. Produce a SITSTAT Report for the operation. Liaise with SOC Planning and Intelligence on all information needs. Lead data management and GIS operations, with support from Cal OES GIS.
<b>Logistics</b>	Procure resources through SOC Operations, SOC Logistics, Disaster Logistics, and Tactical Communications. Coordinate with these entities on issues related to mission tasks, contracts, and other constraints.
<b>Finance and Administration</b>	Track and manage costs related to the operation, produce financial projections and reports, ensure compliance with executed agreements, and coordinate with the Recovery Directorate and the Office of Disaster Financial Recovery & Reconciliation on reimbursement requirements related to the Disaster Response-Emergency Operations Account, FEMA Public Assistance, or other funding source.

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

#### 5.4.3 Mission Class #3: Single Resource Request

A local or OA EOC may need outside assistance to fully staff it's EOC if local personnel are unavailable. Local personnel may be unavailable due to preexisting staffing shortages, conflicts with steady-state duties, or local personnel may themselves be victims or survivors of the disaster. In these situations, the Emergency Management Mutual Aid (EMMA) system allows local agencies to share personnel. However, during statewide events, sufficient resources may not be available within the EMMA system. If a request cannot be filled through EMMA, IMAT personnel can deploy to fill single resource requests, provided the request complies with the operational parameters described above. Additionally, if the resource need is expected to be extended (longer than 14 days), the local agency should continue identifying an alternate source such as a contractor or emergency hire to relieve the IMAT member.

With concurrence from the local agency, IMAT personnel may also deploy as single resources to satisfy credentialing and experience requirements. This may include times when a local EOC is fully staffed and not otherwise in need of outside assistance. The approval processes detailed in Section 4, Mobilization Phase, will be used for such deployments.

#### 5.4.4 Mission Class #4: Emergency Management Assistance Compact Mission

As a participant in EMAC, Cal OES routinely shares resources with other states during disasters. Other states or their local jurisdictions may be challenged to operate their EOCs for extended duration or lack the technical expertise to manage a large, complex disaster. Recent examples include the 2023 Maui Fires, where a California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) IMT was deployed to augment the Maui County EOC or the 2022 New Mexico Fires, where a California local government fire IMT was deployed to operate the State EOC. In these missions, the IMAT would take functional direction from the requesting state and may directly function in Management and General Staff positions within the State or Local EOC. However, operational control will continue to reside with the AD-HQ Response. More details about EMAC and its processes are described in [Cal OES' EMAC SOP](#).



*Cal OES and Hawaii Emergency Management Agency staff survey damages in Lahaina from the 2023 Maui Fires.*

IMAT personnel may also deploy through EMAC as single resources, either to fill a Management and General Staff position or as subject matter experts in a specific hazard or response operations. Cal OES personnel routinely deploy around the nation advising on wildfire and earthquake operations based on California's extensive history with these hazards.

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

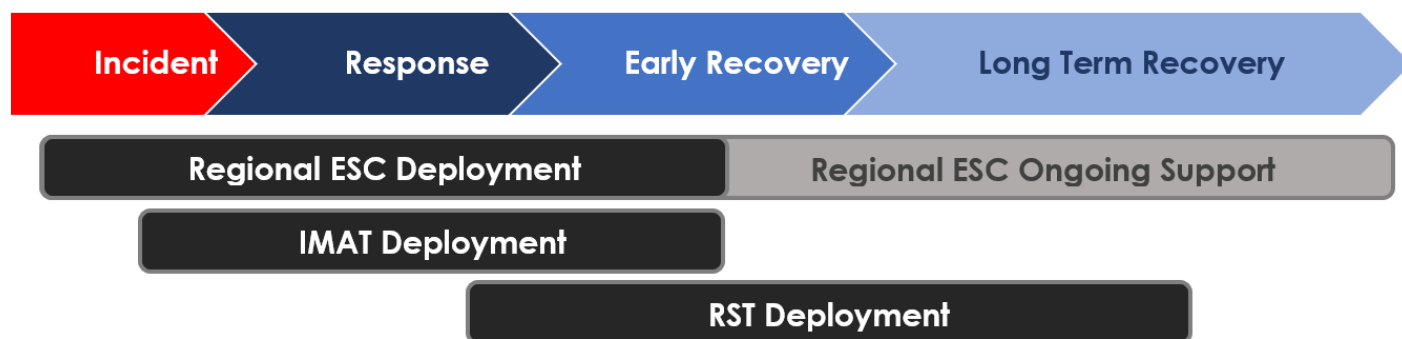
#### 5.5 Training for Local Government Personnel

To increase local response capability, the IMAT may provide training on ICS and EOC operations to local government personnel while deployed to their EOC. Each IMAT Section will be capable of delivering "Just-In-Time-Training" for their EOC Section based on the approved EOC Section Overview (G611) curriculum.

#### 5.6 Transition to Recovery and Demobilization

The IMAT is a response resource, intended to provide support until an incident is stabilized, immediate threats to life and property are mitigated, and basic human needs are met. Once these goals are achieved, the IMAT will facilitate an orderly transition to Cal OES' Recovery Directorate. Whenever possible, an overlap period will be established where both the IMAT and Recovery personnel are on-scene to provide for a comprehensive handoff. Depending on the type and nature of the event, the Recovery Directorate may deploy a Recovery Support Team (RST), a forward-operating team of recovery subject matter experts. If an RST is deployed, the RST Team Leader should work closely with the IMAT Team Leader to plan for and implement a transition. The IMAT may participate in initial recovery planning meetings to provide situational awareness, identify expected challenges, and make introductions between local agency and Cal OES Recovery personnel. Figure 7 shows the process from an incident, Regional ESC deployment, IMAT deployment, and RST deployment.

**Figure 9: Cal OES Deployments Over a Disaster**



While each disaster is unique, indicators of incident stabilization include:

1. Termination of evacuation orders
2. Closure of congregate shelters
3. Restoration of power, water, wastewater, cellular service, internet, and other critical services
4. Reopening of public roads
5. Removal or mitigation of hazardous materials
6. Commencement of debris removal operations
7. Opening of Local Assistance Centers or Disaster Recovery Centers
8. Execution of Public Assistance Applicant Briefings
9. Demobilization of the EOC

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

Once the IMAT Team Leader determines the incident has stabilized, they will recommend to the AD-HQ Response that the IMAT demobilize. Once a demobilization date has been established, the IMAT Team Leader will schedule and facilitate a closeout meeting with the requesting jurisdiction, which will confirm demobilization details and capture initial feedback or lessons learned if appropriate. A demobilization plan developed by the IMAT P&I Section will then be executed, and all IMAT members and equipment will redeploy to Sacramento.

#### 5.7 Administrative Functions During Disaster Operations

As a professional disaster response team, the IMAT maintains refined procedures to administratively support its members while deployed. Specific administrative functions include:

- A. Timesheets:** Each IMAT member will maintain their own timesheets while deployed during a disaster. The IMAT F&A Section Chief is responsible for reviewing timesheets and advising personnel of any identified issues. The IMAT Team Leader will approve timesheets for the IMAT Operations Section and P&I Section. The IMAT Deputy Team Leader will approve timesheets for the Safety Officer, Logistics Section, and F&A Section.
- B. Travel Expense Claims:** Each IMAT member will prepare and submit their own Travel Expense Claims (TECs). In general, TECs should be submitted on two week or monthly intervals. The IMAT F&A Section Chief will be the primary liaison with the Cal OES Travel Unit to answer questions and resolve concerns. The IMAT Team Leader will approve TECs for the IMAT Operations Section and P&I Section. The IMAT Deputy Team Leader will approve TECs for the Safety Officer, Logistics Section, and F&A Section.
- C. Travel Advances:** IMAT members may request a travel advance from the Cal OES Travel Unit. The IMAT F&A Section Chief will assist in coordinating these requests, including the mailing of travel advance checks to deployed locations if necessary.
- D. Long Term Assignment Forms:** If the IMAT Team Leader determines a deployment is likely to exceed 30 calendar days, they will direct the IMAT F&A Section Chief to prepare Long Term Assignment Forms (STD 653) for each member to permit continuance of short-term allowances. The F&A Section Chief will prepare each form, route them to the IMAT Team Leader for supervisor's signature, and then coordinate with the Cal OES Travel Unit for approval by the Director.

## 6 Post-Deployment Phase

This section describes activities the IMAT will take after demobilizing from a disaster to ensure continuous improvement and readiness.

### 6.1 Reconstitution

Upon return from a deployment, each IMAT member will coordinate with the IMAT Logistics Section to restock or replace items as required. All response vehicles and equipment will be inspected to ensure they are in proper working order. The IMAT Team Leader will also coordinate with the SOC Peer Support Officer to provide post-deployment critical incident stress debriefings for any deployment that could

## Concept of Operations

### Incident Management Assistance Team

involve critical incident stress and will make Employee Assistance Program resources available as appropriate.

IMAT members will complete ICS 225 Incident Personnel Performance Rating forms and Evaluation Record Forms after each deployment and ensure satisfactorily completed tasks are documented in PTBs in the MissionEdge system as needed. The IMAT Team Leader or Deputy Team Leader will evaluate all IMAT members unless an appropriately typed individual is available (for example, the IMAT Logistics Section Chief evaluating the Deputy Logistics Section Chief, if the Chief is a higher typing).

#### **6.2 After Action Review**

After each deployment, the IMAT will conduct an after action review (AAR) meeting and identify strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement. Items should be identified per phase. After an initial internal AAR, the IMAT will meet with Region Management (if applicable) and discuss the review's findings and potential improvement strategies. The IMAT will also participate in the Regional Hotwash Discussion for the event and incorporate relevant feedback into the IMAT AAR. If feedback and lessons learned were not captured during the Closeout Meeting or Regional Hotwash Discussion, a separate virtual after-action meeting may be held with the requesting jurisdiction. An AAR will then be prepared documenting the findings and factual background of the incident, reviewed and approved by the IMAT Team Leader, and shared with the requesting jurisdiction, Region Management, and other stakeholders.

#### **6.3 Improvement Plans**

Each AAR will be accompanied by an Improvement Plan, detailing a strategy to address each finding. Strategies may include revisions to this CONOPs, revisions to Position-Specific SOPs, recommended changes to disaster plans, and changes to team or agency processes. Improvement Plans will be documented in an electronic database maintained by the IMAT P&I Section. At least twice per calendar year, the IMAT will review the status of all open improvement areas and determine courses of action to implement them.