



## Objectives

At the end of this unit you will be able to:

- Identify the five stages of emergency response and the emergency manager's role in each of these stages.
- State how to activate the Emergency Operations Center and list the ways in which to make it operational.
- State how to handle the media and rumors in a disaster or emergency.
- Define ways to improve the public response through education and partnership efforts.
- State how to assess and report damage in order to address short- and long-term needs.

In Unit Four, you learned how to plan for an emergency. The true test of the plan is how the community actually responds in time of emergency. In this unit, you will learn the basic stages of response. You will also learn the steps in activating the emergency operations center (EOC) and in processing the information that passes in and out of the EOC. Finally, you will learn about damage assessment to help you determine the situations and allocate the required resources.

## Stages of Response

There are five stages of response to an emergency or disaster:

- 1.** Alerting and notification
- 2.** Warning
- 3.** Protecting the citizens and property
- 4.** Providing for the public welfare
- 5.** Restoration

The length of each stage depends upon the emergency situation. For example, the alerting or notification stage for a flood or hurricane may be several days. In some cases there is less time before the onset of a disaster. For a tornado or explosion it may be a matter of minutes.

Let's examine each stage of response in more detail.

### 1. Alerting and Notification

Some disasters, such as a hurricane, a winter storm, or a large-scale flood are slow in developing. With the excellent and almost instantaneous communications we have today, the likelihood of citizens' being unaware of these slowly developing events is unlikely. The constant, up-to-the-minute publicity the media gives these events is part of the alert and notification.

Public officials need to notify two groups: the general public and emergency response personnel who will respond.

During this period, emergency responders are primarily on a stand-by basis. There are three actions the public needs to take at this time: keep themselves informed of the progress of the threat; take preparatory actions such as getting ready for an evacuation or stockpiling essential resources; and be ready to take more specific steps if public officials order them.

In most situations like this, radio and television will be a chief way to alert the general public. But this notification should occur according to the emergency plan. While you will have no control over what the media will say in general about the potential event, you do have control over the specific emergency preparedness information you want them to convey

to the public. Your plan should state the kinds of emergency information the public needs at different times. Your previous contacts with the media will help you work together during this time.

## 2. Warning



Strengthening Your  
Warning Systems

The second phase is warning. Some events occur with little or no lead time for alert and notification. In these instances, things happen so fast that the best public officials can do is to warn the public of impending danger. This would be the case if there were a hazardous chemical spill at a local facility with an immediate threat to all of or a portion of the community.

The Toolkit contains a worksheet with several questions to help you analyze the warning systems in your community and identify areas that need improvement.

There are several ways to warn the public. A discussion of a couple of options follows. One is to ask the media to interrupt regular broadcasting with an emergency warning about the impending or actual emergency. Be prepared to give the media specific information on who in the community is affected and what protective actions they should take.

Another option is to use public vehicles equipped with loudspeakers to cover the affected areas of the community telling the citizens what to do. This might be to listen to a specific radio or television station for further information on response steps or to take certain protective actions at once.



Types of Warning Systems

The Toolkit has a table showing information about various types of warning systems.

Your planning should include options for warning the public. Regardless of the medium, it is critical that there be one consistent set of information given to the public.



[www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov)

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) website ([www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov)) provides good information about warning systems and processes for warning the public.

### 3. Protecting the Public and Property

The third stage in response is taking immediate actions to protect the public and property. This is primarily providing such services as security, fire protection, emergency medical care, search and rescue, evacuation from the disaster area and possibly sheltering. The primary concern is for the life-safety of the community and immediate treatment of those who may be injured.

Closely associated with this are measures to secure property and prevent further damage. Local emergency services units along with the police normally carry out these actions. The police see to it that property is secure and looting does not occur. The fire department puts out fires and assists in search and rescue. The emergency medical units provide medical care. The local department of public works may also play an important part by

providing personnel and equipment to board up windows, remove debris, or provide street barricades.



*The primary concern is for life-safety and immediate treatment for the injured.*

### 4. Providing for the Public Welfare

Providing for the public welfare is the next phase, and it consists of two main operations: caring for the people during and immediately after the emergency and assessing damage. Service agencies such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and the other community agencies identified in your plan who are skilled in feeding, clothing, and sheltering the public will provide these sources.

The community must assess damage to allow the officials in charge to decide what is required and in what quantity, as well as priorities for restoration of essential services. Also, getting estimates of the associated costs may be necessary to request outside help if local resources are exhausted.

## 5. Restoration

Restoration, the final phase, involves actions to repair essential services. Among many other tasks, this means restoring utility service, clearing or repairing roads, removing debris from the disaster scene, and possibly shoring up weakened structures.



*Restoration involves repairing essential services.*

To the extent possible, the community resumes its normal routine.

Businesses not severely damaged in the disaster will reopen. Schools may also reopen and public transportation may resume. Quite likely it is during this stage that you will use the first

outside assistance provided by your county, if you are smaller unit of government, or by your state or the federal government.

This short-range recovery is the first step toward long-term recovery. The next unit will cover recovery in greater detail.

We have already said that certain disasters or emergencies are more likely than others to occur in your community. You also learned that you may need certain resources identified in your community resources list for certain emergencies but not for others. The following worksheet will show you how preparedness planning links to response. Take a few minutes to complete it.

After you have done so, check it to make sure you have not omitted an important resource. Later, you may want to complete a worksheet for all of the most likely emergencies that may occur in the community.



## Things To Do

*Complete a copy of this worksheet for one of the high priority hazards in your community. The worksheet will help you begin to develop an Emergency Contact List keyed to the five stages of response.*

*First, select an emergency and note it in the space provided. Then, list the kinds of resources you may need to call on in each of the stages. Finally, turn to your resource inventory and identify who or what agency will provide those resources.*

*If you do not have an up-to-date resource inventory, write the names of people or agencies where you think you might be able to obtain the resources. In the future, you will have to check with them and work out an agreement for the emergency use of the resources.*

*Completing a chart for each major threat will give you a good idea where you need to focus on obtaining resources for that emergency.*

## Emergency Resource Contact List for

(Type of Emergency)

| Stage of Readiness                   | Source | Telephone |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| Alert and Notification               |        |           |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| Warning                              |        |           |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| Safeguarding the Public and Property |        |           |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| Providing for the Public Welfare     |        |           |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| Restoration                          |        |           |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |
| _____                                | _____  | _____     |

## **Activating the EOC**

In Unit Four we talked briefly about the EOC. We now need to return to this important topic. The EOC is where the officials responsible for responding to major emergencies and disasters assemble to direct and control the jurisdiction's response. Its operation must function smoothly and efficiently.

It is important to have a well-equipped EOC capable of providing for continued operations throughout major disasters and emergencies. The EOC goes into operation when the elected officials decide that the situation is serious enough to require a coordinated and other-than-routine response. Obviously, the EOC does not become operational for all emergencies. The plan will specify the conditions under which it does and who is authorized to activate it.

One of the first tasks in any emergency is to quickly assess the situation to determine if its size or severity warrants activating the EOC. The EOC may be staffed on a regular or as-needed basis. Staffing the EOC may be as simple as people leaving their offices and walking down the hall to the operations center. Or it may be more elaborate, such as calling in people from various locations.

Regardless, when activating your EOC, you will want to gauge your staffing level by the scale of the emergency. Four classifications are useful in determining the EOC's operational status.

### **Routine Emergencies**

Routine emergencies are those that local emergency services personnel handle on a day-to-day basis, such as fires and traffic accidents. Under certain conditions, such as a large winter storm or a particularly severe spring windstorm, other departments, such as public works, may also respond. But public officials are not likely to activate the EOC for this level of emergency.

### **Limited Emergencies**

A limited emergency is more serious than a routine emergency and involves a limited staff in the EOC. Only functions of the EOC essential for coping with the limited emergency are operational.

Limited emergency situations fall into two categories. The first is an advance readiness for what may become a full-scale emergency later. For example, during a hurricane or tornado watch or warning, your plan may call for the activation of a limited staff at the EOC to monitor conditions.

The second category is when a routine emergency goes beyond the capability of the jurisdiction's day-to-day operations. For example, suppose a small fire in an apartment complex or a wildland fire suddenly gets out of control and becomes a major problem. Your plan may call for the activation of the EOC on a limited basis to help with evacuation, mass care, and sheltering.

## **A Potential Disaster**

A potential disaster is one step beyond a limited emergency. In this situation, authorities would supplement the limited staff to more closely monitor the situation and be ready to go into action if conditions deteriorate. During this waiting time, it is wise to verify that all communication links of the EOC are operational and all essential EOC staff are ready to report.

For example, when a hurricane is a few days away but its projected path is likely to hit your area, the EOC should be in the limited emergency stage. As the storm nears and the trajectory remains constant, more and more staff would report to the EOC. You would have reached the potential disaster stage.

## **Full-scale Emergency**



A full-scale emergency requires total mobilization of the entire EOC staff. Go back to the hurricane example again. By the time the leading edge of the wind and rain is beginning to be felt in your community, the EOC should be on full emergency status with all staff present and all systems ready to function.

*A full-scale emergency requires total mobilization of the entire EOC staff.*

## **Making the EOC Operational**

But how does the EOC go from a nonactive status to a fully activated one? As we stated above, the plan should spell out a sequence of steps for activating the EOC, depending on the threat. Note that many steps will apply whenever you decide to activate the EOC, regardless of the nature of the threat. What will vary from situation to situation will be the number of persons involved and the functions activated.

The following are seven suggestions for preparing that sequence.

### **1. Alerting the EOC Personnel**

Once public officials have decided to activate the EOC, the first step is alerting the personnel needed to deal with the situation at hand. The operations plan should contain a standard operating procedure detailing how this happens. Usually, this is via phone contact, personal pagers, or personal digital assistants.

Your alerting roster should contain the names and phone or pager numbers of a primary and secondary contact for each position in the EOC. The alternate would receive the call if the primary contact is unavailable. To keep your alert roster current, it is wise to update it regularly, at least semiannually.

### **2. Activating the Communications Equipment and Support Facilities**

While the personnel alerted are reporting to the EOC, activate the communications equipment and other support facilities. Unless your EOC is in operation on a day-to-day basis, you will need to activate and test your communications equipment. Activating the support facilities may mean anything from plugging in the coffee maker and turning on the computers to starting up an emergency power generator.

You want to be ready to go into action when the essential personnel arrive.

### **3. Starting the Message Flow System**

In Unit Four we mentioned the importance of having an effective message system that allows for a disciplined flow of incoming and outgoing messages. This system is a method that ensures the following, at a minimum:

- Exact and detailed recording of an incoming message
- Directing this message to the EOC staff person best suited to respond
- Coordinating the decision to allocate resources
- Allocating the resources or requesting additional ones
- Recording the action(s) taken
- Notifying the sender of the message of the action taken

Ideally, an operations officer routes the completed incoming messages to the appropriate staff person and makes sure each incoming message gets the attention it needs.



Message Action Log

The Toolkit contains a sample log for recording messages and actions taken.

One effective way to manage this process is to use pre-printed, pressure-sensitive, color-coded forms that minimize the amount of writing needed. This process also guarantees a chronological record of activities.

#### **4. Using Logs, Maps, and Status Boards**

During a typical disaster, the amount and kinds of information generated can be staggering. You need systems to manage this accumulation of information. Here are some useful tools.

You need to maintain a chronology of events on a log board to keep track of what is occurring. Today there are “white boards” that electronically capture what one writes on the board. Once the chronology is printed, a special file can keep the hard copy of the chronology, thus freeing the board for another batch of data. This minimizes the need to have multiple log boards.

You need maps of your local community, county, and state. The ideal map is a large, wall-size blow-up with an acetate overlay allowing you to use erasable markers in making appropriate notations. Don’t wait until an emergency occurs to find a useful map and accessories; make this part of your preparedness effort.



## Things To Do

*Check to make sure you have up-to-date maps for the community. Often the maps in an EOC are out-of-date because a new road has been put in or a subdivision started. Check your maps with the local fire or police department. Theirs are usually current with the state of the community.*

Finally, you will need status boards to record such things as the names and locations of the operational shelters, the number of occupants and their needs; the roads that are impassible or in need of immediate repair; and the sections of town without utilities. You can capture this information on a computer and project this data on large monitors and wall displays.

### **5. Preparing a Shift Schedule**

If the EOC is to operate for any length of time, make sure the personnel in the EOC have the needed breaks and their tour of duty does not exceed a reasonable span of time. While it is impossible to set a schedule of breaks, it is critical that staff working under intense pressure take regular breaks to maintain their sharpness. You may have to encourage some over-zealous staff who are caught up in the excitement to take a break. Do not hesitate to do so if it looks like fatigue is setting in.

If it seems that the operation will extend beyond one day, you will need a second shift to relieve the first shift. Your plan should specify the length of the shift and the names of everyone who is to serve and on which shift.

### **6. Announcing the Briefing Schedules**

It is important to announce and post the briefing schedule as soon as the EOC activates. Briefings should occur on a regular basis such as when shifts change, when there is a sudden change in events, or before making a major decision or releasing potentially disturbing information to the public or the media.

The local news media also needs a briefing schedule so that they know when to expect a report from the EOC. A media schedule will provide them with important information and help keep the media from interfering with EOC operations.

## 7. Providing Staff Necessities

If you know the EOC will be in operation for some time, make sure you have appropriate food, beverages, housekeeping provisions, and basic medical supplies. Your plan should anticipate all this.

Depending on your situation, you should have made arrangements with caterers or other community food sources used to preparing meals for large groups. While you can stockpile drinks and housekeeping and medical supplies, fresh food poses a different challenge.

These seven steps cover the most important actions you need to take when the officials decide to activate your EOC. There are many smaller tasks that fall under these seven steps that are not addressed in the introductory course. Time on the job and further training will familiarize you with them. These seven provide you a reliable starting point.

It is one thing to make the EOC operational, but it is something else to keep it that way. One of the chief obstacles to smooth operations in the EOC is the possible interruptions from persons who have no business in the EOC. So we need to say a few words about maintaining the security of the EOC.



*Make sure your plan includes basic provisions for the EOC staff.*

## Controlling Access to the EOC

In order to carry out an effective response to an emergency or disaster, the EOC must function without interference from those who are not part of the emergency management team. The best way to do this is to control access to the EOC. As soon as the EOC goes into emergency status, implement your



*The EOC should have a receptionist or security person on duty.*

planned check-in procedure. The EOC should have a receptionist or security person on duty. Each member of the EOC staff should have identification so that the receptionist knows whom to admit. You may wish to have a different identification for those who have direct access at any time if the EOC operates on a daily basis and those who have only limited access during emergencies.

Your plan should require a sign-in procedure, so you can tell at any time who is in the EOC.

It is best to have the media out of the EOC staff's way so they do not interfere with operations. Designate a separate facility for briefing the media. If you have no separate facility, designate a restricted area or room within the building housing the EOC but preferably not close to the operations. You may want to provide the media some type of identification badge.

It is critical to meet with the media representatives at some point in the planning process to tell them about your reasons for restricting their access to the EOC and for providing them regular briefings at another site. Always keep in mind that the media are a vital link in keeping the public accurately informed. You need to do your best to keep them well informed about events.



## Things To Do

*See if your plan has a standard operating procedure to activate your EOC and to deal with the media. If it does, compare it with the suggestions offered above and propose needed modifications.*

*If there are no SOPs for these activities, develop them following the guidance just provided.*

## Information in the EOC

Earlier we referred to the necessity of a smooth flow of information into and out of the EOC. This information processing is critical to the successful operations of the EOC. How well you perform will depend upon how well you can handle the information you receive and process and transmit it.

Even before the staff arrives at the EOC, there should be no question as to what each person should do. Each staff member should have received a personal copy of the EOC standard operating procedures as part of your training and exercise program.



List of Tasks for  
Communications Center  
Personnel

The Toolkit contains a list of tasks for communications center staff.

As soon as possible after activation of the EOC, someone needs to brief personnel on the situation. This can occur via a quickly prepared summary given to them as they sign in or through an initial situation briefing.

Even as this briefing is occurring, the EOC is likely to be receiving messages from the field. There are ways to manage this message process and not let it get out of hand.

All incoming messages should be written or entered into a computer and then funneled through an operations officer to those in the EOC who are responsible for taking action. The operations officer should be aware of the actions taken, not just the information coming in. One way to do this is to use a preprinted form for incoming and outgoing messages. A typical form appears on the following page.

MESSAGE / ACTION LOG

Event Number \_\_\_\_\_ Message Number \_\_\_\_\_

Sample Form

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (24 Hr.) \_\_\_\_\_ Routine \_\_\_\_\_ Urgent  
 Mo Day Yr

**TO:** Staff / Name \_\_\_\_\_ **FROM:** Staff / Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Staff / Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Staff / Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
 Method \_\_\_\_\_ Method \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Tel., Fax, Radio, Ecomm, Amateur) (Tel., Fax, Radio, Ecomm, Amateur)

**MESSAGE / ACTION:** (Names, Titles, Dept., Tel. No., Dates) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature

**ROUTE TO:**

- \_\_\_ ELECTED OFFICIALS
- \_\_\_ EOC INCIDENT COMMAND (IC)
- \_\_\_ PUBLIC INFO OFFICER      \_\_\_ RUMOR CONTROL
- \_\_\_ LIAISON Municipal EMA/Elected Officials
- \_\_\_ MESSAGE CENTER Data Information Systems

- |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| ___ OPERATIONS OFFICER<br>(Field Actions) | ___ PLANNING OFFICER<br>(Plan/Evaluate) | ___ LOGISTICS OFFICER<br>(Resource Mgmt.) | ___ FINANCE OFFICER<br>(Cost/Contract) |
| ___ FIRE/RESCUE                           | ___ AGRICULTURE                         | ___ COMMUNICATIONS/RACES                  | _____                                  |
| ___ POLICE                                | ___ PUBLIC WORKS                        | ___ MASS CARE/RED CROSS                   | _____                                  |
| ___ EMS/MEDICAL                           | ___ DAMAGE ASSMT.                       | ___ SHELTER SYSTEMS                       | _____                                  |
| ___ EMA                                   | ___ RADIOLOGICAL                        | ___ SCHOOLS                               | _____                                  |
| ___ EVACUATION                            | ___ HAZMAT                              | ___ RESOURCES                             | _____                                  |
| ___ FLOOD OBSERVERS                       | ___ FLOOD COORD.                        | ___ TRANSPORTATION                        | _____                                  |
| ___ CIVIL AIR PATROL                      | ___ DOCUMENTATION                       | ___ MILITARY AFFAIRS                      | _____                                  |

**ACTION TAKEN BY RECIPIENT:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**WHITE** = To Designated Staff    **YELLOW** = Message Control    **PINK** = Keep

Written information is absolutely essential, because it documents the time of the request and the actions taken during the response phase. You may have to refer to this documentation later for verification of events.

The use of a standard form (or computer program) will ensure that the information is complete. The form should be an easily recognizable document and contain space for the members of the staff to make notes. Nothing is more frustrating to the EOC staff and more potentially damaging to an effective response than to have to deal with slips of paper of various sizes with no specific format. Making important decisions affecting public safety on the basis of these snippets of information is not an effective way to operate.

As an emergency manager, it is your job to see that the EOC functions smoothly. Message flow is a critical process supporting the EOC operation. It will require some training and exercises for the staff to become proficient at it, especially if you do not use your EOC on a regular basis.

## **Computers as EOC Tools**

Probably no tool of emergency operations since the advent of radio communications has had such an impact as the computer. It enables the storage, retrieval, and rapid display of huge quantities of information. As a result, it has greatly altered the way an EOC can function.

Let's consider a couple of areas where a computer can improve EOC operations. As messages flow into the EOC, the communications operators directly enter messages into the computer, tagging them for action by specific agencies or individuals. The action tag is a blinking red marker turned off only when the assigned individual responds to that message. A glance at a large projection screen showing the EOC Event Log makes it clear to everyone what actions are still outstanding and what unmet needs exist.

For example, when a message arrives asking for pumps to support the response operation, the resource manager can type the word pump and get a list of all available pumps displayed in seconds. With proper programming, the computer system can display the location of the pumps on a computer-generated map. When the resource manager allocates a pump, the program can record its use and further unavailability instantly on the screen.

Similarly, you can answer questions about shelters quickly. The computer allows the shelter officer to display all shelters and the exact status of all open shelters. Each time more occupants arrive in a shelter, the shelter officer can adjust the number of remaining shelter spaces. A computerized program can easily keep count of and display a list of shelters and their occupancy rates.

These are but two examples. Computer-aided EOC operations are state-of-the-art. Commercially available emergency information software or database management programs that you develop yourself can improve the way your EOC functions.

## Dealing with the Media

During an emergency, the media crave information. You, as the emergency manager, or your public information officer or your chief executive will have to face the media. Do not ignore the media because they may gather the information from other less reliable sources and report it if you do not provide it.

The information the news media needs answers basic questions like who, what, when, where, why, and what next. Whenever possible, use prepared press releases to cover these essential facts. In addition, the reporters will probably want briefings with officials of the government. This approach can be very useful in getting attention, but you must ensure that officials are well informed about the situation.

When you, your public information officer, or an official goes before the reporters, be as factual as possible. Do not speculate on what could happen or what is going to happen. Present them with the basic facts, and answer their questions to the best of your ability. If you do not know the answer to a particular question, be honest. Tell them you don't know at this time but you will let them know as soon as you get and verify the information requested. Do not give out any information you have not been able to confirm.



Emergency Public Information  
Checklist

Dealing with the Media

The Toolkit contains a checklist for preparing emergency public information and tips for dealing with the media in a disaster or emergency.

You need to work with the news people throughout the year, not only during emergencies. Remember, you will need assistance in informing the public about your preparedness plan.

The more you work with them on a regular basis, the better grasp of their operation and deadlines you will have. A good working relationship will facilitate positive exchanges during an emergency.

Also, the more respect for you and awareness of your day-to-day operations they have, the less they will doubt your credibility during an emergency.

Finally, always remember that the news media have a job to do. There are potential conflicts and tensions built into your relationship with the news people, but they are professionals, too, and need to be members of your emergency management partnership.

A serious threat to this harmonious relationship with the media is the always-present possibility of rumors distorting the true picture.

## Rumor Control

Rumors are sometimes as dangerous as the emergency itself. The control of rumors is essential if the public is to remain accurately informed and as cooperative as possible with the emergency recommendations public officials issue. As an emergency manager, there are several things you can do to control rumors.

### Get the Facts Out

First, try to control rumors quickly by getting the facts and then getting the exact information out. As soon as you are aware of a possible rumor, check it out and release to the news media the facts that dispel the rumor. If it is true, confirm its veracity.

The local news media will be of great help in dispelling rumors. That's why it is so important to have a good working relationship with them. Your good rapport will contribute to making them willing to hold certain information until you verify it before releasing it to the public.



Media Interview Tips  
Media Do's and Don'ts

The Toolkit contains tips to help you stay in control of the interview process and a list of media do's and don'ts.

## Create a Rumor Control Center

Another useful technique is creating a rumor control center. The public should have a number to call for confirmation or refutation of information. It helps to use well-known community leaders to aid in rumor control. Certain individuals may have more credibility with a particular group in the community. It may be necessary for such leaders to go on radio or television to inform their constituents of the facts involved and to deal with their particular needs.



### Things To Do

*Make a list of the news media in your area. Get a list of the reporters who would be assigned to cover emergency situations or disasters in your area. Arrange a get-acquainted meeting with them.*

## Improving Public Response

Responding to the media and the general public during and after an emergency is, of course, only part of your public affairs responsibilities. You can do a lot before the emergency hits.

Your job involves other public information responsibilities such as pre-disaster public safety education. Awareness campaigns, sponsored by community groups, local government officials, and area business and industry, are perhaps the best way to spread the word on preparedness actions that citizens can take to help save their lives and their property when an event occurs.

Kits, handbooks, CD-ROMs, and other materials are available on nearly any emergency. For instance, FEMA has materials covering hurricanes, tornadoes, winter storms, and earthquake preparedness. You can obtain these and use them in order to interest community groups and others in conducting a campaign. You could chair a committee, or persuade someone—like an official from the mayor's office, a newspaper publisher, or a TV station manager—to take the lead. Involving the community leaders not only makes your job easier but adds credibility and expands human resources for getting the job done.

In addition to helping the citizens of the community, a well-planned and well-executed public awareness campaign has other benefits. It expands your working relationship with the community and helps develop stronger alliances between you and the local media. It will also result in people knowing more about your organization and the services it offers. In addition, it will disseminate necessary emergency public information throughout the community, ready for use when a disaster strikes.



[www.fema.gov/about/media](http://www.fema.gov/about/media)

Public awareness kits include information on how to conduct a campaign. Additionally, FEMA handbooks provide you with camera-ready art to print brochures and fact sheets, plus suggestions for radio and television interviews. They also contain resource lists you can use to obtain materials or further help from many other sources. For more information, visit [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov), and click on the “News Media” button.



Get Messages to the Public

Also, the Toolkit contains a list of tools to help you get messages to the public.



*Awareness campaigns sponsored by community groups, and other organizations can save lives and property*

While we have mentioned some of these at various times in the course, following is a more complete list of public affairs functions you can use to help build a strong emergency program.

A public affairs plan can assist in raising the community’s awareness of emergency management. Every time you succeed at doing this, both you and the community are the winners.

### Public Affairs Functions Checklist

- ✓ Work with the local fire department, or other emergency responders, to make presentations to community groups.
- ✓ Develop personal relationships with the local media. Don't just call or mail public releases. Deliver them personally and meet the reporters who can tell the story.
- ✓ Hold open houses and let the whole community visit the EOC to find out just what an emergency manager does.
- ✓ Offer to make presentations at local elementary and high schools and community colleges. Reaching young minds is important, and often what students learn through these sessions can save a life later.
- ✓ Work with the local scout leaders to initiate interest in working toward an emergency management badge.
- ✓ Invite the media to participate when you hold exercises, either as a player or an evaluator. This will help local reporters and telecasters learn more about how emergency management functions.
- ✓ Work with the Chamber of Commerce and other community groups to distribute posters, set up exhibits, and distribute information during high-hazard seasons.
- ✓ Contact cable networks to get public service cablevision time for your emergency program. This can add to your community's safety knowledge and get more support for your programs.
- ✓ Call press conferences or write press releases to announce initiatives and to report ongoing activities or progress of new projects. Consider holding monthly breakfasts or coffees with the local media.

## Assessing Damage

The last point we need to examine in reference to response is assessment of damage.

There are two types of assessment—rapid assessment and preliminary damage assessment.

- 1.** Rapid assessment takes place within hours after an incident and focuses on lifesaving needs, imminent hazards, and critical lifelines.
- 2.** Preliminary damage assessment (PDA) details the types of damage and affixes a dollar amount to damage.

The ability of local governments to perform a rapid assessment accurately and within the first few hours after an incident is critical to providing an adequate local government response for life-threatening situations and imminent hazards. Coordinated and timely assessment permits local government to prioritize response activities, allocate scarce resources, and request assistance quickly and accurately.

## Rapid Assessment

Rapid assessment involves developing plans and procedures that address:

- What information should be collected
- Who will be responsible for collecting the information
- What supplies and equipment will be needed by those collecting the information
- How will the assessment data be consolidated, summarized, and communicated
- What follow-up actions will be needed



Assessor's Checklist

Initial Disaster Intelligence  
Collection Worksheet

Sample data collection forms for rapid needs assessment are provided in the Toolkit. The first file is a checklist for individual assessors. The second file is a worksheet to collect information from all of the assessors.

## Preliminary Damage Assessment

Preliminary damage assessment is a key step in caring for the long-term needs of the community.

Use experienced assessors such as those from the municipal tax office or appraisers from banks, savings and loans, or real estate offices. Fire departments and insurance companies also sometimes have experienced damage assessors. The damage estimates will be more reliable if the estimators are familiar with conditions prior to the emergency and have had some experience.



We cannot overemphasize that you should take pictures of the

damage. Written documentation is important, but nothing tells it more graphically and dramatically than a photograph. Today, with the availability of digital cameras and camcorders, there is no reason not to document the damage with photos.

*Nothing details damage like a photograph.*



### Things To Do

*Make a list of the individuals in your area who are qualified to assess the damage done or the replacement value of property in your community. Contact these persons to solicit their participation in your emergency plan. Do not overlook your local tax office and local financial institutions.*

*List these resources at the appropriate place in the plan once they have agreed.*

Make sure the people who are responsible for PDA know what to do. Their job is to assess the damage and not to make statements to the media. Keep their work as confidential as possible. Later, you can share it with the media at official news briefings or through news releases. It is important to complete damage assessments quickly, because, as you will learn, substantial federal or state aid depends upon damage assessment.

You collect damage assessment information in many different ways. There are no easy guidebooks on how to do it. You will have the greatest success if you develop a system that fits your needs and stick to it. It should be as simple as possible but help you collect all the vital information. The persons identified above as potential assessors might be helpful in developing your system. Ask them for advice. FEMA also has courses on damage assessment.

The determining factor is how you are going to use the damage information. The basic purpose of an assessment is to obtain assistance. You may also use the damage assessment information to report to the media or help substantiate insurance claims or make an annual report to your executive. Your damage assessment may even be the basis for a major Presidential disaster declaration if the disaster is large enough.



Sample Damage  
Assessment Forms

The type of information that you need to collect for a PDA, such as residence, business, public facilities, medical attention, and sheltering are included in the Toolkit.

## Conclusion

In brief, these are some of the major duties your emergency management team will be responsible for during response. As you can see, there will be a lot to do. The more of this you can anticipate and plan for, the better off you and your jurisdiction will be when something happens.

The secret is playing your stage manager role well and making sure that all of the other actors and performers know their roles and are ready to respond.



 **QUESTIONS**  
Learning Check

2. List several of the steps in making an EOC operational.

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3. Keeping people informed of emergency conditions while running the emergency operations in the EOC requires a careful balance between controlling information and access for the media. What procedures and facilities are useful for informing those necessary without disrupting operations?

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4. What is the purpose of a message form?

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 **QUESTIONS**  
Learning Check

5. List types of information required by the press immediately following an emergency and where you can obtain that information.

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6. What are some possible ways to handle rumors?

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7. Why conduct a damage assessment?

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For every question that you answered incorrectly, review the page listed next to the answer to find out why your answer was incorrect.

1. List the five basic stages of response to an emergency or disaster and identify your level of preparedness for each stage. (See page 5-2.)

*Alerting and notification*

*Warning*

*Protecting the citizens and property*

*Providing for the public welfare*

*Restoration*

2. List several of the steps in making an EOC operational. (See pages 5-10 through 5-13.)

*Any of the following: Alerting the EOC Personnel, Activating the Communications Equipment and Support Facilities, Starting the Message Flow System, Using Logs, Maps, and Status Boards, Preparing a Shift Schedule, Announcing the Briefing Schedules, Providing Staff Necessities*

3. Keeping people informed of emergency conditions while running the emergency operations in the EOC requires a careful balance between controlling information and access for the media. What procedures and facilities are useful for informing those necessary without disrupting operations? (See page 5-14.)

*Implement a planned check-in procedure, designate a public information officer and a separate facility for briefing the media, and make sure all EOC staff and media are properly identified.*

4. What is the purpose of a message form? (See page 5-17.)

*The use of a standard form (or computer program) will ensure that the information is complete.*



Learning Check

## ANSWERS

5. List types of information required by the press immediately following an emergency and where you can obtain that information. (See page 5-18.)

*The information the news media needs answers basic questions like who, what, when, where, why, and what next. These are available from the Public Information Officer.*

6. What are some possible ways to handle rumors? (See page 5-19.)

*Try to control rumors quickly by getting the facts and then getting the exact information out. As soon as you are aware of a possible rumor, check it out and release to the news media the facts that dispel the rumor. If it is true, confirm its veracity. It is also important to have a good working relationship with the media. Your good rapport will contribute to making them willing to hold certain information until you verify it before releasing it to the public. Another useful technique is creating a rumor control center. The public should have a number to call for confirmation or refutation of information. It helps to use well-known community leaders to aid in rumor control. Certain individuals may have more credibility with a particular group in the community. It may be necessary for such leaders to go on radio or television to inform their constituents of the facts involved and to deal with their particular needs.*

7. Why conduct a damage assessment? (See page 5-23)

*Provide adequate response for life-threatening situations, prioritize response activities, allocate resources, report to press, help substantiate insurance claims, make annual report to executive, basis for requesting Presidential disaster declaration.*