WHAT AN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (EOP) IS

A jurisdiction's emergency operations plan is a document that:

1. Assigns responsibility to organizations and individuals for carrying out specific actions at projected times and places in an emergency that exceeds the capability or routine responsibility of any one agency, e.g., the fire department.
2. Sets forth lines of authority and organizational relationships, and shows how all actions will be coordinated.
3. Describes how people and property will be protected in emergencies and disasters.
4. Identifies personnel, equipment, facilities, supplies, and other resources available--within the jurisdiction or by agreement with other jurisdictions--for use during response and recovery operations.
5. Identifies steps to address mitigation concerns during response and recovery activities.

As a public document, an EOP also cites its legal basis, states its objectives, and acknowledges assumptions.

Local EOPs - In our country's system of emergency management, local government must act first to attend to the public's emergency needs. Depending on the nature and size of the emergency, State and Federal assistance may be provided to the local jurisdiction. The local EOP focuses on the measures that are essential for protecting the public. These include warning, emergency public information, evacuation, and shelter.

WHAT AN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (EOP) IS NOT

Those who develop and implement an EOP must understand what it is not.

While the EOP is considered to be a jurisdiction's emergency response plan -- the "centerpiece" of its comprehensive emergency management effort; that does not mean that the EOP details all aspects of that effort.

Other Types of Plans - Emergency management involves several kinds of plans, just as it involves several kinds of actions.

1. **Administrative Plans** - Administrative plans describe policies and procedures basic to the support of a governmental endeavor: typically they deal less with external work products than with internal processes. Examples include plans for financial management, personnel management, records review, and labor relations activities. Such plans are not the direct concern of an EOP. However, if it is assumed that provisions of an administrative plan apply in emergency situations, then the administrative plan may be referenced in the EOP. Likewise, if exceptions to normal administrative plans are permitted in an emergency, that fact should be noted in the relevant part of the EOP.

2. **Mitigation Plans** - A jurisdiction may outline its strategy for mitigating the hazards it faces; in fact, a mitigation plan is required of States that seek funds for post-event mitigation after Presidential declarations under the Stafford Act. Existing plans for mitigating hazards are relevant to an EOP, particularly in short-term recovery decision-making, which can affect prospects for effective implementation of a mitigation strategy aimed at reducing the long-term risk to human life and property in the jurisdiction.

3. **Preparedness Plans** - Preparedness planning covers three objectives: maintaining existing emergency management capability in readiness; preventing emergency management capabilities from themselves falling victim to emergencies; and, if possible, augmenting the jurisdiction's emergency management capability. Such plans would include: the process and schedule for identifying and meeting training needs (based on expectations created by the EOP); the process and schedule for developing, conducting, and evaluating exercises, and correcting identified deficiencies; and plans to procure or build facilities and equipment that can withstand the effects of hazards facing the jurisdiction. Results of these efforts should be incorporated in the EOP as assumptions: that certain equipment and facilities are available, that people are trained and exercised, etc. Operational checks of equipment and communications systems, however, should be a part of each tasked organization's standard operating procedures (SOP) for the period between notification and impact of an emergency.

4. **Recovery Plans** - Typically, an EOP does not spell out recovery actions beyond rapid damage assessment and the actions necessary to satisfy the immediate life support needs of disaster victims; the EOP should provide for a transition to a recovery plan, if any exists, and for a stand-down of response forces. However, some short term recovery actions are natural extensions of response and are covered by the EOP. For example, meeting human needs would require maintaining logistical support to mass care actions initiated in the response phase, with the addition of crisis counseling; it would also involve restoration of infrastructure "lifelines," and perhaps debris removal to facilitate response. At the State's discretion, its disaster assistance plans for distribution of Federal and State relief funds may be annexed to the EOP. Disaster assistance plans would identify how eligible aid recipients will be identified, contacted, matched to aid, certified, and issued checks. Beyond that lies long-term recovery, which is not strictly time-sensitive and can sometimes be more ad hoc. Pre-disaster planning for long-term mitigation and recovery would involve identifying strategic priorities for restoration, improvement, and growth; here emergency management planning starts to intersect the community development planning of other agencies. FEMA recommends and supports the development of State and local hazard mitigation plans to facilitate and expedite obtaining Federal mitigation funds during the post-disaster recovery period.

5. **Plans Versus Procedures** - Although the distinction between plans and procedures is fluid, writers of an EOP should use it to keep the EOP free of unnecessary detail. The basic criterion is: What does the entire audience of this part of the EOP need to know, or have set out as a matter of public record? Information and "how-to" instructions that need to be known only by an individual or group can be left to SOPs; these may be annexed to the EOP or referenced as deemed appropriate. For many responsibilities in the EOP, it will be enough to assign the responsibility to an individual or organization and specify the assignee's accountability: to whom does he or she report, or with whom does he or she "coordinate"? For example, an EOP that assigns responsibility for putting out fires to

the fire department would not detail what should be done at the scene or what fire equipment is most appropriate: he EOP would defer to the fire department's SOPs for that. The EOP would describe the relationship between the Incident Commander (IC) and the central organization that directs the total jurisdictional response to the emergency, of which the fire in question might be only a part. Likewise, the EOP would not detail how to set up facilities for emergency operations, leaving that for an SOP to be used by the responsible organization(s). The emergency manager should work with the senior representatives of tasked organizations to ensure that SOPs needed to implement the EOP do in fact exist and do not conflict with the EOP or one another.

(Reference: SLG 101: Guide for All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning (9/96), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)