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## LESSON LEARNED

### Emergency Operations Centers: Establishing Strategic Priorities during Activations

#### SUMMARY

Emergency managers should establish strategic priorities each time the emergency operations center (EOC) is activated. These strategic priorities should be reviewed and revised for each operational period.

#### DESCRIPTION

On April 26, 2007, the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) sponsored the Regional Response '07 statewide functional exercise. The exercise scenario detailed that a Category 3 hurricane made landfall at the Virginia/North Carolina border and degraded to a tropical storm as it continued through Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Maryland. Storm damage included significant rainfall leading to flash flooding, power outages, and debris in roadways. Exercise objectives included demonstrating effective coordination between jurisdictions and agencies and maintaining a common operational picture at each of the 19 participating EOCs. Approximately 200 participants from 25 federal, state, and local agencies participated in the exercise.

Emergency managers did not use incident action plans (IAP) or hold consistent hourly briefings to establish and maintain strategic objectives during the exercise. EOC staff members could not prioritize their actions without IAPs and subsequently processed injects with consistent urgency regardless of strategic priorities. The after-action report (AAR) recommended establishing strategic priorities each time the EOC is activated and communicating them through EOC briefings and through the IAP. According to the AAR, briefings provide EOC staff members with the opportunity to share information in a concise and focused manner. The AAR also recommended designating a support position to remind the EOC commander to maintain these briefings.

Emergency managers should establish strategic priorities each time the EOC is activated. These strategic priorities should be reviewed and revised for each operational period.

#### CITATION

Maryland Emergency Management Agency. *After Action Report/ Improvement Plan Regional Response '07*. 07 Jun 2007.

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