

SERT ESF8 Planning Section, Situation Unit Standard Operation Guidelines

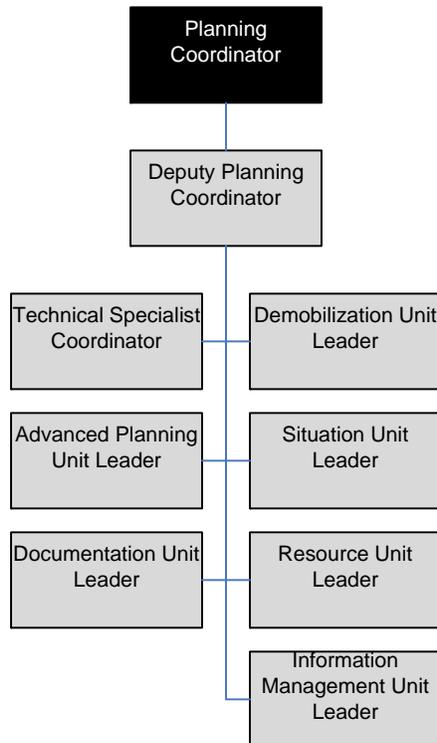
Situation Unit Responsibilities

The State Emergency Response Team (SERT), Emergency Support Function 8 (Public Health & Medical) uses the Incident Command System principles and practices to coordinate support for incidents for which the SERT is activated. The State ESF-8 Planning Section is responsible for conduct of ESF8's planning activities during an **unscheduled incident** or **planned event**. See Figure 1 below for Planning Section Organization. Within the Planning Section, the Situation Unit is responsible for the collection, validation, analysis, and dissemination of information in narrative and graphic portrayals for the purposes of:

- Describing the current situation as it evolves,
- Developing and advising the Planning Section Coordinator regarding Essential Elements of Information (EEI) that might be necessary in planning efforts.
- Monitoring actions taken by ESF8 partners and other SERT members and affiliates
- Predicting possible impacts of future conditions and actions on operations as they may affect the overall mission.

While portraying the current situation, the Situation Unit must continually assess potential future requirements and advise the Planning Section Coordinator, thus supporting the ESF 8 Emergency Coordinating Officer and SERT.

Figure 1. Planning Section Organization



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Situation Unit Coordination

The Planning Section organization will expand and contract with the duration, type, and complexity of the incident or event for which it is activated. In a long duration or complex incident, the Planning Section will typically be organized as shown in Figure 1 on previous page.

The Situation Unit is activated by the ESF8 Planning Coordinator; the Situation Unit Leader is accountable to the Coordinator. The Situation Unit coordinates information exchange with all ESF8 Sections and partners. Situation Unit composition will be determined by the needs of the ESF 8 Command and General Staff based on the incident or event. In limited or short-duration incidents or events when not all of the Planning units are activated, the Planning Coordinator may allocate some of the responsibilities normally assigned to the other Planning units identified below, to the Situation Unit.

The Advanced Planning Unit is responsible for identifying potential consequences planning requirements for 3-7 operational periods into the future. The Advance Planning Unit uses Situation Unit resources to accomplish its planning goals. The Advance Planning Unit's outputs are used by the Situation Unit to support short term forecasting.

The Resource Unit compiles the status of requests for deployment of staff, teams, and materiel, and estimates resource needs for operations. The Resource Unit's outputs are used by the Situation Unit to describe resource deployments and update status updates on the Incident Action Plan objectives.

The Documentation Unit maintains accurate and complete incident files including a record of the key steps taken in response to the incident. Documentation Unit activities include

- Filing, maintaining, and storing incident files for legal, analytical, and historical and after action report purposes.
- Distributing documents to ESF8 Command and General Staff as needed.
- Providing duplication services to incident personnel.
- Providing electronic and hard copies of the Logs, Incident Action Plan (IAPs), Situation Reports (Sit Reps), key emails, and EM Constellation mission requests to ESF8 staff.

The Information Management Unit is responsible for internal and external communications related to the event. Public information is coordinated through Emergency Support Function 14 within the State Emergency Response Team. The Situation Unit works with the Information Management Unit providing situational awareness data to

- meet risk communication needs
- provide information to senior leaders and elected officials
- monitor rumors, and to assist in rumor confirmation or denial.

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Situation Unit Organization

The Situation Unit organization is scalable based on the SERT's level of activation. See Figure 2 Situation Unit Organization.

At SERT Activation Level 2, the Situation Unit Leader will be activated. The Situation Unit Leader may activate additional unit positions as required by the event. The Reporting Unit Leader and Information Triage Analyst may be activated first to establish the work flow for the unit. Additional analysts and technical specialists will be activated to complete the work of the unit as the event evolves. A Liaison Officer may be appointed and activated if the ESF8 Liaison Officer and/or Deputy Planning Coordinator are overwhelmed by duties.

As the response to the incident increases in scope and duration, and the SERT response elevates to Level 1, the Situation Unit leader may recommend activation of an entire Situation Unit Team and/or additional analysts. Technical specialists may be consulted as needed, returning to their normal work assignments when finished. Additional analysts may be requested to support the following responsibilities:

- Ad Hoc Reporting
- Information Triage
- Situation Log Recorder
- Research
- Area of Operations Analysis
- Health Care Systems Analysis
- Health Care Responder Analysis
- Hazard Analysis
- Forecasting
- Population Analysis
- Rumor Control and Social Media Monitoring

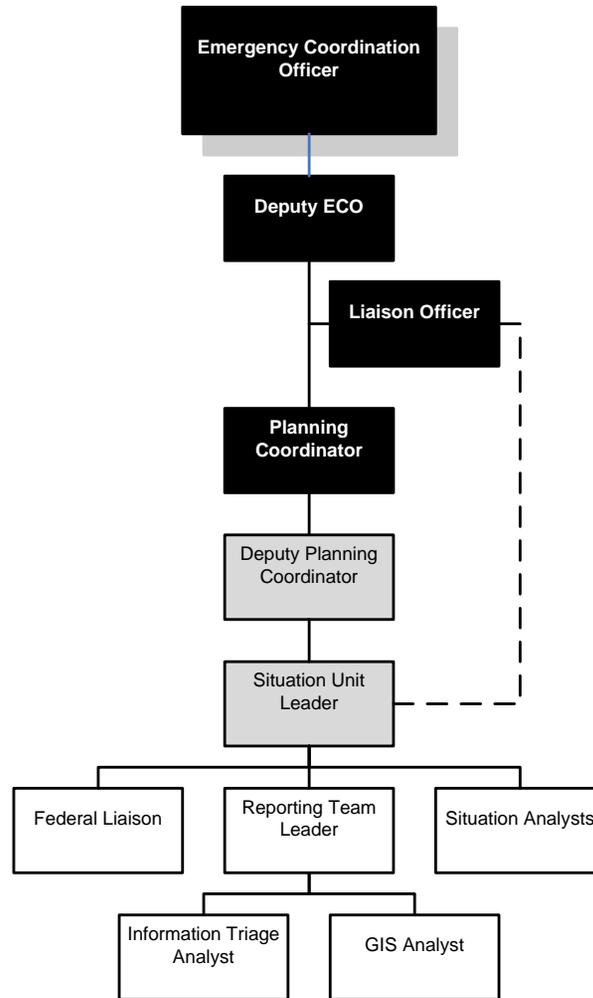
In support of intensive operation the Situation Unit may be operational for up to 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Generally shifts last 12 hours, but may be eight hours apiece (two or three shifts per day). ***When there are multiple shifts, the Situation Unit Leader and all Team Leaders are responsible for briefing their incoming counterparts on previous shift events, current operations and status, and pending actions.*** General staff positions roles and responsibilities are stated below. See Job Action Sheets for specific duty requirements.

The Situation Unit Leader is activated by and reports to the Planning Section Coordinator or Deputy Planning Coordinator and supervises the Situation Unit. The Situation Unit Leader is responsible for:

- Directing and managing Situation Unit staff, including requesting and assigning staff, and establishing shift schedules.
- Supervising all data gathering and analytical work related to situation status
- Establishing a regular Situation Unit report cycle.
- Directing efforts to develop and deliver requested ad hoc reports.
- Directing preparation of Situation Unit After Action Reports/Implementation Plans.
- Implementing unit improvement plans, including revision of this SOG (as necessary), staff training and exercising, and staff recruitment as necessary.
- Ensuring unit viability for future events.

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Activation Sequencing		
Core Staff	Initial Activation at Level 2 SERT	Activated as Needed

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The Situation Unit leader submits requests to the Planning Section Coordinator or designee for additional staffing pursuant to Planning Section SOP. Staffing requests should be developed for future operational periods, wherever possible, to provide as much notice as possible to staff sought, as well as their supervisors.

The SEOC Liaison Officer (LNO), when designated and activated, reports to the Situation Unit Leader. The LNO is responsible for acquiring and informally disseminating current operational information through the ESF 8 structure. The LNO acts as a courier to receive and communicate non-routine (*Ad Hoc*) requests for situational data, information, and status updates to and from the Situation Unit Leader. It is most likely that the LNO will shuttle physically and electronically between the SEOC and the location in which the main body of the Situation Unit is working.

The Reporting Team

The Reporting Team Leader supervises the Reporting Team, and is responsible for the management of information, data, and requests for information and all Situation Unit deliverables. See Situation Unit deliverables page 7. The Information Triage Analyst and GIS Technical Specialists report to the Reporting Team Leader.

The Situation Report Specialist prepares the Situation Report in accordance with the input, format, and schedule specified by the Situation Unit Leader.

The Information Triage Analyst reviews and prioritizes situational awareness information from Emergency Management Constellation requests, the ESF 8 Planning Mailbox, and other incoming information sources, for input into the Situation Report, *ad hoc* reports, and for distribution to appropriate Situation Unit staff.

Ad Hoc Reporting Analyst(s) receive and prioritize requests for non-routine information received from the Situation Unit Leader or LNO. If there is more than one Ad Hoc Reporting Analyst working on a shift, the Situation Unit Leader will designate one Analyst to take the lead. The Analyst works with the Information Triage Analyst, other Situation Unit Teams, and as necessary, Department of Health Divisions to obtain the requested information. The format for the *ad hoc* information response will depend upon the request. All formal and informal requests for *ad hoc* information and the responses to these requests will be documented in the Situation Log.

The Situation Log Recorder ensures that all documents and pertinent verbal communications that are received and distributed by the Situation Unit are recorded in the Situation Log on ICS Form 214. The Situation Unit Recorder works with the Documentation Unit to ensure the hard copy and electronic preservation of Logs and log entry documents.

Analysis Teams

Based on the requirements of the event the Situation Unit Leader will establish Analysis Teams to gather, compile, validate, analyze and format information necessary to inform situational awareness. This includes providing data for the Situation Report, *ad hoc* data requests and forecasting future impacts.

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Specific types of analysis may include:

- Hazard Analysis
- Area of Operations (AO) Analysis
- Healthcare System and Responder Analysis
- Vulnerable Population Analysis
- Rumor Control and Social Media Analysis

Federal Situation Liaison may be assigned by the Department of Health and Human Services during events with the potential for federal response. The position serves as a liaison to the federal planning structure to support a federal/state common operating picture and situational awareness for the event.

Situation Unit Work Area

The Planning Section Coordinator is expected to assign the Situation Unit work area which meets the needs of the unit as closely as possible given the available work environment and incident. The Situation Unit Leader will convey unmet space and equipment needs to the Planning Section Coordinator.

Situational Awareness

The Situation Unit is the focal point for information collection, analysis, and dissemination. The effective operations of the SERT ESF8 organization depends on the shared knowledge of the current situation and potential future impacts referred to as situational awareness. Public health and medical situational awareness is organized into three categories of impacts or potential impacts:

- Population
- Healthcare System
- Public Health and Medical Responders

The Situation Unit must aggressively harvest information from its ESF8 partners and others, validate the accuracy of the information, and widely share the compilation and analysis of this information in a way that supports incident decision making.

Situational awareness is the compilation and analysis of information on the impact or potential impact of a specific hazard, the vulnerabilities within the area of impact, the availability of resources within the area of impact and surrounding areas of support, the description of actions taken to date, description of deploying resources and actions scheduled to be taken in the near future, and prediction of future needs.

Essential Elements of Information (EEI)

Seven Target Capability incident categories have been established: Storms (Hurricanes and Tropical), Tornado and Severe Weather, Wildfires, Mass Trauma/Terrorism, Biological

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Outbreaks/Bioterrorism, Chemical Releases/Chemical Terrorism, and Radiological Releases/Radiological Dispersal Devices. These are found in attachments 5 through 11.

Situational Awareness may begin with the development of essential elements of information (EEI) about an event category. These EEI are a starting point for acquiring data at the beginning of the first operational period. Not all EEI will be relevant to a particular incident or event. The Planning Section Coordinator and Situation Unit Leader will confer early in the response cycle to identify relevant EEI for the upcoming operational period. EEI will evolve and change based on the incident or event, operational responses, and decisions. EEI may be provided to other units for their planning consideration as determined by the Planning Section Coordinator.

The Situation Unit Leader will evaluate EEI data sources and the timing of data input and data update or refresh periods. The Situation Unit will provide an analysis of EEI data as input into Ad Hoc reports, the Situation Report, and interim briefing requirements. EEI data analysis provided in these reports and briefings may influence ESF 8 ECO decisions that will be reflected in subsequent Incident Action Plans. The IAP Objectives, if revised, will be the basis for more evolving EEI for the following operational period.

Situation Unit Deliverables

All Situation Unit reports and other fact based deliverables are expected to be based on timelines set by the Planning Section Coordinator for the incident or event.

The Situation Unit is responsible for developing and disseminating the following deliverables during each operational period:

- Situation Report (SitRep)
- Displays of key indicators
- Incident or event maps for Incident Action Plan
- Standard Reports
- Ad Hoc Reports
- Forecasting of contingencies for 2-3 operational periods into the future, developed in concert with the Advanced Planning Unit Leader.

Analysts prepare standard or Ad Hoc reports which contain key indicators details. GIS Technical Specialists convert data reports into maps and charts designed to visually boost rapid understanding for decision-makers.

The Reporting Unit Leader has primary responsibility for compilation of routine Situation Reports (SitReps). Depending on the scope of the event, the Reporting Unit Leader may assign responsibility for creation of the report to other positions within the Reporting Team. These reports are typically prepared twice daily, as of 0600 and 1600. The reports should be published/disseminated within 90 minutes of the closure time. The Planning Section Coordinator may set a different schedule. Upon completion, the Reporting Unit Leader provides the SitRep to the Situation Unit Leader before it is further transmitted to the Planning Section Coordinator. SitRep information and analyses are inputs for the Planning Section Coordinator to develop Incident Action Plan Objectives (IAP) and Areas of Operations (AOs). Depending on the event, AOs may be characterized as Pre-response, Response, and Recovery.

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Staff with responsibilities for SitRep preparation will schedule their work to accommodate the deadlines.

Situation Unit Documentation

It is important to retain all work documents in both hard copy and electronic version in the event of power failures or network outages. The Situation Log Recorder will archive hard copies of all relevant documents, post them in the incident log and file electronic copies in the incident log folder and Situation Unit SharePoint site designated for each operational period. Integration of Situation Unit documentation with the overall ESF8 documents management structure is the responsibility of the Documentation Unit.

Situation Unit Measurement of Success

The Situation Unit should be the “go to” place for current information. The successful Situation Unit provides information that supports decision making by the ESF 8 Emergency Coordinating Officer, the Planning Section Coordinator, and the Logistics Coordinator. This information must be available in a time frame and format that is useful for decision making.

The Situation Unit Leader should evaluate staff performance each operational period, and seek input from the Planning Section Coordinator and Logistics Section Coordinator. These evaluations will be based on document timeliness, quality of content (information and its analyses), and dissemination. At the end of the incident or event, the Situation Unit Leader provides input, including lessons learned, to the Planning Section Coordinator for incorporation into After Action Reports and Improvement Plans.

Attachments

1. Forms
2. Situation Unit Job Action Sheets
3. Standard Reports and Templates
4. Reports Schedule
5. Key Data Sets and Systems
6. Essential Elements of Information

References

1. Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)
2. CEMP Appendix 8 (ESF 8 Health and Medical)
3. ESF 8 Standard Operating Procedures
4. ESF 8 Communications Procedures