

Chapter X: Forming a Planning Team

The Emergency Planning Team

Emergency planning should be a team effort because disaster response potentially requires coordination between many agencies and organizations, and at different levels of government. Planning as a team helps to ensure that everyone having the expertise to contribute in a response is a part of the process. Team planning also helps to ensure the buy-in of all key players—or stakeholders.

Who Should be on the Planning Team?



Different types of emergencies require different expertise and response capabilities. The specific individuals and organizations involved in a response will vary by the type of emergency or disaster. For example, law enforcement, fire services, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) will probably have a role to play in almost every emergency. On the other hand, hazardous materials (HazMat) personnel may or may not be involved in every incident but should be included in the planning process nonetheless, because they have specialized expertise that may be called upon in certain situations.

The following table presents an example of the types of agencies and personnel that may be involved in the planning process. All individuals do not need to be included in every aspect of the planning process, but they should be consulted in areas that affect them directly or for which they will be responsible.

| Individuals/Organizations | What They Bring to the Planning Team |
|--|--|
| Chief Elected Official (CEO) or designee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support for the emergency planning process ▪ Policy guidance and decision-making capability ▪ Authority to commit the community's resources |
| Fire Chief or designee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of the Incident Command System (ICS) ▪ Knowledge of fire department procedures, on-scene safety requirements, hazardous materials response requirements, and search and rescue requirements ▪ Knowledge of the community's fire-related risks ▪ Specialized personnel and equipment resources |
| Police Chief or designee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of police department procedures, on-scene safety requirements, and local laws and ordinances ▪ Specialized response requirements, such as perimeter control and evacuation procedures ▪ Specialized personnel and equipment resources |
| Public Works Director or designee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of the community's road and utility infrastructure ▪ Specialized personnel and equipment resources |

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| EMS Director or designee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of medical treatment requirements for a variety of situations ▪ Knowledge of treatment facility capabilities ▪ Specialized personnel and equipment resources |
| Hazardous Materials Coordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of hazardous materials that are produced, stored, or transported in or through the community ▪ Knowledge of EPA, OSHA, and DOT requirements for producing, storing, and transporting hazardous materials ▪ Knowledge of how to respond to hazardous materials incidents |
| Mutual Aid Partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specialized personnel and equipment resources ▪ Additional personnel and equipment resources |
| Department of Health Director or designee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of community public health capabilities and limitations ▪ Familiarity with the key local healthcare providers ▪ Specialized personnel resources |
| DOT Director or designee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of the community's road infrastructure ▪ Knowledge of the area's transportation resources ▪ Familiarity with the key local transportation providers ▪ Specialized personnel resources |
| USDA Director or designee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of the area's agricultural sector and the associated risks |
| Tax Assessor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Records of property in the community and their respective values |
| Building Inspector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of types of construction used in the community ▪ Knowledge of land use and land use restrictions ▪ Records of planned development |
| School Superintendent or designee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of school facilities ▪ Knowledge of hazards that directly affect schools |
| Voluntary Agency Directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of additional resources that can be brought to bear in an emergency ▪ Lists of shelters, feeding centers, and distributions centers ▪ Volunteer resources |
| Air/Seaport Managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of risks associated with airport/seaport operations ▪ Specialized personnel and equipment resources that can be used in an emergency |
| Representatives from local industry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge of hazardous materials that are produced, stored, or transported in or through the community ▪ Facility response plans ▪ Specialized personnel and equipment resources that can be brought to bear in an emergency |

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| Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">List of RACES resources that can be used in an emergency |
| Social Services Agency Representative | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Knowledge of special-needs populations in the community |
| Veterinarian/Animal Shelter Representative | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Knowledge of the special response needs required for animals, including livestock |

Getting the Team Together

Getting all of the stakeholders in the planning process together and to take an active interest in the planning process will be an arduous task. To schedule meetings with so many participants may be even more difficult. It is critical, however, to have everyone's participation in the planning process, at least in the early stages and at critical points along the way, to draw from their expertise and ensure their buy-in to the plan.



The expertise and knowledge that participants bring of their organizations' resources is crucial to developing an accurate plan that considers the entire community's needs and the resources that could be made available in an emergency. It is definitely to the community's benefit to have the active participation of all key players.

There are several steps that you can take to gain cooperation from participants and to gain their involvement in the planning process:

- Plan ahead. Give the planning team plenty of notice of where and when the planning meeting will be held. If time permits, survey the team members to find the time and place that will work for them.
- Provide information about team expectations. Explain why participating on the planning team is important to the participants' agencies and to the community itself. Show the team members how they will contribute to a more effective emergency response.
- Involve the Chief Elected Official. Ask the Chief Elected Official to sign the meeting notice. This will send a clear message that emergency planning is important to the community and that the participants are expected to attend.
- Allow flexibility in scheduling after the first meeting. Not all team members will need to attend all meetings. Some of the work can be completed by task forces and subcommittees. Where this is the case, gain concurrence on timeframes and milestones, but let the subcommittee members determine when it is most convenient to meet.

It also may be beneficial to talk to Emergency Managers from other communities to gather input on how to gain and maintain interest in the planning process.

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Team Operation

Unlike working alone, working with personnel from other organizations to plan for emergencies requires some give and take—in other words, collaboration. Collaboration is the process in which people work together as a team on a common mission—in this case, the development of a community EOP. Successful collaboration requires:

- A commitment to participate in shared decision making.
- A willingness to share information, resources, and tasks.
- A professional sense of respect for individual team members.

Collaboration can be made difficult by differences among agencies and organizations in:

- Terminology. Often, people from different organizations use different terms to mean the same thing—or use the same terms to mean different things. For example, the American Red Cross considers a house fire to be a disaster, while FEMA considers disasters to be incidents large enough in scope and impact to warrant a Presidential declaration under the Stafford Act.
- Experience. Peoples' experiences lead them to respond differently in different situations. Those whose past experiences have proven them correct (or incorrect) in a given situation may have very strong opinions about what should be done, when, and how.
- Mission. Each agency that participates in the planning process is operating toward achieving its specific mission, which may or may not be entirely consistent with that of the emergency management agency. "Personal" missions may interfere with collaboration.
- Culture. Culture entails everything about a person and the agency that he or she works for, including the potential meaning of nonverbal cues. Culture may be one of the most difficult factors to overcome during the collaboration process.

Collaboration under these conditions requires flexibility to agree on common terms and priorities, and humility to learn from others' ways of doing things.

Although collaboration among EOP planning team members may be difficult, it benefits the community by strengthening the overall response to disaster. Collaboration can:

- Eliminate duplication of services resulting in a more efficient response.
- Expand resource availability through sharing.
- Enhance problem solving through the cross pollination of ideas.

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Stages of Team Formation

Collaboration does not come automatically. Building a team that works well together takes time and effort and typically evolves through five stages:

1. **Forming**: Individuals come together as a team. During this stage, the team members may be unfamiliar with each other and uncertain of their roles on the team.
2. **Storming**: Team members may become impatient, disillusioned, and may disagree.
3. **Norming**: Team members accept their roles and make progress toward the goal.
4. **Performing**: Team members work well together and make progress toward the goal.
5. **Adjourning**: Their task accomplished, team members may feel pride in their achievement and some sadness that the experience is ending. It is important to remember that the team should remain in tact for the purpose of exercising and revising the plan.

Team Roles

To keep the team focused throughout the planning stages, it is important for team members to assume roles. Perhaps the most important role is that of team leader—you. As the team leader, you will initiate appropriate team-building activities that move the team through each stage and toward its goal.

Other team roles may include:

- **The task master**, who identifies the work to be done and motivates the team.
- **The innovator**, who generates original ways to get the group's work done.
- **The organizer**, who helps the group develop plans for getting the work done.
- **The evaluator**, who analyzes ideas, suggestions, and plans made by the group.
- **The finisher**, who follows through on plans developed by the team.



Together, all members contribute toward making the team productive.

Characteristics of an Effective Team

You will know that the planning team is on track when it displays the following characteristics:

- Works toward a common goal
- Accepts you as the leader who provides direction and guidance
- Communicates openly
- Resolves conflicts constructively
- Displays mutual trust
- Shows respect for each individual and his or her contributions

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Summary

Emergency planning requires collaboration from a variety of individuals and organizations. The benefits of collaboration far outweigh the difficulties that you will face during the planning process. Some of the benefits include elimination of duplication of services, expanded resource availability, and enhanced problem solving.

The planning process can be made easier by planning ahead, providing information about team expectations, and allowing flexibility in scheduling. It may be to your benefit to talk to emergency managers from other communities to gain their input on the planning process.

Successful team operation requires a commitment to participate in shared decision making, a willingness to share information, and a professional sense of respect for individual team members.

Team formation usually takes place through five stages: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning.

You will know that you have an effective planning team when they agree on and work toward a common goal, provide open communication, and display constructive conflict resolution, mutual trust, and respect for other team members.