

# CHAPTER 13

## STANDARDIZED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (SEMS)

**Background:** As a result of the 1991 East Bay Hills Fire, Senate Bill 1841 was passed by the Legislature and made effective 1/1/93. The law is found in Section 8607 of the California Government Code. The intent of this law is to improve the coordination of state and local emergency response in California. The SEMS regulations took effect in September of 1994.

**Five levels:** SEMS consists of five organizational levels which are activated as necessary:

- ◆ field response;
- ◆ local government;
- ◆ operational area;
- ◆ regional; and
- ◆ state.

**Adapted from ICS:** SEMS has five essential functions adapted from the Incident Command System (ICS). The field response uses the five primary ICS functions: command, operations, planning/intelligence, logistics, and finance/administration.

At the local government, operational area, regional, and state levels, the term "management" is used instead of command. The titles of the other functions remain the same at all levels.

- ◆ Management ;
- ◆ Operations;
- ◆ Planning/Intelligence ;
- ◆ Logistics;
- ◆ Finance/Administration.

**SEMS deadlines** By December 1, 1995, all local governments within a county geographic area shall be organized into a single operational area and the county board of supervisors shall be responsible for its establishment.

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SEMS compliance regulations must be developed on or before December 1, 1995.

State agencies are required to use SEMS.

Local Governments must use SEMS by December 1, 1996, in order to be eligible for state funding of their personnel related costs under state disaster assistance programs.

**SEMS components**        The SEMS will integrate several of the state's emergency response components:

- ◆ The Incident Command System (ICS), the nationally used standardized emergency management system for field level response;
- ◆ Multi-agency or inter-agency coordination;
- ◆ Mutual aid;
- ◆ Operational Areas;
- ◆ A common EOC structure compatible with ICS (Management, Operations, Planning/Intelligence, Logistics, and Finance/Administration).

**Put in emergency plans:**        The following items should be reflected in emergency plans and procedures to conform with the SEMS as described in Section 8607 of the Emergency Services Act.

- ◆ Review documents that provide the legal basis for emergency planning for their conformance to SEMS requirements, and modify as required.
- ◆ Include "official" recognition that the agency or jurisdiction has adopted SEMS. This could be in a letter of promulgation, a resolution, or ordinance.
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Reference documentation indicating participation in, or establishment of, the Operational Area.

- ◆ Provide a description of tasks associated with each SEMS function (i.e., Management, Operations, Logistics, Plans/Intelligence, Finance/Administration).
- ◆ Include a basic SEMS organizational chart and description (in matrix format) of what agencies could perform each of the five SEMS functions.
- ◆ Describe the coordination links between your adjacent SEMS levels (field, local, operational area, region, and state).
- ◆ Provide a fundamental checklist for each of the five SEMS functions.

## SEMS

### FIVE SEMS LEVELS

The five SEMS organizational/response levels are described briefly below. The levels are activated as needed for an emergency.

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
<b>Field response level</b>	The field response level is where emergency response personnel and resources, under the command of an appropriate authority, carry out tactical decisions and activities in direct response to an incident or threat. SEMS regulations require the use of ICS at the field response level of an incident.
<b>Local government level</b>	Local governments include cities, counties, and special districts. Local governments manage and coordinate the overall emergency response and recovery activities within their jurisdiction.  Local governments are required to use SEMS when their emergency operations center is activated or a local emergency is declared or proclaimed in order to be eligible for state funding of response-related personnel costs.
<b>Operational Area</b>	Under SEMS, the operational area means an intermediate level of the state's emergency services organization which encompasses the county and all political subdivisions located within the county including special districts.  The operational area manages and/or coordinates information, resources, and priorities among local governments within the operational area, and serves as the coordination and communication link between the local government and the regional level.  While an operational area always encompasses the entire county area, it does not necessarily mean that the county government manages and coordinates the response and recovery activities within the county.  The decision on organization and structure within the operational area is made by the governing bodies of the county and the political subdivisions within the county.
<b>Regional</b>	Because of its size and geography, the state has been divided into three administrative and six mutual aid regions. The purpose of a mutual aid region is to provide for more effective application and coordination of

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LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
	mutual aid and other emergency related activities.  In SEMS, the administrative regional level manages and coordinates information and resources among operational areas within the mutual aid region, and also between the operational areas and the state level. The regional level also coordinates overall state agency support for emergency response activities within the region.
<b>State</b>	The state level of SEMS manages state resources in response to the emergency needs of the other levels, and coordinates mutual aid among the mutual aid regions and between the regional level and state level. The state level also serves as the coordination and communication link between the state and the federal disaster response system.

### INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM (ICS)

**Purpose:** ICS was originally developed by the fire services to provide a standard system for managing emergencies. ICS provides a common organizational framework within which agencies can work collectively at the scene of an emergency.

**Functions:** There are five primary functions within the ICS management structure. Each of these is important, and will have a role in any incident.

- ◆ Command;
- ◆ Operations;
- ◆ Planning/intelligence;
- ◆ Logistics; and
- ◆ Finance/Administration.

<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
Command	Command is the action taken to direct, order or control resources by virtue of some explicit legal, agency, or delegated authority.  The on-scene command of an incident or an event is carried out by the Incident Commander who is commonly referred to as the IC.
Operations	responsible for the coordinated tactical response directly applicable to, or in support of the mission(s) in accordance with the Incident Action Plan
Planning/ Intelligence	In ICS, the function of Planning can also be called Planning/Intelligence.  Responsible for the collection, evaluation, and documentation of information about the development of the incident and the status of resources.
Logistics	responsible for providing facilities, services, personnel, equipment, and materials in support of the incident.
Finance/ Administration	responsible for all financial and cost analysis aspects of the incident, and for any administrative aspects not handled by the other functions.

**REFERENCES**

- ◆ Standardized Emergency Management System Guidelines, Office of Emergency Services, March 1995