

2.0 Concept of Operations

2.1 Guiding Principles

Highlands adopts the principles, concepts, and terminology set out in the British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS). The guiding principles for response and recovery include, but are not limited to, the following:

Management Functions – BCERMS adopts the following primary ICS management functions:

- Command
- Operations
- Logistics
- Planning
- Finance/Administration

The individual designated as the Incident Commander (IC) at an emergency site, or the EOC Director in an Emergency Operations Centre, has responsibility for all functions. That person may elect to perform all activities, or delegate authority to perform functions to other people in the organization. Delegation does not, however, relieve the Incident Commander or EOC Director from overall responsibility.

Management by Objectives – This principle draws a direct link between policies and actions. Management by objectives calls for four basic steps:

1. Understand agency policy and direction
2. Establish incident objectives
3. Select appropriate strategy
4. Perform tactical direction, such as applying tactics appropriate to the strategy, assigning the right resources, and monitoring performance.

Unity and Chain of Command – In ICS, "Unity of Command" means that every individual has a designated supervisor. "Chain of Command" means that there is an orderly line of authority within the organization. Both concepts apply at an EOC.

Action Plans – Every incident must have oral or written action plans that provide all incident supervisory personnel with direction for future actions. Action plans shall include the measurable tactical operations to be achieved.

Operational Periods – Actions are always prepared around a timeframe called an "Operational Period." The length of an Operational Period, selected by the Incident Commander or EOC Director, will be based on the needs of the incident, and thus can change over the course of an incident.

Unified Command – The principle of Unified Command is an important feature of ICS and our Plan. Unified Command allows all agencies who have jurisdictional or functional responsibility for an incident to jointly develop a common set of incident objectives and strategies. This is accomplished without losing or giving up agency authority, responsibility, or accountability. All incidents where Unified Command is applied shall function under a single, coordinated Action Plan.

Span of Control – Every position in the EOC must monitor the number of others reporting to him or her. Acceptable span of control may vary from three to seven, and a ratio of one to five reporting elements is recommended.

Common Terminology – We adopt the BCERMS principle of using common terminology in referring to organizational elements, position titles, resources, and facilities.

With this Plan, Highlands adopts the Incident Command System (ICS) for use in response and recovery efforts, as part of the British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS). In an emergency, the principles of BCERMS and ICS shall be used by all organizations involved in emergency operations, including the following:

- On-scene Fire, RCMP, Ambulance, and Public Works
- Any Department Operations Centre that may be established to assist in an emergency situation
- Municipal Emergency Operations Centre

2.2 Site Support

BCERMS anticipates response organizations at four levels:

Site – An Incident Commander is always present to oversee site activities.

Site Support – An Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), if required, is activated to oversee and coordinate all non-site activities in support of the Incident Commander. This is the focus of the Highlands Emergency Response and Recovery Plan.

Regional Support – If an emergency is very large, a Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre (PREOC) may be established to provide support and coordination to one or more EOCs. An EOC normally turns to the PREOC for support when all other resources are exhausted, or they require coordination that is outside their jurisdiction. The PREOC serving Highlands is located in Victoria.

Provincial Support – If a PREOC requires support, it requests assistance from the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) in Victoria.

2.3 Response Goals

The EOC, as with the site response level, supports a prescribed set of response goals set out in priority as follows:

1. Provide for the safety and health of all responders
2. Save lives
3. Reduce suffering
4. Protect public health
5. Protect government infrastructure
6. Protect property
7. Protect the environment
8. Reduce economic and social losses

EOC Action Plans shall take these goals into consideration.

2.4 Response Levels

This Plan recognizes three levels of potential activation.

Level 1 actions reflect events that are normally managed by first responder agencies on a regular basis. However, the EOC may be activated when there is potential for the event to escalate and requires monitoring. There is little need for site support activities and the event will be closed in a relatively short time. The EOC Director should be notified, but may or may not activate the EOC. If activated, relatively few EOC functions are filled, typically the EOC Director, Information Officer, and Planning Section Chief.

Level 2 events are emergencies that are of a larger scale or longer duration and may involve limited evacuations, additional or unique resources, or similar extraordinary support activities. This level requires the EOC Director to notify the management team and to initiate a limited activation of the EOC.

Level 3 events are of large magnitude and/or long duration or may have multiple sites that involve multi-agencies and multi-government response. This level requires the notification of the EOC team, and activation of the EOC.

2.5 Decision-Making

All decisions made in the EOC require accurate and timely information as well as input and consultation from relevant staff members and agencies.

The EOC Director is ultimately responsible for making decisions on behalf of the EOC. He/She does this in consultation with the EOC Management Team, Incident Commander(s) and the EOC Policy Group.

The EOC Director must carefully assess, evaluate, and prioritize issues requiring decision or approval. Once the decision is made, it must be documented on the decision/approval log, assigned to applicable functions/positions for implementation and communicated to all appropriate EOC staff and BCERMS levels. Briefings are commonly used to facilitate the decision making process.

Operational decisions are those made by emergency responders to deal with the immediate incident at hand, and need not necessarily be of an urgent nature. Policy decisions, in the context of emergency response, are decisions that are not of an urgent nature and have political ramifications and are made by the Policy Group. The EOC Director is responsible for operational decisions once the EOC has been activated and until it is terminated.

2.6 Risk Management

Risk management is the process of planning and implementing decisions that will minimize the adverse effects of losses to an organization.

Highlands adopts and applies the principles of risk management in emergency response and recovery. The EOC shall incorporate risk management in the development of all Action Plans.

The EOC Director shall ensure that good risk management practices are applied in all incidents throughout the response and recovery organizations, and that every function contributes to the management of risks. The Director may activate the management staff position of Risk Management Officer to assist in this function.

2.7 Information Flow

Information coming to and from the EOC must be managed carefully. BCERMS identifies four types of information:

Management directions must follow the lines of authority established for the response organization. For the municipal EOC, these lines are represented in the EOC organization chart presented in Section 3. Among the different BCERMS levels, command decisions and priorities are communicated between the Incident Commander and EOC Director, and between the EOC Director and the Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre (PREOC) Director.

Situation reports (SitReps) are a function most commonly managed through the Planning Section. All personnel must forward incident situation information to the Situation Unit in the Planning Section. The EOC should compile an amalgamated EOC SitRep within a reasonable time period from receipt of the situation reports.

Resource requests normally flow from site Incident Commander to the Operations Section of the EOC or directly to the EOC Director. The EOC Operations Section Chief or Director forwards resource requests to the EOC Logistics Section. If needs cannot be met, the EOC Director forwards the request to the PREOC Operations Section or the PREOC Director.

General information may be exchanged among members of a response organization, and BCERMS encourages lateral information flow between functions. In addition, a function at one level may wish to exchange information with a similar function one level above or below them. Verifying general information is an important step before taking action.

2.8 Mutual Aid

The municipalities of Central Saanich, Colwood, Esquimalt, Highlands, Metchosin, North Saanich, Oak Bay, Saanich, Salt Spring, Sidney, Sooke, and Victoria are signatories of a Disaster Mutual Aid Agreement (Annex C). Under this Agreement, the senior elected representative of any of the above municipalities may request senior representatives of other municipalities to provide employees, volunteer members of the Emergency Program, equipment, supplies, or other property to assist in managing a disaster. Resources are provided on a cost recoverable basis.

2.9 Recovery

The ability to recover from the physical damage, injury, economic impairment and human suffering of any disaster is a critical element in our emergency program.

One of the key components of effective community recovery is ensuring that all efforts and initiatives are integrated and everyone is aware of the various community recovery activities as they are being carried out.

To meet this objective, Highlands shall delegate one person as a Recovery Manager in disasters to coordinate support from all levels of government, the myriad of service agencies, and the general public. The Recovery Manager shall consult the Recovery Guidelines (see Section 6)

2.10 After Action Report

The Emergency Program Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that an after-action report is prepared on all aspects of emergency response and recovery. In addition, the Emergency Program Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that all documented records are complete and available in the event of a public inquiry.
