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LESSON LEARNED

Continuity of Operations: Coordinating Emergency Operations Centers

SUMMARY

Emergency command centers are activated to manage response and recovery efforts during a crisis. These command centers must be adequately staffed and equipped to handle emergency tasks associated with the response and coordinate efforts with other command centers.

DESCRIPTION

During the blackout crisis in New York City in August 2003, multiple command centers were set up by various government agencies to manage response and recovery efforts. In addition to the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Emergency Operations Center (EOC), government agencies, such as the Police and Fire Departments, the Department of Transportation, and others, mobilized command centers.

According to the New York Emergency Preparedness Task Force, command centers in the City were uncoordinated and often unprepared to handle the blackout crisis. These command centers did not share information in a timely manner; consequently, "efforts were sometimes duplicated and decisions were sometimes made without the most up-to-date, available information." Coordination was further hampered by lack of adequate power, lights, and communications at some command centers.

To solve problems related to operations centers, the Task Force Report recommended that the City strengthen its command center structure. Each center should be staffed and equipped with adequate resources for the given mission, and should closely coordinate response efforts with other command centers, according to the Report.

CITATION

New York City Emergency Response Task Force. *Enhancing New York City's Emergency Preparedness*. October 28, 2003.
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