

Chatham County
EMERGENCY
OPERATIONS Plan
INCIDENT ANNEX D

CATASTROPHIC
INCIDENT

APRIL 2006

Chatham Emergency Management Agency

Catastrophic Incident Annex

Primary Agency: Chatham Emergency Management Agency

Support Agencies: All departments, agencies, and other organizations assigned primary or supporting Emergency Support Function (ESF) responsibilities.

Introduction

Purpose

The Catastrophic Incident Annex to the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) establishes the context and strategy for implementing and coordinating an accelerated, proactive response to a catastrophic incident.

Scope

A catastrophic incident, as defined by the EOP, is any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, which results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, morale, and/or government functions. A catastrophic incident could result in sustained impact over a prolonged period of time; almost immediately exceeds resources normally available to municipal and private-sector authorities in the impacted area; and significantly interrupts governmental operations and emergency services to such an extent that security could be threatened. All catastrophic incidents are Incidents of Critical Significance. These factors drive the urgency for coordinated planning to ensure accelerated local and external assistance.

Recognizing that State and possibly Federal resources are required to augment overwhelmed local response efforts, the EOP establishes protocols to identify and rapidly deploy key essential resources (e.g., medical teams, urban search and rescue teams, transportable shelters, medical and equipment caches, etc.) that are expected to be urgently needed/required to save lives and contain incidents.

Accordingly, upon designation by the State and subsequently by the Secretary of Homeland Security of a catastrophic incident, Federal resources—organized into incident specific “packages”—deploy in accordance with the National Response Plan (NRP) and in coordination with the affected State and local incident command structure.

Policies

The Chatham County EOP strategy is consistent with the State EOP and the NRP and National Incident Management System protocols and Incident Command System conventions.

- Only the Chairman of the Chatham County Commission or designee may initiate implementation of the this Annex of the EOP;
- All deploying resources remain under the control of their respective department or agency during mobilization and deployment. Supplemental resources arriving at a mobilization center or staging area remain there until requested by local incident command authorities, when they are integrated into the incident response effort.
- Federal assets unilaterally deployed in accordance with the NRP-Catastrophic Incident Annex do not require a State or local cost-share. However, in accordance with the Stafford Act, State or local requests for use of deployed Federal assets may require cost sharing.
- The occurrence or threat of multiple catastrophic incidents may significantly reduce the size, speed, and depth of the response. If deemed necessary or prudent, the Federal Government may reduce the availability or allocation of finite resources when multiple venues are competing for the same resources, or hold certain resources in reserve in case of additional incidents.

Situation

Normal procedures for certain ESFs may be expedited or streamlined to address the magnitude of urgent requirements of the incident. All ESFs must explore economies of scale to maximize utilization and efficiency of scarce resources. In the case of a catastrophic incident, it is expected that the Government or other entities will provide expedited assistance in one or more of the following areas:

- **Mass Care, Housing, and Human Services (ESF #6):** The ability to provide temporary shelter, food, emergency first aid, clothing, and other essential life support to people may be complicated by contaminated resources or facilities.
- **Urban Search and Rescue (ESF #9):** Resources and personnel to perform operational activities (e.g., locating, extricating, and providing onsite medical treatment to victims trapped in collapsed structures) are limited. If search and rescue operations are required in areas of contamination, the limited availability of properly equipped resources supports or underscores the need for prompt response.
- **Decontamination (ESFs #8 and #10):** Incidents involving a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) may require decontamination of casualties, evacuees, animals, equipment, buildings, critical infrastructure, and other areas. Given the potentially large numbers of casualties and evacuees, resulting decontamination requirements may quickly outstrip local capabilities.

- **Public Health and Medical Support (ESF #8):** There is a significant need for public health and medical support, including mental health services. Medical support is required not only at medical facilities, but at casualty evacuation points, evacuee and refugee points and shelters, and at other locations to support field operations. In addition, any contamination requirement increases the requirement for technical assistance.
- **Medical Equipment and Supplies (ESF #8):** Shortages of available supplies of preventive and therapeutic pharmaceuticals and qualified medical personnel to administer available prophylaxis are likely. Timely distribution of prophylaxis may forestall additional illnesses, and reduce the impact of disease among those already exposed.
- **Casualty and Fatality Management and Transportation (ESF #8):** Resources may be required to manage the transportation and storage of deceased, injured, and exposed victims if their numbers are extremely high. In addition, the immense numbers of casualties are likely to overwhelm the bed capacities of local and State medical facilities.
- **Public Information (ESF #15):** When State and local public communications channels are overwhelmed during a catastrophic incident, the Federal Government will be expected to provide resources to assist in delivering clear and coherent public information guidance and consistent messages to the affected areas.

Planning Assumptions

- A catastrophic incident results in large numbers of casualties and/or displaced persons, possibly in the tens of thousands.
- Upon recommendation of the Governor, the Secretary of Homeland Security designates the event an Incident of National Significance and directs implementation of the NRP.
- A catastrophic mass casualty/mass evacuation incident may trigger a Presidential disaster declaration, immediately or otherwise.
- The nature and scope of the catastrophic incident may include chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high-yield explosive attacks, disease epidemics, and major natural or manmade hazards.
- Multiple incidents may occur simultaneously or sequentially in contiguous and/or noncontiguous areas. Some incidents, such as a biological WMD attack, may be dispersed over a large geographic area, and lack a defined incident site.

- A catastrophic incident may occur with little or no warning. Some incidents, such as rapid disease outbreaks, may be well underway before detection.
- The incident may cause significant disruption of the area's critical infrastructure, such as energy, transportation, telecommunications, and public health and medical systems.
- The response capabilities and resources of Chatham County and its municipalities (to include mutual aid from surrounding jurisdictions and response support from the State) may be insufficient and quickly overwhelmed. Local emergency personnel who normally respond to incidents may be among those affected and unable to perform their duties.
- A detailed and credible common operating picture may not be achievable for 24 to 48 hours (or longer) after the incident. As a result, response activities must begin without the benefit of a detailed or complete situation and critical needs assessment.
- Support must be provided in a timely manner to save lives, prevent human suffering, and mitigate severe damage. This may require mobilizing and deploying assets before they are requested via normal protocols.
- Large-scale evacuations, organized or self-directed, may occur. More people initially are likely to flee and seek shelter for attacks involving chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear agents than for natural events. The health-related implications of an incident aggravate attempts to implement a coordinated evacuation management strategy.
- Large numbers of people may be left temporarily or permanently homeless and may require prolonged temporary housing.
- A catastrophic incident may produce environmental impacts (e.g., persistent chemical, biological, or radiological contamination) that severely challenge the ability and capacity of the County and its municipalities to achieve a timely recovery.
- A catastrophic incident has unique dimensions/characteristics that require response plans/strategies be flexible enough to effectively address emerging needs and requirements.
- If the incident is the result of terrorism, the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) level likely may be raised locally, regionally, and perhaps nationally. Elevation of the HSAS level carries additional local, State, and Federal security enhancements that may affect the availability of certain response resources.

Concept of Operations

Local and State Response: Local response operations and responsibilities are covered in the EOP. This annex addresses the proactive response to be taken in anticipation of or following a catastrophic incident to rapidly provide critical resources to assist and augment local response efforts.

In order to provide for a proactive response to catastrophic incidents, the EOP employs an expedited approach to the provision of resources to save lives and contain the incident.

Guiding principles for a proactive catastrophic incident response include the following:

- The primary mission is to save lives, protect property and critical infrastructure, contain the event, and protect the national security;
- Standard procedures outlined in the EOP regarding requests for assistance may be expedited or, under extreme circumstances, temporarily suspended in the immediate aftermath of an incident of catastrophic magnitude, pursuant to existing law;
- Pre-identified response resources are mobilized and deployed, and, if required, begin emergency operations to commence life-safety activities; and
- Notification and full coordination with GEMA occurs, but the coordination process should not delay or impede the rapid mobilization and deployment of critical resources.
 - Upon recognition that a catastrophic incident condition (e.g., involving mass casualties and/or mass evacuation) exists CEMA will immediately designate the event an Incident of Critical Significance and begin, potentially in advance of a formal State and Federal disaster declaration, implementation of the EOP. Upon notification that the State EOP and the NRP have been implemented, departments and agencies:
 - Take immediate actions to activate, mobilize, and deploy incident-specific resources in accordance with the EOP;
 - Take immediate actions to protect life, property, and critical infrastructure under their jurisdiction, and provide assistance within the affected area;
 - Immediately commence those hazard-specific activities established under the appropriate and applicable EOP Incident Annex(es); and

- Immediately commence functional activities and responsibilities established under the ESF Annexes.
 - Actions that municipalities take in response to a catastrophic incident include:
 - All departments and agencies and the American Red Cross initiate actions to mobilize and deploy resources as planned for in the EOP;
 - All departments, agencies, and organizations (e.g., the American Red Cross) assigned primary or supporting ESF responsibilities immediately begin implementation of those responsibilities, as appropriate or when directed;
 - Incident-specific resources and capabilities (e.g., medical teams, search and rescue teams, equipment, transportable shelters, preventive and therapeutic pharmaceutical caches, etc.) are activated and prepare for deployment to a mobilization center or staging area near the incident site. The development of site-specific catastrophic incident response strategies that include the identification of incident-specific critical resource requirements and corresponding deployment/employment strategies accelerate the timely provision of critically skilled resources and capabilities;
 - Facilities (e.g., hospitals) are activated and prepared to receive and treat casualties from the incident area. Facilities are directed to reprioritize services (in some cases reducing or postponing certain customary services) until life-saving activities are concluded. The development of site-specific catastrophic incident response plans that include the identification of projected casualty and mass care support requirements and potentially available facilities expands the response architecture and accelerates the availability of such resources;

- Supplementary support agreements with the private sector are activated; and
- Given the projected high demand for augmentation support, as well as the potential security implications of a catastrophic incident, departments and agencies may be asked to redirect efforts from their day-to-day responsibilities to support the response effort.

Responsibilities

This section summarizes department and agency responsibilities under the EOP. For additional department and agency responsibilities, refer to the individual ESF Annexes and hazard-specific Incident Annexes in the EOP.

Primary Agency: CEMA

- Establish that a catastrophic incident has occurred and implement the EOP.
- Notify all departments and agencies to implement the EOP.
- Upon implementation of the EOP:
 - Activate and deploy (or prepare to deploy) CEMA-managed teams, equipment caches, and other resources in accordance with the EOP;
 - Identify, prepare, and activate facilities critical to supporting the movement and reception of deploying resources;
 - Establish and maintain communications with incident command authorities to ensure a common and current operating picture regarding critical resource requirements; and
 - Make every attempt to establish contact with impacted communities (s) to coordinate the employment of supporting resources.

Support Agencies

- When notified by the CEMA that the EOP has been implemented, departments and agencies (and the American Red Cross):
 - Activate and deploy (or prepare to deploy) agency- or ESF #managed teams, equipment caches, and other resources in accordance with the EOP;
 - Commence ESF responsibilities as appropriate;
 - Commence assessments of the probable consequences of the incident and projected resource requirements; and
 - Commence development of short and long term response and recovery strategies.
- The EOP provides a list of the specific actions that are initiated upon activation. The following departments, agencies, and other organizations are assigned specific responsibilities as support agencies:
 - Chatham County Health Department
 - Savannah Fire Department
 - Chatham Area Transit

- Department of Family and Children's Services
 - Chatham Emergency Management Agency
 - American Red Cross
- Departments and agencies assigned primary responsibility for one or more functional response areas under the EOP appendixes are identified below.
 - **Mass Care:** American Red Cross
 - **Search and Rescue:** Savannah Fire Department
 - **Decontamination:** Savannah Fire Department and Chatham County Health Department
 - **Public Health and Medical Support:** Chatham County Health Department
 - **Medical Equipment and Supplies:** Chatham County Health Department
 - **Patient Movement:** Chatham County Health Department
 - **Mass Fatality:** Chatham County Health Department
 - **Housing:** Department of Family and Children's Services
 - **Public and Incident Communications:** Chatham Emergency Management Agency
 - **Transportation:** Chatham Area Transit
 - **Private-Sector Support:** Chatham Emergency Management Agency
 - **Logistics:** Chatham County Central Services