Unit IV – Local Continuity of Operations Planning: Broward County Perspective

This Unit presents an overview of guidance which affects local governments in Florida and provides the general application of COOP planning at the local level. The current COOP activities in Broward County are outlined. This unit defines the difference between comprehensive emergency operations and continuity of operations planning and presents criteria for Broward County planning. Finally, the unit describes the implementation process for county agencies and provides the main issues, obstacles, and long-term barriers that Broward County has encountered.
Unit Objectives

At the conclusion of this unit, participants will be able to:

1. Outline current COOP activities in Broward County.

2. Explain the requirements for agencies in Broward County agencies for COOP planning.

3. Describe the main issues and obstacles experienced by Broward County in developing and implementing a COOP program.
Comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan (CEOP)

The CEOP addresses the operational concepts and responsibilities of coordinated county emergency response, relief, and recovery. The CEOP describes the basic strategies, assumptions and mechanisms through which the county governments and agencies will mobilize resources and conduct activities to guide and support efforts for emergency response and recovery. The CEOP is reviewed and updated yearly.

Broward County was the pilot jurisdiction for the establishment of the Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) at the local level in the Spring of 1994. Currently, the county uses 19 ESFs – the standard 17 ESFs in the State of Florida CEMP plus ESF 18 – People with Special Needs and ESF 19 Business and Industry. The primary agencies are Substance Abuse and Health Care Services and Office of Economic Development, respectively.

**CEOP is emergency planning.** This plan establishes a framework through which the government and agencies of Broward County will prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the impacts of a major or catastrophic emergency which would adversely affect the health, safety, and general welfare of its residents.

**COOP is business planning.** How to resume business operations after a crisis or loss of resource? The capability of an organization to continue essential operations and reconstitute those operations prior to, during, and after an emergency which prohibits occupancy of the building or disrupts normal services.
Nationally Recognized Criteria

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1600 (Standard on Disaster/ Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs: 2000 Edition) provides NFPA codes, standards, recommended practices and guides prepared through a consensus standards development process approved by the American National Standards Institute. The document is produced through the establishment of a committee of volunteers representing varying viewpoints and interests. The committee agrees on fire and other safety issues, although the NFPA does not independently test, evaluate, or verify the accuracy of the any information in the development of the codes and standards.

The first NFPA 1600, Recommended Practice for Disaster Management, document was produced in 1995. This publication was the culmination of work which began in 1991 by a committee given responsibility to develop documents relating to preparedness for, response to, and recovery from disasters resulting from natural, human, or technological events.

The 2000 edition of NFPA 1600 was prepared by the Technical Committee on Disaster Management and issued by the Standards Council in January 2000. This edition of the publication is also approved by the American National Standards Institute. The a committee members included, but was not limited to, representatives from:

- FEMA
- International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM)
- National Emergency Management Association (NEMA)
- State and local emergency management officials
Broward County’s COOP Criteria

After the September 11th events, Broward Emergency Management Agency (BEMA) decided to revisit the necessity for contingency planning for county agencies, and BEMA felt that the NFPA 1600 program elements encompassed a comprehensive contingency methodology. The committee, comprised of representatives from the County Administration, Emergency Management, Internal Audit, and the Office of Information Technology, developed the guidelines which Broward County agencies must adhere to using the NFPA standards 1600 guidance.

On January 8, 2002, the Broward County Board of County Commissioners adopted the CEOP which incorporated a COOP planning process as a requirement in the plan. This new annex requires each County agency to develop, test and revise a COOP. In addition, agencies must: (1) Identify one liaison to serve as the agency’s COOP coordinator (2) Attend a training workshop (3) Adhere to the 14 program elements.

The committee also prepared a template and criteria evaluation. The template allows for uniform plan development using 14 program elements – the 13 NFPA elements were tailored for Broward’s needs and information technology was added as 14th element. The COOP plan includes three sections – Introduction, Program Management and Program Elements. These sections contain the following:

- Introduction – Section Scope, Purpose and Authorities.
- Program Elements – 14 elements as discussed in the presentation.
Fourteen Program Elements

Research and internal experience suggests an effective and comprehensive COOP should include these 14 program elements:

- Laws and Authorities
- Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
- Hazard Mitigation
- Resource Management
- Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure
- Planning
- Concept of Operations
- Communications
- Operations and Procedures
- Logistics and Facilities
- Training
- Exercise, Evaluations and Corrective Actions
- Crisis Communications, Public Education and Information
- Funding and Administration
### LAWS AND AUTHORITIES

**Element One:**

Local, State and Federal governing laws and authorities to include:

- Ordinances
- Statutes
- Executive Orders

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### Laws and Authorities

Laws refers to an act of Congress (state legislature, county commission, city council) that has been signed by the president (governor, commissioner, mayor) or passed over his/her veto by Congress. Public bills, when signed, become public laws, and are cited by the by year (session) in which they were passed chronologically. Examples of laws are Congressional legislation, State Statutes, and county ordinances. Organizations must adhere to these.

Authorities direct an organization’s ability to act and provide the power for the actions. The authority is usually officially or formally granted by statute or legislation. Authority can also be an *express authority* – explicitly granted to an agent by a principal or an *implied authority* – ability to perform acts that are customary, necessary, and understood by an agent as authorized in performing acts for which the principal has given express authority. Federal and State Executive Orders, applicable regulations and guidance, and codes and standards of operation can be authorities. Various agencies will have specific authorities directing their operations, for example the Aviation Department would identify applicable Federal Aviation Administration regulations. In addition, organizations may also use References to guide their operations, such as the Incident Command System.
HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Element Two:

• Natural Events: hurricanes, floods, thunderstorms,
• Technological Events: accidental or intentional occurrences – WMD, hazardous material release, cyber attack
• Consider “What if” scenarios:
  – No electricity
  – Phones don’t work
  – No fuel for vehicles
  – Staff can’t get to work
  – Vendors can’t deliver critical supplies

Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

Each agency should identify all of the hazards that could impact their operations, determine the likelihood of this event occurring, and assess the impact severity on their personnel, property, and business operations. Considerations for estimating the hazards should include, location – especially if in a hurricane evacuation zone or flood zone, building construction, critical systems, etc. Based upon the hazard analysis, agencies will conduct an impact assessment to determine the potential for detrimental impacts on several items including:

• Health and safety of persons
• Continuity of operations
• Property, facilities, and infrastructure
• Delivery of services
• The environment
• Economic and financial condition
• Reputation
• Security
• Needs of the customers
HAZARD MITIGATION

Element Three:
Establish strategies to eliminate or reduce the degree of risk to life, property, and operations from hazards, either prior to or following an emergency or loss of resources.

Hazard Mitigation

Agencies should also develop a mitigation strategy based on the results of the hazard identification and risk assessment to eliminate or mitigate the effects of the potential hazards if practical. A mitigation group will meet periodically to reassess and update the mitigation strategy. The mitigation strategy shall consider, but not be limited to the following:

- The use of appropriate building construction standards.
- Hazard avoidance through appropriate land-use practices.
- Relocation, retrofitting, or removal of structures at risk.
- Removal or elimination of the hazard.
- Reduction or limitation of the amount or size of the hazard.
- Segregation of the hazard from that which is to be protected.
- Modification of the basic characteristics of the hazard.
- Control of the rate of release of the hazard.
- Provision of protective systems or equipment.
- Establishment of hazard warning and communication procedures.
- Redundancy or duplication of critical systems, equipment, information, operations, or materials.
Element Four:

- Identify personnel (roles and responsibilities), equipment, materials, facilities, funding, training, expert knowledge.
- Identify volunteers, mutual aid, current inventory or internal and external resources.
- Identify the quantity, response time, capability, limitations, cost and liability connected with using these resources.

Resource Management

Each agency should identify a coordinator and personnel who possess the skills to carry out the plan. Each plan should contain procedures to contact personnel during business and off-hours, assign an employee to contact these employees, identify the roles and responsibilities for the personnel, and include additional personnel that may be needed on an emergency basis to carry-out the plan. A plan should be in place to manage solicited and convergent volunteers.

Based on the hazard identification, agencies should establish time frames when personnel, equipment, materials, facilities, funding and training will be needed. To effectively manage their resources each agencies’ plan should: develop procedures to allocate resources based on established priorities, identify the resource requirements to maintain operations at critical infrastructure facilities, include the quantity, response time, capability, limitations, cost, and liability connected with using the involved resources, create a current list of internal and external resources, and a mechanism should be in place to ensure resource inventories are kept up-to-date.

Each agency should consider using mutual aid agreements and prepare applicable Memorandums of Agreement. Additionally, each plans should develop procedures to request and coordinate local government and private sector personnel and equipment, maintain a current list of contract or agreement references for each vendor the agency currently does business with (include contract beginning and ending date), and include a current list of vendors the plan will require.
Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure

Each agency should establish a consolidated list of critical systems/applications/networks by location. There are 77 Broward County agencies with hundreds of facilities located throughout the county. This element should establish the procedures for effective Disaster Recovery Planning by assigning a criticality level to all critical applications and networks. The plans should also include impact statements for the loss of each critical system, application and network, prepare procedures for recovering the critical systems, applications and networks, establish procedures to mitigate the impact of the impact statements, and identify personnel needed for recovery operations. Each agency must have an existing contract with a disaster recovery provider.
PLANNING

Element Six:
Procedures for operating within the plan

Planning

Each agency should develop procedures for operating within the plan including a method for annual evaluation and periodic updating of the materials. The mission critical systems must be identified and the plan should outline how long after an interruption a system or replacement must be implemented. Additionally, the plan should have provisions or procedures for the following:

- Relocation Site(s) for Alternate Operations
- Relocation Site Requirements for maintaining operations
- Recovery and return to normal operations
- Vital Record maintenance and back-up provisions/procedures
- Redundant back-up sites for storing vital records
- Vital Record protection
- Recovery of damaged Vital Records
- Restoration of services, facilities, programs and infrastructure
Concept of Operations

Each agency should implement an Incident Command System (ICS) to direct operations outlined in the plan. The ICS is a set of common procedures for organizing personnel, facilities, equipment and communications at the scene of an incident which enables responders to systematically organize activities and easily expand to meet incident requirements.

Emergency incidents need to be managed professionally to ensure personnel safety, reduce the confusion and damage an incident can cause, and allow critical decision-making with limited information and severe time restrictions. An effective incident management system provides the foundation for an effective response.

Development and implementation of the system starts from the time an incident occurs until the requirement and operations no longer exists. ICS structure can be established and expanded depending upon the changing conditions of the incident. As such, the system can be used for any type or size of emergency, ranging from a minor incident involving a single unit to a major emergency involving several agencies. The ICS allows agencies to communicate using common terminology operating procedures. It also allows for the timely combining of resources during an emergency.

Each agency should establish applicable procedures and policies for coordinating response, continuity, and restoration activities with appropriate authorities and resources while ensuring compliance with applicable statutes and regulations.
Element Eight:

Internal and external communications systems and procedures shall be established and regularly tested.

Communications

An emergency communications process/procedure shall be developed and periodically tested to alert customers or citizens, or both, of an actual or impending emergency. The roles and responsibilities for communications need to be addressed. The communication system capabilities must be established including, providing a current inventory of local communication resources and capabilities and identifying primary and backup internal and external communication systems. Additionally, Communications SOPs and checklists should be developed and updated at least annually.

Each agency should create a schedule for communications equipment testing and maintenance, develop and maintain a reliable capability to alert officials, customers, and emergency response personnel, and establish a system capable of issuing a warning of an actual or impending emergency to those potentially affected. Also, agencies should develop frequency use procedures and protocols and identify the integration of private sector/voluntary agency communication capabilities (e.g. Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services – RACES).
Operations and Procedures

This is the operational policy section. Agencies shall develop, coordinate, and implement operational procedures to support the program, including:

- Conducting needs assessments
- Responding to hazards
- Acquiring resources
- Conducting damage assessments
- Identify unsafe structures
- Information gathering and assessment
- Identification of critical resources
Logistics and Facilities

Agencies shall establish procedures to locate, acquire, distribute, and account for services, personnel, resources, materials, and facilities procured or donated to support the program.

Each agency should identify an alternate facility and include business and off-hours contact information for the individual in charge of managing that facility. Each agency should develop procedures, in coordination with the alternate facility management, should have procedures to conduct operations at the back-up site and for receiving commodities, disposing of items that are damaged or destroyed, and retrieving recoverable equipment and supplies.
Training

The training and education program shall comply with all applicable regulatory requirements and the concepts of operations developed in the COOP. Each agency should develop procedures for conducting an annual training needs assessment, publish a schedule of training activities that meet identified needs, and document the training.
Exercise, Evaluations and Corrective Actions

Each agency should identify a staff person, with policy and budgetary authority, to coordinate and conduct the development and implementation of exercises. Exercises should include actual crisis or loss of resource experience. Results of the hazard identification and risk assessment should factor into the exercise planning. Agencies should develop a multiyear exercise schedule which is updated and published at least semiannually and procedures to ensure that corrective action is taken on deficiencies identified in the evaluation process.
CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

Element Thirteen:
How will you disseminate information prior to, during the duration of and following the crisis or loss of resource?

Crisis Communications, Public Education and Information

Each agency should develop procedures to inform citizens about hazards and reducing their risk using means such as public education materials, presentations to civic groups, participation in information expositions, published articles, and Public Service Announcements. Agencies should prepare procedures to disseminate and manage emergency public information in a crisis or loss of resource.

Agency plans should create contact lists for communicating with all interested public and private sector agencies, identify multiple methods of communicating with the media, public and private sector agencies, develop rumor control procedures, and create boilerplate news releases, flyers, and public service announcements.
Funding and Administration

Each agency’s plan should illustrate employee job descriptions and develop procedures for administrative plans (e.g. emergency hiring and purchasing) and the performance of essential administrative activities during a loss of resource. Boilerplate rental or procurement contracts should also be prepared.

Agencies should develop procedures for procurement, handling compensation and claims issues, and establish procedures to ensure the safety of cash, checks, and accounts receivable, assist with the protection of other valuable documents/records, as well as to ensure the ability to issue payments during a loss of critical resources.

EACH AGENCY SHOULD DEVELOP PROCEDURES TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THE COOP!
Implementation

After the training workshops are complete, agencies will have 90 days to complete a COOP for their organization. They will be given a self-evaluation form to review the plan prior to submitting it to BEMA who will then use the same evaluation form to determine compliance with the Commission edict.

The Implementation process for the development of Broward County Agency COOP plans includes the following steps:

- Divisions identify coordinator through a memo from Department Director to BEMA Director.
- Coordinators attend BEMA training workshops.
- Each agency completes and assesses their plan.
- BEMA reviews every plan, determines compliance with CEOP, and reports findings through a memo from BEMA Director to Department Director and County Administrator.
Broward County Main Issues

BEMA conducted a facilitated brainstorming session with key personnel in the county to identify potential impacts the county as a whole could potentially face in a post-disaster environment.

The format of this formal session consisted of reviewing a hurricane scenario which produces specific impacts. The discussion then focused on the issues which county agencies would potentially encounter. The output was used to help guide emergency planning and COOP development in Broward County. The main issues to be addressed by agencies in Broward County are:

- Identification of essential countywide services
- Agency Interdependencies
- Availability of staff and resources
- Identification of Alternate Facilities
- Availability of Funding
- Limitations of Vendor contracts (Ashbritt)
- Delineation of Authority – worst-case scenarios
- Redundancy of communications
- Lack of family support structure for critical employees
- Necessity to complete inventories (including facilities)
- Prioritization of COOP planning
- Centralization of COOP plans
- Lack of process to identify and document employee skill’s
- Plan validation, maintenance, and coordination
Obstacles to COOP Implementation

The Implementation Phase of any program, particularly COOP, is vital to the success of operations. The obstacles which must be overcome for effective COOP program development will vary by the potential hazards/threats and the agency functions. However, most organizations will face common problems associated with COOP planning, including resource shortfalls in equipment, facilities, and labor.

Several of the obstacles to COOP implementation in Broward County are also included as the main issues that the agencies must address. Some of the obstacles identified by BEMA in the training process and encountered by the Broward County agencies include:

- Limitations on internal and external resources
- Expectations of the citizenry
- Determination of activities in other communities
- Identification of alternatives for shelters
- Transportation of Special Needs Populations including inmates and patients
- Management of daily activities in concert with emergency responsibilities
- Relocation issues for court proceeding if the main courthouse is untenable
Long-term Barriers to COOP Program

As with any program, COOP development is also inhibited by long-term barriers. During the planning process, these impediments should be anticipated and addressed at the onset through coordinated efforts. Some of the barriers that Broward County must surmount include:

- Return to normal operations
- Introduction of new and evolving priorities
- Preservation of program focus and visibility
- Management of daily activities in concert with emergency responsibilities
- Coordination and cooperation among elected officials and municipalities
- Adjustments for varied needs – compromising with others
- Utilization of facilities in accordance with priorities
- Identification of leadership for the COOP program
- Prioritization
- Identification of resources
- Availability of facilities/capital plan
- Provisions for safety and security
- Establishment of cyclical plan development process