

Part III. Supporting Documents

Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS)

Glossary of Terms

INTRODUCTION

The Glossary contains definitions of terms commonly used in the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). The Glossary was developed from a glossary used in the Incident Command System National Training Curriculum. It does not contain terms or definitions related to specific resources for particular application areas. Users should supplement this glossary with agency-specific terms and definitions as appropriate.

A

Action Plan: The plan prepared in the EOC containing the emergency response objectives of that SEMS level reflecting overall priorities and supporting activities for a designated period. The plan is shared with supporting agencies. See also Incident Action Plan.

Activate: At a minimum, a designated official of the emergency response agency that implements SEMS as appropriate to the scope of the emergency and the agency's role in response to the emergency.

After action report: A report covering response actions, application of SEMS, modifications to plans and procedures, training needs, and recovery activities. After action reports are required under SEMS after any emergency which requires a declaration of an emergency. Reports are required within 90 days.

Agency: An agency is a division of government with a specific function, or a non-governmental organization (e.g., private contractor, business, etc.) that offers a particular kind of assistance. In ICS, agencies are defined as jurisdictional (having statutory responsibility for incident mitigation), or assisting and/or cooperating (providing resources and/or assistance). (See Assisting Agency, Cooperating Agency and Multi-agency.)

Agency Dispatch: The agency or jurisdictional facility from which resources are allocated to incidents.

Agency Executive or Administrator: Chief executive officer (or designee) of the agency or jurisdiction that has responsibility for the incident.

Agency Representative: An individual assigned to an incident or to an EOC from an assisting or cooperating agency who has been delegated authority to make decisions on matters affecting that agency's participation at the incident or at the EOC. Agency Representatives report to the Liaison Officer at the incident, or to the Liaison Coordinator at SEMS EOC levels.

Air Operations Branch Director: The person primarily responsible for preparing and implementing the air operations portion of the Incident Action Plan. Also responsible for providing logistical support to helicopters operating on the incident.

Allocated Resources: Resources dispatched to an incident.

Area Command: An organization established to: 1) oversee the management of multiple incidents that are each being handled by an Incident Command System organization; or 2) to oversee the management of a very large incident that has multiple Incident Management Teams assigned to it. Area Command has the responsibility to set overall strategy and priorities, allocate critical resources based on priorities, ensure that incidents are properly managed, and ensure that objectives are met and strategies followed.

Assigned Resources: Resources checked in and assigned work tasks on an incident.

Assignments: Tasks given to resources to perform within a given operational period, based upon tactical objectives in the Incident or EOC Action Plan.

Assistant: Title for subordinates of the Command Staff positions at the Field SEMS level. The title indicates a level of technical capability, qualifications, and responsibility subordinate to the primary positions. Assistants may also be used to supervise unit activities at camps.

Assisting Agency: An agency directly contributing tactical or service resources to another agency.

Available Resources: Incident-based resources which are available for immediate assignment.

B

Base: The location at an incident at which primary logistics functions for an incident are coordinated and administered. There is only one Base per incident. (Incident name or other designator will be added to the term "Base.") The Incident Command Post may be collocated with the Base.

Branch: The organizational level at the SEMS Field Level having functional or geographic responsibility for major parts of incident operations. The Branch level is organizationally between Section and Division/Group in the Operations Section, and between Section and Units in the Logistics Section. Branches are identified by the use of Roman Numerals or by functional name (e.g., medical, security, etc.). Branches are also used in the same sequence at the SEMS EOC Levels.

Branch Director: The ICS title for individuals responsible for supervision of a Branch at the Field Level. At SEMS EOC levels, the title Branch Coordinator is preferred.

C

Cache: A pre-determined complement of tools, equipment and/or supplies stored in a designated location, available for incident use.

Camp: A geographical site, within the general incident area, separate from the Incident Base, equipped and staffed to provide sleeping, food, water, and sanitary services to incident personnel.

Chain of Command: A series of management positions in order of authority.

Check-in: The process whereby resources first report to an incident or into an EOC. Check-in locations at the SEMS Field level include: Incident Command Post (Resources Unit), Incident Base, Camps, Staging Areas, Helibases, Helispots, and Division Supervisors (for direct line assignments).

Clear Text: The use of plain English in radio communications transmissions. No Ten Codes or agency specific codes are used when utilizing Clear Text.

Command: The act of directing, and/or controlling resources at an incident by virtue of explicit legal, agency, or delegated authority. May also refer to the Incident Commander.

Command Post: (See Incident Command Post)

Command Staff: The Command Staff at the SEMS Field level consists of the Information Officer, Safety Officer, and Liaison Officer. They report directly to the Incident Commander. They may have an assistant or assistants, as needed. These functions may also be found at the EOC levels in SEMS. At the EOC, they would report to the EOC Director but may be designated as Coordinators. At EOCs, the functions may also be established as Sections, or Branches to accommodate subsequent expansion.

Communications Unit: An organizational unit in the Logistics Section responsible for providing communication services at an incident or an EOC. A Communications Unit may also be a facility (e.g., a trailer or mobile van) used to provide the major part of an Incident Communications Center.

Compacts: Formal working agreements among agencies to obtain mutual aid.

Compensation Unit/Claims Unit: Functional unit within the Finance/Administration Section responsible for financial concerns resulting from property damage, injuries or fatalities at the incident or within an EOC.

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

Cooperating Agency: An agency supplying assistance other than direct tactical or support functions or resources to the incident control effort (e.g., American Red Cross, telephone company, etc.).

Coordination: The process of systematically analyzing a situation, developing relevant information, and informing appropriate command authority of viable alternatives for selection of the most effective combination of available resources to meet specific objectives. The coordination process (which can be either intra- or inter- agency) does not involve dispatch actions. However, personnel responsible for coordination may perform command or dispatch functions within the limits established by specific agency delegations, procedures, legal authority, etc. Multi-agency or Inter- agency coordination is found at all SEMS levels.

Coordination Center: Term used to describe any facility that is used for the coordination of agency or jurisdictional resources in support of one or more incidents.

Cost Sharing Agreements: Agreements between agencies or jurisdictions to share designated costs related to incidents. Cost sharing agreements are normally written but may also be verbal between authorized agency or jurisdictional representatives at the incident.

Cost Unit: Functional unit within the Finance/Administration Section responsible for tracking costs, analyzing cost data, making cost estimates, and recommending cost-saving measures.

D

Delegation of Authority: A statement provided to the Incident Commander by the Agency Executive delegating authority and assigning responsibility. The Delegation of Authority can include objectives, priorities, expectations, constraints and other considerations or guidelines as needed. Many agencies require written Delegation of Authority to be given to Incident Commanders prior to their assuming command on larger incidents.

Demobilization Unit: Functional unit within the Planning Section responsible for assuring orderly, safe and efficient demobilization of incident or EOC assigned resources.

Department Operations Center: A facility used by a distinct discipline, such as flood operations, fire, medical, hazardous material, or a unit, such as Department of Public Works, or Department of Health. Department Operations Centers may be used at all SEMS levels above the field response level depending upon the needs of the emergency.

Deputy Incident Commander (Section Chief or Branch Director): A fully qualified individual who, in the absence of a superior, could be delegated the authority to manage a functional operation or perform a specific task. In some cases, a Deputy could act as relief for a superior and therefore must be fully qualified in the position. Deputies may also be found as necessary at all SEMS EOC levels.

Disaster: A sudden calamitous emergency event bringing great damage loss or destruction.

Dispatch: The implementation of a command decision to move a resource or resources from one place to another.

Dispatch Center: A facility from which resources are assigned to an incident.

Division: Divisions are used to divide an incident into geographical areas of operation. Divisions are identified by alphabetic characters for horizontal applications and, often, by numbers when used in buildings. Divisions are also used at SEMS EOC levels and are found organizationally between Branches and Units.

Division or Group Supervisor: The position title for individuals responsible for command of a Division or Group at an Incident. At the EOC level, the title is Division Coordinator.

Documentation Unit: Functional unit within the Planning Section responsible for collecting, recording and safeguarding all documents relevant to an incident or within an EOC.

E

Emergency: A condition of disaster or of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property caused by such conditions as air pollution, fire, flood, hazardous material incident, storm, epidemic, riot, drought, sudden and severe energy shortage, plant or animal infestations or disease, the Governor's warning of an earthquake or volcanic prediction, or an earthquake or other conditions, other than conditions resulting from a labor controversy.

Emergency Management Coordinator: The individual within each jurisdiction that is delegated the day to day responsibility for the development and maintenance of all emergency management coordination efforts.

Emergency Management Director (Emergency Services Director): The individual within each political subdivision that has overall responsibility for jurisdiction emergency management. For cities and counties, this responsibility is commonly assigned by local ordinance.

Emergency Medical Technician (EMT): A health-care specialist with particular skills and knowledge in pre-hospital emergency medicine.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC): A location from which centralized emergency management can be performed. EOC facilities are established by an agency or jurisdiction to coordinate the overall agency or jurisdictional response and support to an emergency.

Emergency Operations Plan: The plan that each jurisdiction has and maintains for responding to appropriate hazards.

Emergency Response Agency: Any organization responding to an emergency, or providing mutual aid support to such an organization, whether in the field, at the scene of an incident, or to an operations center.

Emergency Response Personnel: Personnel involved with an agency's response to an emergency.

EOC Action Plan The plan developed at SEMS EOC levels which contains objectives, actions to be taken, assignments and supporting information for the next operational period.

Event: A planned, non-emergency activity. ICS can be used as the management system for a wide range of events, e.g., parades, concerts or sporting events.

F

Facilities Unit: Functional unit within the Support Branch of the Logistics Section at the SEMS Field Response Level that provides fixed facilities for the incident. These facilities may include the Incident Base, feeding areas, sleeping areas, sanitary facilities, etc.

Field Operations Guide: A pocket-size manual of instructions on the application of the Incident Command System.

Finance/Administration Section: One of the five primary functions found at all SEMS levels which is responsible for all costs and financial considerations. At the incident the Section can include the Time Unit, Procurement Unit, Compensation/Claims Unit and Cost Unit.

Food Unit: Functional unit within the Service Branch of the Logistics Section responsible for providing meals for incident and or EOC personnel.

Function: In ICS, function refers to the five major activities in the ICS, i.e., Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics and Finance/Administration. The same five functions also are found at all SEMS EOC levels. At the EOC, the term Management replaces Command. The term function is also used when describing the activity involved, e.g., "the planning function."

Functional Element Refers to a part of the incident, EOC or DOC organization such as section, branch, group or unit.

G

General Staff: The group of management personnel reporting to the Incident Commander or to the EOC Director. They may each have a deputy, as needed. At the Field SEMS level, the General Staff consists of:

- Operations Section Chief
- Planning/Intelligence Section Chief
- Logistics Section Chief
- Finance/Administration Section Chief

At some SEMS EOC levels, the position titles are Section Coordinators.

Generic ICS: Refers to the description of ICS that is generally applicable to any kind of incident or event.

Ground Support Unit: Functional unit within the Support Branch of the Logistics Section at the SEMS Field Response level that is responsible for the fueling, maintaining and repairing of vehicles, and the transportation of personnel and supplies.

Group: Groups are established to divide the incident into functional areas of operation. Groups are composed of resources assembled to perform a special function not necessarily within a single geographic division. (See Division.) Groups are located between Branches (when activated) and Resources in the Operations Section.

H

Helibase: The main location for parking, fueling, maintenance, and loading of helicopters operating in support of an incident. It is usually located at or near the incident base.

Helispot: Any designated location where a helicopter can safely take off and land. Some helispots may be used for loading of supplies, equipment, or personnel.

Hierarchy of Command: (See Chain of Command.)

I

Incident: An occurrence or event, either human-caused or by natural phenomena, that requires action by emergency response personnel to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or natural resources.

Incident Action Plan: The plan developed at the field response level which contains objectives reflecting the overall incident strategy and specific tactical actions and supporting information for the next operational period. The plan may be oral or written.

Incident Base: Location at the incident where the primary logistics functions are coordinated and administered. (Incident name or other designator will be added to the term "Base.") The Incident Command Post may be collocated with the Base. There is only one Base per incident.

Incident Commander: The individual responsible for the command of all functions at the field response level.

Incident Command Post (ICP): The location at which the primary command functions are executed. The ICP may be collocated with the incident base or other incident facilities.

Incident Command System (ICS): The nationally used standardized on-scene emergency management concept specifically designed to allow its user(s) to adopt an integrated organizational structure equal to the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure, with responsibility for the management of resources to effectively accomplish stated objectives pertinent to an incident.

Incident Communications Center: The location of the Communications Unit and the Message Center.

Incident Management Team: The Incident Commander and appropriate General and Command Staff personnel assigned to an incident.

Incident Objectives: Statements of guidance and direction necessary for the selection of appropriate strategy(s), and the tactical direction of resources. Incident objectives are based on realistic expectations of what can be accomplished when all allocated resources have been effectively deployed. Incident objectives must be achievable and measurable, yet flexible enough to allow for strategic and tactical alternatives.

Information Officer: A member of the Command Staff responsible for interfacing with the public and media or with other agencies requiring information directly from the incident. There is only one Information Officer per incident. The Information Officer may have assistants. This position is also referred to as Public Affairs or Public Information Officer in some disciplines. At SEMS EOC levels, the information function may be established as a Coordinator or as a section or branch reporting directly to the EOC Director.

Initial Action: The actions taken by resources which are the first to arrive at an incident.

Initial Response: Resources initially committed to an incident.

J

Jurisdiction: The range or sphere of authority. Public agencies have jurisdiction at an incident related to their legal responsibilities and authority for incident mitigation. Jurisdictional authority at an incident can be political/geographical (e.g., special district city, county, state or federal boundary lines), or functional (e.g., police department, health department, etc.). (See Multijurisdiction.)

Jurisdictional Agency: The agency having jurisdiction and responsibility for a specific geographical area, or a mandated function.

L

Landing Zone: (See Helispot.)

Leader: The ICS title for an individual responsible for a functional unit, task forces, or teams.

Liaison Officer: A member of the Command Staff at the Field SEMS level responsible for coordinating with representatives from cooperating and assisting agencies. At SEMS EOC levels, the function may be done by a Coordinator and/or within a Section or Branch reporting directly to the EOC Director.

Life-Safety: Refers to the joint consideration of both the life and physical well-being of individuals.

Local Government: Means local agencies per Article 3 of the SEMS regulations. The Government Code 8680.2 defines local agencies as any city, city and county, county, school district or special district.

Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC): Committees established by the Director of OES to provide a forum for the exchange of information among the cities and counties of a Mutual Aid Region. The LGAC may develop a consensus of action and policy among local emergency managers on issues, policies, and programs of concern to local governments, and if necessary bring such concerns to the attention of OES Executive Management.

Logistics Section: One of the five primary functions found at all SEMS levels. The Section responsible for providing facilities, services and materials for the incident or at an EOC.

M

Management by Objectives: In SEMS field and EOC levels, this is a top-down management activity which involves a three-step process to achieve the desired goal. The steps are: establishing the objectives, selection of appropriate strategy(s) to achieve the objectives; and the direction or assignments associated with the selected strategy.

Master Mutual Aid Agreement An agreement entered into by and between the State of California, its various departments and agencies, and the various political subdivision, municipal corporations, and other public agencies of the State of California to assist each other by providing resource during an emergency Mutual aid occurs when two or more parties agree to furnish resources and facilities and to render services to each other to prevent and combat any type of disaster or emergency.

Marshaling Area An area used for the completed mobilization and assemblage of personnel and resources prior to their being sent directly to the disaster affected area. Marshaling Areas are utilized particularly for disasters outside of the continental United States.

Medical Unit: Functional unit within the Service Branch of the Logistics Section at SEMS Field levels responsible for the development of the Medical Emergency Plan, and for providing emergency medical treatment of incident personnel.

Message Center: The Message Center is part of the Incident or EOC Communications Center and is collocated or placed adjacent to it. It receives, records, and routes information to appropriate locations at an incident or within an EOC.

Mobilization: The process and procedures used by all organizations federal, state and local for activating, assembling, and transporting all resources that have been requested to respond to or support an incident.

Mobilization Center: An off-incident location at which emergency service personnel and equipment are temporarily located pending assignment to incidents, release, or reassignment.

Multi-Agency or Inter-Agency Coordination: The participation of 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.

Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS): The combination of personnel, facilities, equipment, procedures and communications integrated into a common system. When activated, MACS has the responsibility for coordination of assisting agency resources and support in a multi-agency or multijurisdictional environment. A MAC Group functions within the MACS. MACS organizations are used within the California Fire Services.

Multi-Agency Incident: An incident where one or more agencies assist a jurisdictional agency or agencies. The incident may be managed under single or unified command.

Multijurisdiction Incident: An incident requiring action from multiple agencies that have a statutory responsibility for incident mitigation. In ICS these incidents will be managed under Unified Command.

Mutual Aid Agreement: Written agreement between agencies and/or jurisdictions in which they agree to assist one another upon request, by furnishing personnel and equipment.

Mutual Aid Coordinator: An individual at local government, operational area, region or state level that is responsible to coordinate the process of requesting, obtaining, processing and using mutual aid resources. Mutual Aid Coordinator duties will vary depending upon the mutual aid system.

Mutual Aid Region: A mutual aid region is a subdivision of state OES established to assist in the coordination of mutual aid and other emergency operations within a geographical area of the state, consisting of two or more county (operational) areas.

O

Office of Emergency Services: The Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

Operational Area: An intermediate level of the state emergency organization, consisting of a county and all political subdivisions within the county area.

Operational Period: The period of time scheduled for execution of a given set of operation actions as specified in the Incident or EOC Action Plan. Operational Periods can be of various lengths, although usually not over 24 hours.

Operations Section: One of the five primary functions found at all SEMS levels. The Section responsible for all tactical operations at the incident, or for the coordination of operational activities at an EOC. The Operations Section at the SEMS Field Response Level can include Branches, Divisions and/or Groups, Task Forces, Teams, Single Resources and Staging Areas. At the EOC levels, the Operations Section would contain Branches or Divisions as necessary because of span of control considerations.

Out-of-Service Resources: Resources assigned to an incident but unable to respond for mechanical, rest, or personnel reasons.

P

Planning Meeting: A meeting held as needed throughout the duration of an incident to select specific strategies and tactics for incident control operations and for service and support planning. On larger incidents, the planning meeting is a major element in the development of the Incident Action Plan. Planning meetings are also an essential activity at all SEMS EOC levels.

Planning Section: (Also referred to as Planning/Intelligence) One of the five primary functions found at all SEMS levels. Responsible for the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of information related to the incident or an emergency, and for the preparation and documentation of Incident or EOC Action Plans. The section also maintains information on the current and forecasted situation, and on the status of resources assigned to the incident. At the SEMS Field Response level, the Section will include the Situation, Resource, Documentation, and Demobilization Units, as well as Technical Specialists. Other units may be added at the EOC level.

Procurement Unit: Functional unit within the Finance/Administration Section responsible for financial matters involving vendor contracts.

Public Information Officer: The individual at field or EOC level that has been delegated the authority to prepare public information releases and to interact with the media. Duties will vary depending upon the agency and SEMS level.

R

Recorders: Individuals within ICS or EOC organizational units who are responsible for recording information. Recorders may be found in Planning, Logistics and Finance/Administration Units.

Region Emergency Operations Center (REOC): Facilities found at State OES Administrative Regions. REOCs are used to coordinate information and resources among operational areas and between the operational areas and the state level.

Reporting Locations: Specific locations or facilities where incoming resources can check-in at the incident. (See Check-in.)

Resources: Personnel and equipment available, or potentially available, for assignment to incidents or to EOCs. Resources are described by kind and type, and may be used in tactical support or supervisory capacities at an incident or at EOCs.

Resources Unit: Functional unit within the Planning Section at the SEMS Field Response level responsible for recording the status of resources committed to the incident. The Unit also evaluates resources currently committed to the incident, the impact that additional responding resources will have on the incident, and anticipated resource needs.

S

Safety Officer: A member of the Command Staff at the incident or within an EOC responsible for monitoring and assessing safety hazards or unsafe situations, and for developing measures for ensuring personnel safety. The Safety Officer may have assistants.

Section: That organization level with responsibility for a major functional area of the incident or at an EOC, e.g., Operations, Planning, Logistics, Administration/Finance.

Section Chief: The ICS title for individuals responsible for command of functional sections: Operations, Planning/Intelligence, Logistics and Administration/Finance. At the EOC level, the position title will be Section Coordinator.

Service Branch: A Branch within the Logistics Section responsible for service activities at the incident. Includes the Communications, Medical and Food Units.

Single Resource: An individual, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew or team of individuals with an identified work supervisor that can be used on an incident.

Situation Unit: Functional unit within the Planning Section responsible for the collection, organization and analysis of incident status information, and for analysis of the situation as it progresses. Reports to the Planning Section Chief.

Span of control: The supervisory ratio maintained within an ICS or EOC organization. A span of control of five-positions reporting to one supervisor is considered optimum.

Special District: A unit of local government (other than a city, county, or city and county) with authority or responsibility to own, operate or maintain a project (as defined in California Code of Regulations 2900(s) for purposes of natural disaster assistance. This may include a joint powers authority established under section 6500 et seq. of the Code.

Staging Area: Staging Areas are locations set up at an incident where resources can be placed while awaiting a tactical assignment. Staging Areas are managed by the Operations Section.

Staging Area Managers: Individuals within ICS organizational units that are assigned specific managerial responsibilities at Staging Areas. (Also Camp Manager.)

Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS): A system required by California Government Code for managing response to multi-agency and multijurisdiction emergencies in California. SEMS consists of five organizational levels which are activated as necessary: Field Response, Local Government, Operational Area, Region, State.

State Operations Center (SOC) An EOC facility operated by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services at the state level in SEMS.

Strategy: The general plan or direction selected to accomplish incident or EOC objectives.

Supply Unit: Functional unit within the Support Branch of the Logistics Section responsible for ordering equipment and supplies required for incident operations.

Support Branch: A Branch within the Logistics Section responsible for providing personnel, equipment and supplies to support incident operations. Includes the Supply, Facilities and Ground Support Units.

Support Resources: Non-tactical resources under the supervision of the Logistics, Planning, Finance/Administration Sections or the Command Staff.

Supporting Materials: Refers to the several attachments that may be included with an Incident Action Plan, e.g., communications plan, map, safety plan, traffic plan, and medical plan.

T

Tactical Direction: Direction given by the Operations Section Chief at the SEMS Field level which includes the tactics appropriate for the selected strategy, the selection and assignment of resources, tactics implementation, and performance monitoring for each operational period.

Task Force: A combination of single resources assembled for a particular tactical need, with common communications and a leader.

Team: (See Single Resource.)

Technical Specialists: Personnel with special skills that can be used anywhere within the ICS or EOC organization.

Time Unit: Functional unit within the Finance/Administration Section responsible for recording time for incident or EOC personnel and hired equipment.

Type: Refers to resource capability. A Type 1 resource provides a greater overall capability due to power, size, capacity, etc., than would be found in a Type 2 resource. Resource typing provides managers with additional information in selecting the best resource for the task.

U

Unified Area Command: A Unified Area Command is established when incidents under an Area Command are multijurisdictional. (See Area Command and Unified Command.)

Unified Command: In ICS, Unified Command is a unified team effort which allows all agencies with responsibility for the incident, either geographical or functional, to manage an incident by establishing a common set of incident objectives and strategies. This is accomplished without losing or abdicating agency authority, responsibility or accountability.

Unit: An organizational element having functional responsibility. Units are commonly used in incident Planning, Logistics, or Finance/administration sections and can be used in operations for some applications. Units are also found in EOC organizations.

Unity of Command: The concept by which each person within an organization reports to one and only one designated person.