



World Health
Organization

#Ready4Response

Tier 2: Ready4Response

Module 1: Response systems and structures

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)

Unit 1D

Photo: WHO / C. Black

#Ready4Response



Hello, it's **Andrew!**

INTRODUCTION

Effective response is built on having a good understanding of what is happening (situational awareness), making appropriate decisions and enacting those decisions.

To do this, it is essential that different teams work together. The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is a place where teams can come together to share information and plan the response.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define an EOC;
- describe common features of the layout of an EOC;
- explain how the EOC encourages joint working;
- list the activities commonly undertaken in the EOC;
- list the tasks undertaken by the EOC team;
- explain the role and EOC facilities commonly seen at the different levels of the response; and
- explain the different types of information displayed in the EOC.

THE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE (EOC)

“

is a location for the coordination of information and resources to support incident management activities.

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The activities conducted in the EOC provide the basis for the coordination requirements of responding to emergencies that involve health consequences and public health threats.

Emergency Operation Centres can be located in:



Purpose-built facilities

This EOC is housed in a dedicated structure. These facilities are most likely located at regional, provincial and national government levels.



Repurposed facilities

This EOC is housed a suite of rooms that can be repurposed from their normal use when needed. These are most likely located at local levels and in health centres, such as hospitals.

BRINGING TEAMS TOGETHER TO A PHYSICAL LOCATION MAKES IT EASIER TO:



Set-up of the EOC

Although there is no fixed design for an EOC, it should be set up to maximize information sharing. To this end, there are some common features:



- A meeting area where the function and team leads can come together to share information is essential; this is where key information can be displayed.



- Quiet working spaces and smaller meeting rooms will provide space for individuals and teams to hold conference calls and small group activities.



- Because the personnel working in the EOC will be dealing with sensitive information, the EOC should be made secure.

Joint and multisectoral working

The EOC is the location where the heads of each of the IMS functions can meet with personnel from partner organizations to share information and plan the response.

Joint and multisectoral working and joint decision-making is key to a response because it ensures the Incident Manager has the most accurate information and access to technical expertise.



2-MINUTE REFLECTION

Joint working brings together key technical expertise for a more effective response.



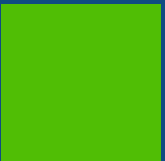
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Think about the last response you were involved in – why do you think joint working is so important?

How could an EOC be used to improve joint working?

Make a note in your journal.

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The activities that take place in an EOC are:

- coordinating information and resources;
- ensuring situational awareness;
- making strategic and operational decisions;
- implementing various plans and procedures; and
- monitoring and evaluation.



The EOC team

Personnel will have to be allocated to manage the EOC.
They will:

- provide communication services (telephone, email, fax, tele-/video-conferences);
- maintain information-sharing platforms and documentation-sharing space;
- manage meeting venues and schedules;
- make available EOC standard operating procedures (SOPs) and supporting tools to users;
- orient new staff; and
- maintain common operational information.



EOCs will be established at each level of the response.

Strategic



In large-scale events, or events which have a national impact, a strategic EOC may be required to coordinate national-level assets and provide strategic planning to take into account the wider socioeconomic, political, environmental and international impacts.

Operational



In emergencies where the tactical level requires additional resources, coordination, policy direction or specialist support, or where there are multiple tactical sites, a larger EOC can be established to support, manage and acquire additional resources and carry out longer-term operational planning.

Tactical



Most small-scale emergencies are managed at or very close to the site by an incident commander in charge of the people and resources needed to directly manage the situation. The commander may establish a small EOC (sometimes called a command post) to manage response functions. In these small teams, individuals will carry out multiple IMS functions.

Key information displayed in the EOC

The EOC is the place where key information will be collated and displayed. This information is used to help inform planning and decision-making. The key information most often displayed will be:

- **Common Operating Picture (COP)** – provides the current situation, locations of affected population, infrastructure and resources. Each of the functional teams should contribute to the COP which is used to guide meetings.
- **Common Operating Information (COI)** – provides key information such as contact numbers, tracking of actions to be completed, tracking of staff locations and a timetable of key events.





SUMMARY

- The EOC is a physical location where responders can come together to share information and plan the response.
- The EOC should contain meeting areas where key information is displayed.
- There will normally be an EOC at each level of the response (strategic, operational and tactical).

The way your EOC is laid out can help joint working.



FOLLOW-UP TASK

1. Consider your current workplace – how would you repurpose it to be used as an EOC? Think about the different areas you could use. Make a sketch in your journal.
1. If you already work in an EOC, consider what changes you would make to develop it.

Additional resources

- More information about EOCs is available in the 2015 Framework for a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre:
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/framework-for-a-public-health-emergency-operations-centre>
- And the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre training package on OpenWHO:
<https://openwho.org/courses/PHEOC-EN>