



## Essential Terms for Emergency Management

**Acceptable Risk:** That level of risk (likelihood of occurrence and consequence of impact) for any activity or situation that is sufficiently low that society (or an organization within society that is managing the risk) is comfortable with it. Society (and an individual organization) does not generally consider expenditure in further reducing such risks justifiable.

**Accident:** A deviation from normal operations or activities associated with a hazard, which has the potential to result in an emergency.

**Action plans:** Written or verbal plans that reflect the overall incident goal (control objectives) and incident strategy, objectives for the designated operational period, specific tactical actions and assignments, and supporting information for the designated operational period. They provide designated personnel with knowledge of the objectives to be achieved and the strategy and steps to be used for achievement, hence improving coordination across different levels of government and intrastate jurisdictional borders. Action plans not only provide direction, but also provide a metric for measuring achievement of objectives and overall system performance.

**After Action Report:** A comprehensive report that details the response effectiveness to a particular incident or exercise, specifically itemizing lessons learned and recommended revisions to plans and training.

**Agency:** A division of government with a specific function offering a particular kind of assistance. In the Incident Command System, agencies are defined either as jurisdictional (having statutory responsibility for incident management) or as assisting or cooperating (providing resources or other assistance). Governmental organizations are most often in charge of an incident, though in certain circumstances private sector organizations may be included. Additionally, nongovernmental organizations may be included to provide support.

**All-Hazards Approach:** An approach for prevention, protection, preparedness, response, and recovery that addresses a full range of threats and hazards, including domestic terrorist attacks, natural and manmade disasters, accidental disruptions, and other emergencies

**Area Command:** An organization established to oversee the management of multiple incidents that are each being handled by a separate Incident Command System organization or to oversee the management of a very large or evolving incident that has multiple incident management teams engaged. An agency administrator/executive or other public official with jurisdictional responsibility for the incident usually makes the decision to establish an Area Command. An Area Command is activated only if necessary, depending on the complexity of the incident and incident management span-of-control considerations.

**Assisting Agency:** An agency or organization providing personnel, services, or other resources to the agency with direct responsibility for incident management.

**Chain of Command:** The orderly line of authority within the ranks of the incident management organization.



**Conservation:** The profession devoted to the preservation of cultural property for the future. Conservation activities include examination, documentation, treatment, and preventive care, supported by research and education.

**Cooperating Agency:** An agency supplying assistance other than direct operational or support functions or resources to the incident management effort.

**Crisis:** A short period of extreme danger.

**Damage Assessment:** The process of identifying and documenting the extent of physical damage that a natural or man-made disaster has caused to buildings and/or property.

**Demobilization:** The orderly, safe, and efficient return of an incident resource to its original location and status.

**Disaster:** A large scale calamity that requires immediate action. May result in significant loss, damage, or destruction. An emergency that has gotten out of control.

**Dispatch:** The ordered movement of a resource or resources to an assigned operational mission, or an administrative move from one location to another.

**Emergency:** A serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action.

**Emergency Management/Response Personnel:** Includes Federal, State, territorial, tribal, substate regional, and local governments, private-sector organizations, critical infrastructure owners and operators, nongovernmental organizations, and all other organizations and individuals who assume an emergency management role. Also known as emergency responders.

**Emergency Operations Center (EOC):** The physical location at which the coordination of information and resources to support incident management (on-scene operations) activities normally takes place. An EOC may be a temporary facility or may be located in a more central or permanently established facility, perhaps at a higher level of organization within a jurisdiction. EOCs may be organized by major functional disciplines (e.g., fire, law enforcement, and medical services), by jurisdiction (e.g., Federal, State, regional, tribal, city, and county), or some combination thereof.

**Emergency Operations Plan (EOP):** An all-hazards document that specifies actions to be taken in the event of an emergency or disaster event; identifies authorities, relationships, and the actions to be taken by whom, what, when, and where, based on predetermined assumptions, objectives, and existing capabilities.

**Emergency Plan:** The emergency plan documents the emergency management program and describes the provisions for response to an Operational Emergency. It contains a brief, clear, and concise description of the overall emergency organization, designation of responsibilities, and procedures, including notifications, involved in coping with any or all aspects of a potential credible operational emergency.

**Emergency Support Function (ESF):** A functional area of response activity established to facilitate the delivery of federal assistance required during the immediate response phase of a disaster to save lives, protect property and public health, and maintain public safety. ESFs represent those types of federal



assistance which the state will most likely need because of the overwhelming impact of a catastrophic or significant disaster on its own resources and response capabilities, or because of the specialized or unique nature of the assistance required. ESF missions are designed to supplement state and local response efforts.

**Field Operations Guide:** Durable pocket or desk guide that contains essential information required to perform specific assignments or functions.

**Hazard:** A natural, technological, or social phenomenon that poses a threat.

**Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT):** Any material which is explosive, flammable, poisonous, corrosive, reactive, or radioactive (or any combination), and requires special care in handling because of the hazards posed to public health, safety, and/or the environment.

**Incident:** An event, accidentally or deliberately caused, which requires a response.

**Incident Action Plan (IAP):** An oral or written plan containing general objectives reflecting the overall strategy for managing an incident. It may include the identification of operational resources and assignments. It may also include attachments that provide direction and important information for management of the incident during one or more operational periods.

**Incident Commander (IC):** ICS term for the person, usually from the local jurisdiction, who is responsible for overall management of an incident.

**Incident Command System (ICS):** A standardized on-scene emergency management concept specifically designed to allow its users to adopt an integrated organizational structure equal to the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without hindrance by jurisdictional boundaries.

**Incident Management:** The broad spectrum of activities and organizations providing effective and efficient operations, coordination, and support applied at all levels of government, utilizing both governmental and nongovernmental resources to plan for, respond to, and recover from an incident, regardless of cause, size, or complexity.

**Jurisdiction:** A range or sphere of authority. Public agencies have jurisdiction at an incident related to their legal responsibilities and authority. Jurisdictional authority at an incident can be political or geographical (e.g., city, county, tribal, State, or Federal boundary lines) or functional (e.g., law enforcement or public health).

**Management by Objectives:** A management approach that involves a five-step process for achieving the incident goal. The Management by Objectives approach includes the following: establishing overarching incident objectives; developing strategies based on overarching incident objectives; developing and issuing assignments, plans, procedures, and protocols; establishing specific, measurable tactics or tasks for various incident management functional activities and directing efforts to attain them, in support of defined strategies; and documenting results to measure performance and facilitate corrective action.

**Mitigation:** Those activities designed to alleviate the effects of a major disaster or emergency or long-term activities to minimize the potentially adverse effects of future disaster in affected areas.



**Mission Assignment:** The mechanism used to support Federal operations in a Stafford Act major disaster or emergency declaration. It orders immediate, short-term emergency response assistance when an applicable State or local government is overwhelmed by the event and lacks the capability to perform, or contract for, the necessary work.

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

**Multiagency Coordination (MAC) Group:** A group of administrators or executives, or their appointed representatives, who are typically authorized to commit agency resources and funds. A MAC Group can provide coordinated decision-making and resource allocation among cooperating agencies, and may establish the priorities among incidents, harmonize agency policies, and provide strategic guidance and direction to support incident management activities. MAC Groups may also be known as multiagency committees, emergency management committees, or as otherwise defined by the Multiagency Coordination System.

**Multiagency Coordination Systems (MACS):** A system that provides the architecture to support coordination for incident prioritization, critical resource allocation, communications systems integration, and information coordination. MACS assist agencies and organizations responding to an incident. The elements of a MACS include facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications. Two of the most commonly used elements are Emergency Operations Centers and MAC Groups.

**Multijurisdictional Incident:** An incident requiring action from multiple agencies that each have jurisdiction to manage certain aspects of an incident. In the Incident Command System, these incidents will be managed under a Unified Command.

**Mutual Aid or Assistance Agreement:** Written or oral agreement between and among agencies/organizations and/or jurisdictions that provides a mechanism to quickly obtain emergency assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services. The primary objective is to facilitate rapid, short-term deployment of emergency support prior to, during, and/or after an incident.

**National Incident Management System (NIMS):** A set of principles that provides a systematic, proactive approach guiding government agencies at all levels, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work seamlessly to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life or property and harm to the environment.

**National Response Framework (NRF):** A guide to how the Nation conducts all-hazards response.

**Operational Period:** The time scheduled for executing a given set of operation actions, as specified in the Incident Action Plan. Operational periods can be of various lengths, although usually they last 12 to 24 hours.

**Preparation:** Those activities, programs, and systems that exist prior to an emergency that are used to support and enhance response to an emergency or disaster.



**Pre-Positioned Resource:** A resources moved to an area near the expected incident site in response to anticipated resource needs.

**Preservation:** The protection of cultural property through activities that minimize chemical and physical deterioration and damage and that prevent loss of informational content. The primary goal of preservation is to prolong the existence of cultural property.

**Recovery:** Those long-term activities and programs beyond the initial crisis period of an emergency or disaster and designed to return all systems to normal status or to reconstitute these systems to a new condition that is less vulnerable.

**Retrograde:** To return resources back to their original location.

**Resources:** Personnel and major items of equipment, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment to incident operations and for which status is maintained. Resources are described by kind and type and may be used in operational support or supervisory capacities at an incident or at an emergency operations center.

**Response:** Those activities and programs designed to address the immediate and short-term effects of the onset of an emergency or disaster.

**Restoration:** Treatment procedures intended to return cultural property to a known or assumed state, often through the addition of nonoriginal material.

**Risk:** The possibility of suffering harm from a hazard.

**Risk Assessment:** The process of identifying the likelihood and consequences of an event to provide the basis for informed decisions on a course of action.

**Salvage:** The act of saving artifacts at risk of being completely destroyed.

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

**Span of Control:** The number of resources for which a supervisor is responsible, usually expressed as the ratio of supervisors to individuals. (Under the National Incident Management System, an appropriate span of control is between 1:3 and 1:7, with optimal being 1:5; or between 1:8 and 1:10 for many largescale law enforcement operations.)

**Stabilization:** Treatment procedures intended to maintain the integrity of cultural property and to minimize deterioration.

**Standard Operating Guidelines:** A set of instructions having the force of a directive, covering those features of operations which lend themselves to a definite or standardized procedure without loss of effectiveness.



**Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):** A complete reference document or an operations manual that provides the purpose, authorities, duration, and details for the preferred method of performing a single function or a number of interrelated functions in a uniform manner.

**Supporting Agency:** An agency that provides support and/or resource assistance to another agency. See Assisting Agency.

**Supporting Technology:** Any technology that may be used to support the National Incident Management System, such as orthophoto mapping, remote automatic weather stations, infrared technology, or communications.

**Tabletop Exercise:** An activity in which key personnel assigned emergency management roles and responsibilities are gathered in a nonthreatening environment to discuss various simulated emergency situations.

**Task Force:** Any combination of resources assembled to support a specific mission or operational need. All resource elements within a Task Force must have common communications and a designated leader.

**Threat:** Natural or manmade occurrence, individual, entity, or action that has or indicates the potential to harm life, information, operations, the environment, and/or property.

**Triage:** An organized process that matches needs with available resources according to a priority scheme designed to achieve the end objective (i.e. goal) of the specific triage system.

**Unified Area Command:** Version of command established when incidents under an Area Command are multijurisdictional. See Area Command.

**Vulnerability:** The susceptibility to damage or injury from hazards.