



FEMA

LESSON LEARNED

Emergency Operations Centers: Cataloguing Staff Skills

SUMMARY

Emergency operations centers (EOC) should compile information on staff members' skills sets and should incorporate skills considerations into the staffing process during activations.

DESCRIPTION

In the summer of 2008, the state of Iowa experienced a series of severe storms that produced several tornadoes and a large amount of rainfall. The heaviest period of storms began on May 25, 2008, and lasted until June 25. Rains caused flooding that overtopped levees and dams and inundated Iowa localities near rivers. Over a 4-week period, flood waters moved across Iowa, which required the state to undertake extensive preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery operations.

Overall, the 2008 summer storms resulted in 17 fatalities, forced the evacuation of approximately 38,000 Iowans, and impacted over 21,000 housing units.

The 2008 storms were comparable to the 1993 floods as the most destructive natural disasters in Iowa's history.

The Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (HSEMD) activated the Iowa State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) shortly after a tornado struck the town of Parkersburg on May 25. The SEOC operated continuously for more than a month as storms and flooding affected large areas of the state. The SEOC activated its four sections (finance, logistics, operations, and planning) as well as its executive office support staff. Federal, state, and private sector agencies deployed representatives to the SEOC to assist in coordinating operations throughout the state.

For more on the SEOC's executive office support staff, please see the *Lessons Learned Information Sharing* Practice Note, [Emergency Operations Centers: Iowa State Emergency Operations Center's Executive Office Support Staff](#).

The executive office support staff organized and published the shift schedule for the SEOC during the response to the summer storms. However, SEOC section chiefs did not always have input into the staffing for their sections, which proved problematic at times. The support staff assigned personnel to some positions they lacked the necessary skills to fulfill. At times, the operations section was either under-staffed or staffed with representatives unfamiliar with SEOC procedures. In some cases, National Guard personnel assigned to the operations section were pulled away to do other missions, leaving gaps in coverage. The summer storms after-action report recommended that the SEOC "develop a directory of all personnel who staff the SEOC, including each person's experience, specialized skills, and responsibilities."

EOCs should compile information on staff members' skills sets and should incorporate skills considerations into the staffing process.

CITATION

Lessons Learned Information Sharing. *Iowa 2008 Summer Storms After-Action Report*. 27 Apr 2009.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=36042>

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