

## **Incident Command System - Emergency Operation Center Interface (E/L/G-191)**

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Recently I have attended two very informative classes, one of which was titled Emergency Operations Center/ Incident Command System Interface. This class focused on the three groups that run an incident, the Multiagency Coordination Group, or MAC, the Emergency Operation center, or EOC, and the Incident management Team, or IMT and their coordination, responsibilities, and overlaps.

The Multiagency Coordination (or MAC) Group is created to assist and coordinate response to large incidents such as major civil unrest or terrorist activity. The MAC Group may consist of senior officials, director of the public works, law enforcement chief, and a fire chief, for example. The MAC provides guidance, mission and strategic direction and policy. MAC Group supports the EOC and the IMT.

The Incident Support Model of the EOC Structure consists in Command Staff with an EOC Director, and possibly a legal advisor, the Safety Officers, a Liaison Officer, and the Public Information Officer, and the General Staff consisting in the Situational Awareness Section, Planning Support Section, the Resources Support Section and the Center Support Section.

The Situational Awareness Section collects, analyzes, and disseminates incident information. Situational awareness is a unit of the Planning Section that can be elevated to general Staff.

The Planning Support Section provides a range of current and future planning services including developing contingencies, deactivation, and recovery plans.

The Resource Support Section works to ensure that on-scene incident management personnel have the resources and operational support they need, like personnel, supplies, and equipment from agencies and departments and other entities.

The EOC could be organized with a departmental structure, where the Emergency Manager as EOC director facilitates planning and reporting, and the representatives of departments like Dept of Natural Resources, of Health and Human Services, Dept of Public Works, of Public Safety, etc. coordinate with the EOC director.

The Emergency Support Functions (or ESFs) and the Recovery Support Functions (or RSFs) support the EOC and serve underneath the general Staff members. For example, Communications is an ESF2 and serves underneath Logistics and / or Operations, depends on the organization of the Agency.

The EOC supports the Incident Management Team in the field, provides resources for the Incident Commander in the field, plans for resource requirements, and facilitates situational awareness. One resource it manages is legal counsel and authority. For example, should the IMT need food and the local Walmart is closed, the EOC can get hold of the Walmart manager.

The EOC does not manage the incident, but support the incident team that manages the incident.

The Incident Management Team is a dispatched or mobilized team that includes an Incident Commander, Command Staff (generally, but not necessarily) including a Safety Officer, PIO, and a liaison Officer), and the General Section, consisting on Planning, Operations, Logistics, and Finance, to manage a complex incident. They are the boots on the ground.

The Incident Commander manages the incident at the scene, keeps the EOC and the MAC group in formed on all important matters pertaining to the incident.

Most common problems are:

- different focus: EOC tends to be more concerned at protecting nearby vital infrastructure than containing the incident itself. For example, while the IMT's goal might be contain the fire, EOC's goal might be isolate communications towers making sure they do not get caught in the fire.
- lack of interoperability between IMT and EOC, like radios not communicating like it happened during September 11
- groups on the ground having resources that are not using at the moment, but want to keep close in case they do, and other groups that need them more urgently.

As the incident grows, these problems can occur. The Liaison Officers are responsible to represent each group involved and their need to keep the situation and communication between groups as smooth as possible.