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# Guidelines for Coordinating Flood Emergency Operations

Governor's Executive Order W-156-97

Approved by the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) Advisory Board on November 21, 1997

Completed in compliance with the Flood Emergency Action Team (FEAT): Initiative Number 1

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The contents of this document have not been changed from the original document;  
however, the guidelines have been reformatted to meet the  
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 508 standards.

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# 1. Purpose

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These guidelines are required in the Governor’s Executive Order W-156-97, item 1, to “integrate local agencies that maintain levees and flood control structures into the overall emergency response organization”.

# 2. Concept of Operations

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## General

All levels of government share responsibility for flood fighting. Local government agencies, including special districts, state agencies and federal agencies all have specific responsibilities during a flood fight. The necessity to initiate a flood fight may result from overflow of a natural waterway, overflow of a waterway confined by levees, rising lake waters, dam overtopping, failure of a levee, or other circumstances. Flood fighting is initiated when a threat to life and property exists. Emergency response to flood threats will be conducted using the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). SEMS includes the Incident Command System (ICS), mutual aid, multi/inter-agency coordination and the operational area concept. There are five levels to the SEMS hierarchy: field, local, operational area, regional and state.

## Local

Local agencies have primary authority for both maintenance of levees and flood fighting. Levee maintenance is provided by public levee districts, local government entities, private levee owners, and in some cases the State of California Department of Water Resources.

Collectively these agencies are referred to as Levee Maintaining Agency or LMAs. Some levees are not maintained by private or public agencies. Flood fighting on levees is the responsibility of the LMA, which will assume the role of Incident Commander in most circumstances. If a flood fight exceeds the capability of the LMA or if communities are threatened, the responsible city or county will assist with the flood fight with support from all other SEMS levels.

## State

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is the lead state agency for flood fight assistance. Section 128(a) of the California Water Code authorizes DWR in times of storms or floods to take any remedial measures necessary to avert, alleviate, repair, or restore damage or destruction to property having a public or state interest. DWR will be the incident commander where they have LMA responsibility.

DWR is the state’s liaison to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Upon request, DWR will provide technical advice on flood fighting. DWR technical assistance may be requested directly from DWR or through the local emergency manager. (See below for requesting other state assistance such as, personnel,

equipment, and materials.)

### **Federal**

USACE has primary federal authority for assisting states with flood fight efforts that meet the criteria established by Public Law 84-99. DWR through Memorandum of Understanding coordinates access to USACE for the state. USACE will have incident command authority for those incidents they determine meet established criteria.

## **3. Emergency Operations**

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### **Field**

In a flood fight, as in other emergencies, the field level is responsible .

### **Command**

For commanding the emergency response personnel and resources necessary to carry out tactical decisions and activities in direct response to the flood threat. Typically, the LMA will be the Incident Commander for a flood fight. As levee problems progress to a level where they pose a potential threat to life and property, the Incident Commander needs to inform the jurisdictional emergency manager. As a flood fight expands other agencies that have functional or geographic responsibilities, for example a local sheriff department for evacuations may join with the LMA to form a unified command. The agencies that participate in a unified command do not relinquish their jurisdictional authorities. Through multi/inter-agency coordination. They develop a single coordinated action plan for the agreed operational period.

### **Local**

The city or county emergency manager will activate their EOC as deemed necessary to manage and coordinate resources to support the Incident Command or Unified Command and the overall emergency response within their jurisdictional boundaries.

### **Op. Area**

The operational area may be activated to manage and/or coordinate information, resources, and priorities among local governments within the operational area and serves as the coordination and communication link between the local government level and the regional level. SEMS requires the activation of the operational area if one or more jurisdictions have activated their EOCs, request the activation of the operational area, and have proclaimed a local emergency.

If the operational area (OA) EOC is activated, OES and DWR will provide staff liaison to the extent possible for coordination of emergency operations and flood fight operations respectively.

## Region

If an OA EOC is activated the OES Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC) will be activated to the level necessary to coordinate emergency operations and respond to requests for resources and mutual aid. The REOC will coordinate information and resources among OAs and provide a point of liaison to Federal agencies, including USACE through the DWR liaison in the REOC. DWR will provide liaison to each activated REOC to assist in coordination of flood fight activities

## State

When a REOC is activated, the SOC will be activated to support the region with state agency resources, i.e., CDF, CCC, to coordinate statewide mutual aid and federal aid.

## DWR Flood

When a severe storm pattern or other flood potential develops, the DWR's **Operations Flood Operations Center** is activated. The FOC is primary center for **Center (FOC)** coordination of DWR's overall flood fight assistance and coordinates the state's requests to USACE.

## 4. Resource Acquisition

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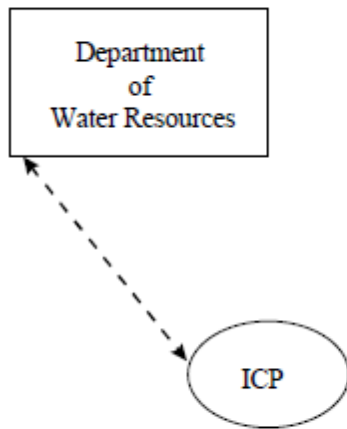
In all circumstances, the resources necessary to continue a flood fight and protect lives and property will be requested and coordinated through the SEMS system. In addition, each level of SEMS is responsible for keeping the next level informed of essential information regarding the development and status of the flood fight.

LMAs are expected to stockpile flood fight resources prior to the flood season. If an LMA exhausts and cannot obtain additional flood resources they should request additional resources from their local jurisdiction.

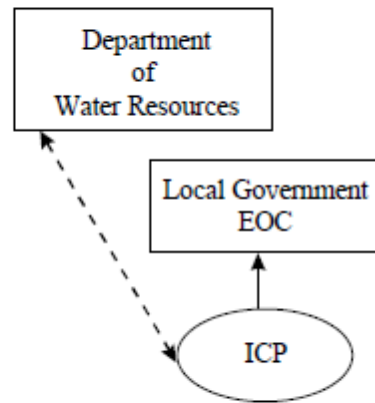
If a city or county cannot provide the needed resources, they should request assistance from the operational area. The OA will provide flood fighting resources to the LMA, to the extent possible, from within the OA, i.e., from county, cities and special districts.

In the event the OA cannot adequately support the flood fight, state resources shall be requested through the Regional Operations Center (REOC). OES through the REOC may task a state agency to provide the resources to the OA. The following diagrams illustrate the SEMS hierarchy and the resources acquisition process. Illustrations progress from the simplest incident to one involving activation of the Operational Area, and, as required under SEMS, the REOC:

**Single Incident Not Requiring EOC Activation**

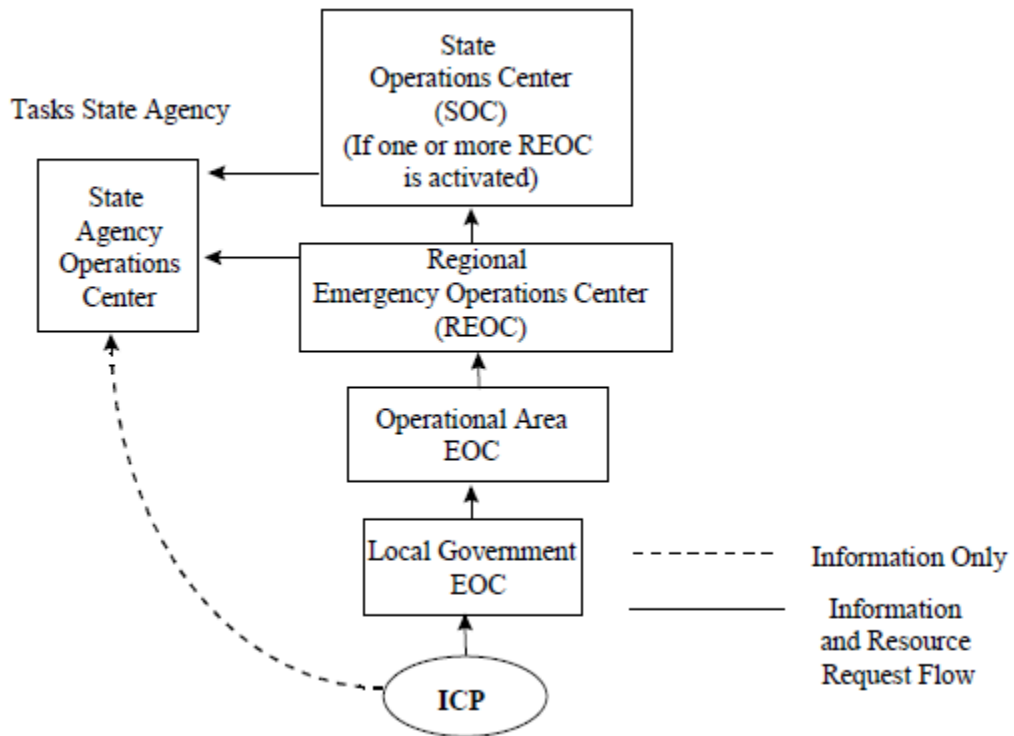


**Single Incident Requiring EOC Activation**



—————> Information and Resource Flow  
 <-----> Information Flow Only

**Single Incident Requiring Operational Area EOC Activation**



## 5. Financing Flood Emergency Operations

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Financing and reimbursement for flood fight operations are governed by the Emergency Services Act and other applicable State and federal laws, which are not altered by this section. This section clarifies which agency or governmental level assumes fiscal responsibility at each successive level of disaster. Agencies participating in flood fight may establish agreements before or during the event in the context of a Unified Command to allocate fiscal responsibility for the flood fight. Fiscal agreements should be documented if they are different from this section.

If there is an LMA, it has primary authority and fiscal responsibility for the flood fight within its jurisdiction. If there is no LMA, local government (typically the city or county responsible for emergency management) is responsible for all aspects of the flood fight necessary to protect the public including costs.

If an LMA or local government determines that it will exhaust its on-hand resources and is no longer capable of procuring its own resources for the purposes of maintaining the flood fight, or it has already exhausted its resources, it may request assistance from the next higher SEMS level. At this point, the jurisdiction providing the resource is fiscally responsible for the costs necessary to support the flood fight and to augment the activities of the LMA.

If the Governor determines that the city or county is no longer able to support the flood fight with its own resources, and conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property exists, he/she may declare a state of emergency. State agency assistance is then provided to the requesting jurisdiction without the expectation of reimbursement.

As the level of disaster progresses, the fiscal responsibility of each level of government will remain intact even as succeeding levels of government join the Unified Command and assume additional flood fight activities and fiscal responsibilities. To ensure fiscal accountability, it is assumed for the purposes of this document that an agency requesting resources assumes the responsibility for paying for those resources, unless otherwise agreed. If mutual aid is used, reimbursement will be governed by the applicable mutual aid agreement. This does not limit an individual agency or Jurisdiction's discretion or ability to request and obtain reimbursement of emergency response costs that may be eligible under State and federal disaster assistance programs.



## 6. Authorities

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### State

**Government Code Section 8607(d)**, all state agencies are required to use the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) to coordinate multiple jurisdiction or multiple agency emergency and disaster operations.

**Government Code Section 8607(e)**, requires a local agency to use SEMS in order to be eligible for reimbursement of personnel-related response costs.

**California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Section 2402(I)**, local government includes most local agencies and special districts as defined by CCR Title 19, Section 2900(y)

**CCR, Title 19, Section 2403**, there are five levels of the SEMS organization. The field response level “commands emergency response personnel and resources” to carry out “tactical decisions and activities in direct response to an incident or threat.” The local government level manages and coordinates the overall emergency response and recovery activities within its jurisdiction. The operational area level “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 level and the regional level.”

**CCR, Title 19, Section 2405**, emergency response agencies operating at the field response level shall use the Incident Command System, incorporating the functions, principles and components of ICS.

**CCR, Title 19, Section 2402**, emergency response agencies include “any organization responding to an emergency. ”

**CCR, Title 19, Section 2407(c)**, “communications and coordination shall be established between a local government EOC, when activated, and any state or local emergency response agency having jurisdiction at an incident occurring within a local government’s boundaries.”

**CCR Title 19, Section 2407(d)**, requires local government to “use multi-agency or inter-agency coordination to facilitate decisions for overall local government level emergency response activities.”

**Government Code Section 8610**, allows local governments to develop plans agreements, ordinances, resolutions, and regulations for dealing with local emergencies that can be adequately dealt with locally and to carry out voluntary mutual aid.

**Government Code Section 8616**, during a state of emergency, “outside aid” to a local government shall be rendered in accordance with approved emergency plans.

**Government Code Section 8618**, unless otherwise expressly provided by the parties, the responsible local official in whose jurisdiction an incident requires mutual aid “shall remain in charge at such incident, including the direction of personnel and equipment provided him through mutual aid.”

**Government Code Section 8632**, State agencies may provide mutual aid to assist political subdivisions during a local emergency in accordance with established plans or agreements, or at the direction of the Governor.

**Government Code Section 8596**, authorizes state agencies and employees to assist in disposal of debris on private property.

**Government Code Section 8617**, provides for the use of mutual aid in periods other than a state of emergency or a local emergency.

**CCR Title 19**, “special districts” is defined as any unit of local government (other than a city, county, or city and county) with authority or responsibility to own, operate or maintain a project, including specified joint powers authorities.

**Water Code Sections 8370 and 12642**, assign responsibility for maintaining and operating the Sacramento River Flood Control Project and the San Joaquin River Flood Control Systems, and other federal projects within their boundaries to local levee maintaining districts, counties, cities and other public agencies.

**Water Code Section 12878.1**, authorizes DWR to maintain and operate units or portions of flood control projects in the Sacramento or San Joaquin Valleys that are within the DWR supervised maintenance areas.

**Water Code Section 128(a)**, authorizes DWR in times of storms or floods to take any remedial measures necessary to avert, alleviate, repair, or restore damage or destruction to property having a public or state interest.

**Water Code Section 8010**, a city may incur indebtedness up to 6% of assessed valuation to protect itself from floods and drain the city.

**Water Code Section 8361**, DWR maintains certain specified features of the Sacramento River Flood Control Project, including many miles of levees and all weirs and flood relief structures.

**Water Code Section 8370**, LMAs must maintain and operate the Sacramento River Flood Control Project within their jurisdictions, except facilities designated in Section 8361 or designated by federal law.

**Water Code Section 8715**, Any levee in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Drainage District (much of the lower part of the Central Valley floor between Fresno and Chico) may be protected or strengthened by anyone if it is in danger of flood damage.

**Water Code Section 12642**, When the federal government does not maintain and operate federally authorized projects, the affected county, city, State agency or public district must do it.

## **Federal**

**Public Law 84-99**, authorizes the Corps of Engineers, at the request of the Governor to conduct emergency flood fight when they determine that an immediate danger to life or property exists and the local and state resources are insufficient for the task.

***Note: Contact DWR Flood Operations Center at (916) 574-2611 for more detailed flood operations information.***