

CARIBBEAN DISASTER EMERGENCY RESPONSE AGENCY



STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURES

GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTERS

PREPARED BY: LT COL STACEY THOMPSON BSc(Hons) Eng, MSc
JAMAICA DEFENCE FORCE

DECEMBER 1993

PREFACE

This document is one of a series produced for CDERA by a team of regional consultants. The series comprises the following:

- . **Standing Operating Procedures: Guidelines for National Emergency Operating Centres.**
- . **Emergency Telecommunications Procedures Manual**
- . **Guidelines for a National Disaster Telecommunications Plan**

The documents were produced as part of the Regional Emergency Telecommunications Review Project funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The objectives of this project were:

- To develop and test regional emergency telecommunications plans
- To expose emergency managers, personnel from key response agencies, radio operators and national telecommunications officers to various elements of emergency operations procedures.
- To provide national disaster focal points with model Standard Operating Procedures and checklists from which national contingency plans can be formulated.

CDERA wishes to thank CIDA for funding the project. Special mention must be made of the cooperation and assistance rendered by the International Telecommunications Union, the Regional Security System and the Jamaica Defence Force.

We also thank the National Disaster Coordinators and Telecommunications Officers of CDERA's Participating States, Amateur Radio Operators, members of CDERA's Telecommunications Advisory Committee, personnel from several regional agencies and all those whose advice and comments helped ensure the successful completion of the documents.

CDERA also acknowledges the support of the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) in facilitating access to the project funds.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	1
1. PURPOSE OF THE STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) GUIDELINES	4
2. PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (NEOC)	4
3. PURPOSE OF STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPS)	4
4. CONCEPT OF DISASTER OPERATIONS	4
5. PHASES OF DISASTER	5
Alert phase	5
Response phase	5
Recovery phase	5
6. ORGANIZATION OF THE NEOC	6
Functional components	6
Executive	6
Operations	6
Public Information and Education	9
Job Descriptions	10
NEOC location and Layout	10
Executive Area	11
Operations Room	11
Communications Room	11
Security Area	11
Rest Area	11
Briefing Room/Media Center	12
Kitchen/Food Storage Facilities	12
Training room	12
Wash rooms (male and female)	12
7. NEOC RESOURCES	12
8. COMMUNICATIONS	13
Disaster site to NEOC	13
Within the NEOC and to other EOCs	13
NEOC to Public	14
9. WARNING AND ALERTING SYSTEMS	14
Initial action	15
Subsequent action	16
10. ACTIVATING THE NEOC	16
During duty hours	16
Non duty hours	16
Twenty four hour operations	17
11. SECURITY AND SIGN-IN	17
12. MESSAGE CONTROL	17
Incoming messages	17
Radio messages	17
Telephone messages	19
Outgoing messages	19

13.	DAMAGE ASSESSMENT	19
14.	SITUATION REPORTS (SITREPS)	19
15.	DISPLAYS	20
	Problem Log	20
	Event Logs	20
	Damage Assessment Chart	20
	Country/County/Parish/City/Town Map	21
	Weather Map	21
	Planning Map	21
	Briefing Maps	21
	Medical Facilities Chart	21
	Shelter Facility Chart	21
	Law Enforcement Resources Chart	22
	Fire Resources Chart	22
	Transportation Resources Chart	22
	Other Displays	22
16.	BRIEFINGS AND CONFERENCES	23
17.	REPORTS	23
	NEOC Reporting	23
	After Action Reports	24
	OTHER TOPICS	24
	Stress management	24
	Managing Public Information	24
	Rumour Control	25
	Disaster Management vs Programmed Management	25
	Common Mistakes in NEOC Management	27
	GLOSSARY	28
	ANNEX A - NEOC JOB DESCRIPTIONS	
	Appendix 1 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF STATE (PM)	A-1
	Appendix 2 NATIONAL DISASTER COORDINATOR (NDC)	A-3
	Appendix 3 NEOC DIRECTOR	A-7
	Appendix 4 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION OFFICER (PIEO)	A-8
	Appendix 5 OPERATIONS OFFICER	A-11
	Appendix 6 ASSISTANT OPERATIONS OFFICER/EMERGENCY COORDINATOR	A-14
	Appendix 7 COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER	A-15
	Appendix 8 ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT OFFICER	A-17
	Appendix 9 LOGISTICS OFFICER	A-18
	Appendix 10 POLICE/PWD/TPT/MILITARY/FIRE/UTIL. REP	A-20
	Appendix 11 HEALTH REPRESENTATIVE	A-21
	Appendix 12 RADIO OPERATOR	A-23
	Appendix 13 PLOTTER	A-24
	Appendix 14 RUNNER/MESSENGER	A-25
	Appendix 15 RECEPTIONIST/TELEPHONE OPERATOR	A-26
	Appendix 16 JOURNAL CLERK	A-27
	Appendix 17 SENIOR STAFF CLERK	A-28

Appendix 17	SENIOR STAFF CLERK	A-28	
Appendix 18	OTHER CLERKS	A-29	
Appendix 19	DIVISIONAL COORDINATORS	A-30	
ANNEX B - NEOC LAYOUT			
Appendix 1	- OPERATIONS ROOM LAYOUT	B-1	
Appendix 2	- COMMUNICATIONS ROOM LAYOUT	B-2	
Appendix 3	- BASIC MEDIA CENTER AND BRIEFING ROOM	B-3	
ANNEX C - NEOC RESOURCE LIST			
Appendix 1	EQUIPMENT	C-1	
Appendix 2	SUPPLIES	C-3	
Appendix 3	STATIONERY	C-4	
Appendix 4	PREPOSITIONED DATA AND ANALYTICAL AIDS	C-6	
Appendix 5	FILES	C-8	
Appendix 6	MISCELLANEOUS FORMS	C-9	
Appendix 7	EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES FOR PUBLIC INFO CENTER	C-18	
ANNEX D - WARNING AND ALERTING DIAGRAM			D-1
ANNEX E - INITIAL EMERGENCY/DISASTER REPORT FORM			E-1
ANNEX F - NEOC ACTIVATION, SETUP AND DEACTIVATION			
Appendix 1	DISASTER NOTIFICATION TABLE	F-1	
Appendix 2	TELEPHONE FAN-OUT CHART	F-2	
Appendix 3	ALERT LIST	F-3	
Appendix 4	SAMPLE ACTIVATION CHECKLIST	F-4	
Appendix 5	SAMPLE SETUP CHECKLIST	F-5	
Appendix 6	SAMPLE DEACTIVATION CHECKLIST	F-6	
ANNEX G - NEOC MESSAGE CONTROL			
Appendix 1	INTERNAL MESSAGE FLOW DIAGRAM	G-1	
Appendix 2	MESSAGE FORM	G-2	
ANNEX H - DAMAGE ASSESSEMENT FORM			H-1
ANNEX J - SITREP FORMAT			J-1
ANNEX K - DISLAY LAYOUTS			
Appendix 1	PROBLEM LOG	K-1	
Appendix 2	MAIN EVENT LOG	K-2	
Appendix 3	SIGNIFICANT EVENT DISPLAY	K-3	
Appendix 4	DAMAGE ASSESSMENT CHART	K-4	
Appendix 5	MEDICAL FACILITIES CHART	K-5	
Appendix 6	CONGREGATE CARE FACILITY CHART	K-6	
Appendix 7	LAW ENFORCEMENT RESOURCES CHART	K-7	
Appendix 8	FIRE RESOURCES CHART	K-8	
Appendix 9	TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES CHART	K-9	
ANNEX L - AFTER ACTION REPORT			L-1

1. PURPOSE OF THE STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) GUIDELINES

These guidelines are meant to provide a standard methodology for the organization and management of National Emergency Operations Centers (NEOCs) throughout the Caribbean region. It is therefore expected that National Disaster Coordinators (NDCs) of individual states will, using this document as a guide, write their own NEOC SOPs. This should be done by simple modification to the guidelines where necessary, in order to reflect conditions peculiar to that state.

It must be stressed that these guidelines represent an ideal 'target system', which will not be immediately feasible in most cases, but one which should be consistently pursued.

2. PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (NEOC)

To provide centralized coordination and control of emergency/disaster response and relief operations on a 24 hour-per-day basis if necessary.

3. PURPOSE OF STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPS)

- a. To organize the NEOC for emergency/disaster operations.
- b. To specify duties and responsibilities for personnel in the NEOC during emergency/disaster operations.
- c. To establish procedures for emergency/disaster operations to fulfill responsibilities assigned by the Chief Executive of the state to the office of the NDC.

4. CONCEPT OF DISASTER OPERATIONS

The chief executive (Prime Minister, Governor, etc) of the state will direct disaster operations through the NEOC

The National Disaster Coordinator (NDC) will maintain the NEOC through the Director, by ensuring that all policy decisions made by the executive body are properly executed

When, in the judgement of the NDC, an emergency situation is of such gravity and magnitude as to require centralized coordination and control of disaster response and relief operations, he/she will request that representatives from appropriate Government and Volunteer relief organizations report to the NEOC to coordinate the disaster operations of their respective disaster functions under the direction of a designated Director. The NDC may additionally perform the duties of NEOC Director in the absence of a dedicated Director.

If the situation warrants, as an extension of the NEOC, Divisional EOC's (DEOCs) may be established in the affected area or at such other locations as may be designated and will operate under the overall direction of the divisional director. Appropriate Government and volunteer relief and response organizations will be requested to send representatives to the DEOCs to assist in the coordination of disaster relief and response operations within the divisions.

It should be noted that since DEOCs often represent counties or parishes of larger countries, as well as a member of a twin Island state, many Islands, by virtue of their size, will not require this facility.

This guide deals with the role of the emergency operations center, its physical layout, personnel, responsibilities, resources and its procedures for presenting a coordinated response to a crisis. While some facilities may vary in size or composition, the major components should be constant.

5. PHASES OF DISASTER

There are three phases of a disaster.

a. Alert phase

Services/authorities will be placed on an alert when a disaster is imminent, suspected or possible.

b. Response phase

Services/authorities are committed to combatting a disaster and its effects, either directly or indirectly.

c. Recovery phase

A disaster is over and disaster response organizations have completed their tasks. Clean up and debris removal have commenced, essential services and life-line systems are restored, and efforts are made to return a community to normality.

Some disasters such as earthquakes and chemical explosions are designated 'No Warning' disasters and will understandably not have an alert phase.

6. ORGANIZATION OF THE NEOC

The NEOC is divided into three basic functional areas.

a. Functional components

- Executive
- Operations
- Public Information and Education

A model of the NEOC is shown overleaf.

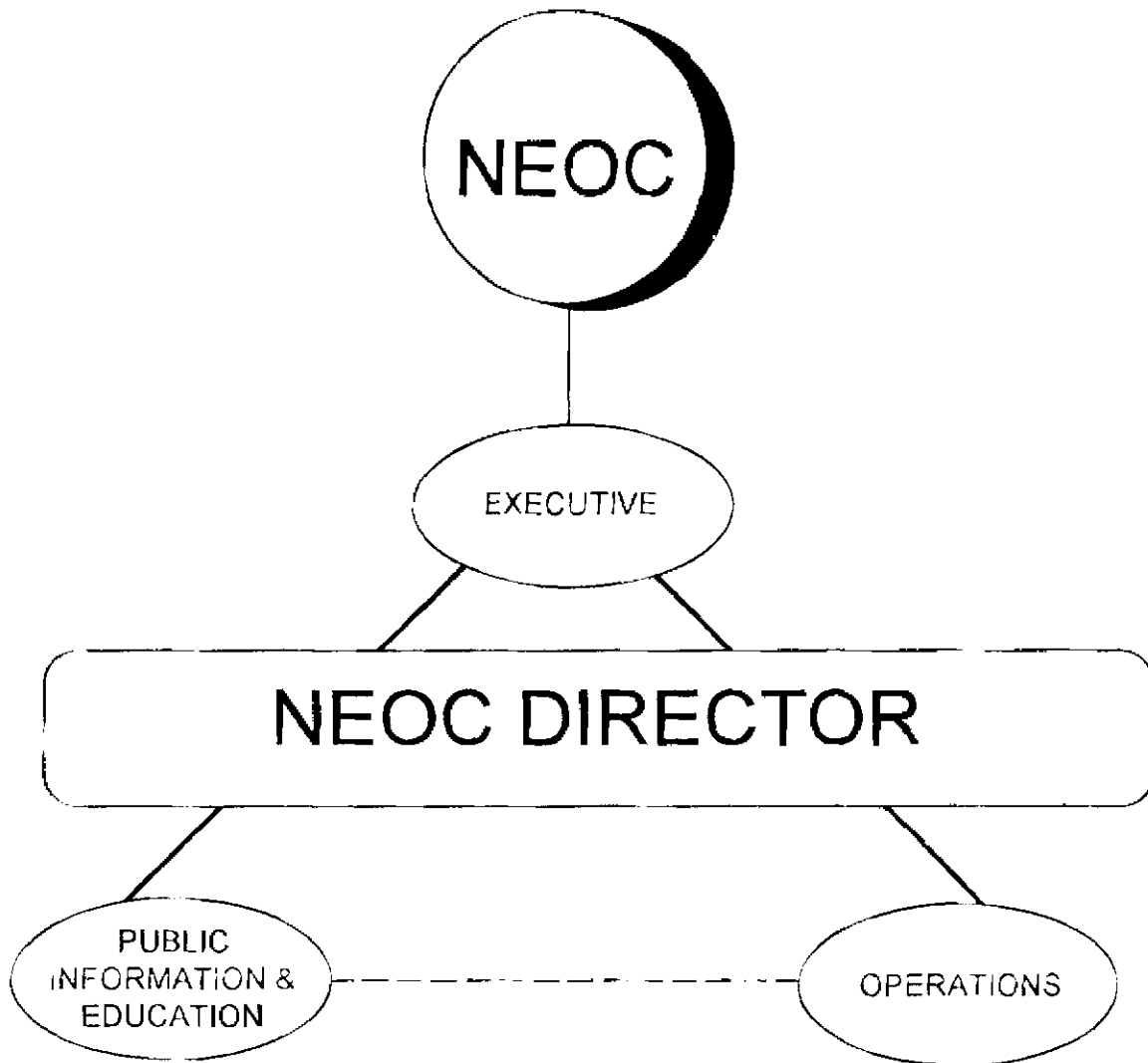
b. Executive

The executive group exercises overall direction and control of disaster operations. This group makes decisions, whether strategic or policy, which are beyond the authority of the NEOC director, and comprises:

- The Prime Minister (or other Chief Executive of States (CES))
- The NDC
- A Public Information Officer
- Military Liaison Officer
- Telecommunications Coordinator
- Procurement Officer
- CDRU Coordinating Officer (if present)
- Ministers designated by the CES whom he/she deems necessary to assist in the policy and decision making process for the particular disaster at hand.

c. Operations

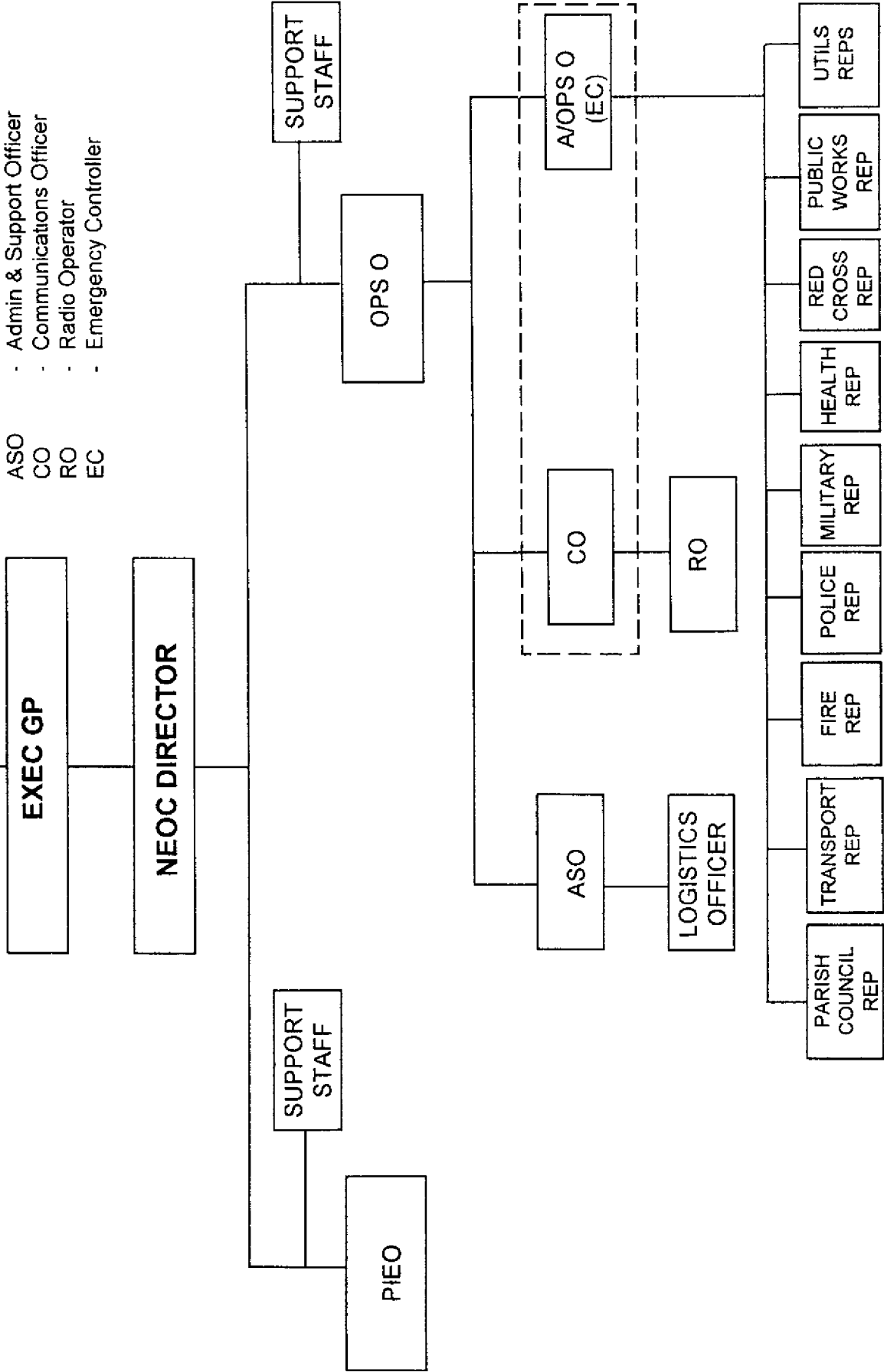
The Operations group coordinates the emergency/disaster response and relief efforts and activities as directed by the NEOC Director through the Operations Officer as shown in the diagram on Page 8. The Operations group functions under the direction of the Operations Officer, who may be the deputy NEOC Director, the Director, or the NDC himself, under certain circumstances. The Communications Officer will often act as Assistant Operations Officer/Emergency Coordinator, depending on the severity of the emergency and the availability of staff. The operations group is responsible for providing emergency or relief services and normally comprises the following:



NEOC MODEL

NEOC

- PIEO - Public Information Education Officer
- OPSO - Operations Officer
- A/OPSO - Assistant Operations Officer
- ASO - Admin & Support Officer
- CO - Communications Officer
- RO - Radio Operator
- EC - Emergency Controller



NEOC ORGANISATION

- Operations Officer (Ops O)
- Asst Operations Officer/Emergency Coordinator (EC)
- Communications Officer (CO)
- Admin and Support Officer (ASO)
- Logistic Officer (LO)
- Radio Operator (RO)
- Police rep
- Military rep
- Coast Guard (if separate from Military) rep
- Public Works rep
- Transport Authority rep
- Telephone Co rep
- Water authority rep
- Light and power Co rep
- Parish council rep
- Fire rep
- Health ministry rep
- Red Cross rep (Shelter)
- Admin and support staff

The operations room is equipped with the necessary maps, displays, status and situation boards, plans and procedures. The displays and status boards are shown in Annex K.

The communications center is established, maintained and operated under the direction of the designated Communications Officer. In addition to the radio equipment and operators of the National Communications Coordination Center (NCCC) within the NEOC, other emergency agencies such as the Police or HAMs, may position their own radios and operators in the NCCC for communication of instructions on their respective networks. The Administrative and support services will cater for finance, procurement, administration and welfare, to include cooking, dining and rest facilities for personnel working in the NEOC.

d. Public Information and Education

It is important that the public is kept informed of the emergency/disaster in a manner that is both timely and factual through the Public Information Center. The media, both print and electronic, will be the most important pipeline to the public at large, in disseminating news. It is therefore imperative that they are kept informed of facts on an on-going basis with briefings and bulletins. The Director will determine and regulate the rules of engagement with the media, for the PIEO and any other Officer authorized to communicate with the media.

The Public Information and Education Officer (PIEO) and staff will gather information from the operations staff and prepare it for dissemination to the public at large. Vital or significant information is accurately prepared and released in a timely manner in order to be of value to the public.

The Public Information and Education center is an area in which at least the following are located:

- Public Information, Education and Training rooms
- Media center and briefing room. (See annex B-3)

e. **Job Descriptions**

NEOC personnel must ensure a coordinated response to the crisis. Since they are not at the disaster site, they must:

- Control and coordinate actions generated as a result of orders from the executive.
- Provide direction and support to the disaster site manager.
- Arrange for logistic support to site personnel and
- Plan ahead to meet the requirements that will follow the disaster

Although the Government has the overall responsibility for responding to a disaster, a country or community effort is invariably needed if the overall effect is to be minimized. It is part of the responsibility of the NEOC staff to ensure that a coordinated effort is made to avoid fragmentation and alienation.

The responsibilities of key NEOC personnel are outlined at annex A.

f. **NEOC location and Layout**

A number of factors need to be considered when deciding where to locate your NEOC. Vulnerability and convenience are the primary considerations. Available facilities and budgetary restraints are other important factors. Potential hazards must be carefully analyzed before locating an NEOC. For example, there is little sense in locating an NEOC in a flood plain if there is a potential flood threat.

Ideally, the NEOC should be survivable against all natural and manmade disasters. Therefore, it should be a self contained, self sufficient facility that can operate independently for a reasonable amount of time with its own electrical generator, an independent water supply and sewerage disposal system, and adequate ventilation. Security and portability should also be considered.

The environment of the NEOC should be suitable for people working closely together. It should at least contain the following separate areas:

(1) Executive Area

Preferably this will be a separate facility from the rest of the NEOC but located near operations. The executive room will house elected officials, whose authority will give direction to the response effort.

(2) Operations Room

This is the largest room in the facility and should be designed so management can effectively coordinate a response to the crisis. A suggested layout is shown at annex B-1.

(3) Communications Room

Separate from the activities of the operations room, this area is the heart of the NEOC. From here, communications between the NEOC, the site and external entities will flow. It is also the location of communications equipment for the rest of the NEOC. A suggested layout is shown at annex B-2.

(4) Security Area

Security is an important part of the NEOC plan. Facilities must be located in an area where security personnel can manage and control people entering and leaving the NEOC, particularly the operations room.

(5) Rest Area

Stress and fatigue are natural consequences of disaster management. It is therefore imperative to include an area in the NEOC where personnel can rest.

(6) *Briefing Room/Media Center*

This part of the NEOC is for the media. It is the Public Information center from which news of the disaster will be disseminated to the public via both print and electronic media through press conferences. Periodic NEOC staff briefings will also be held in this room.

(7) *Kitchen/Food Storage Facilities*

An area must be included in which food can be stored in advance, and also prepared in the event of a disaster.

(8) *Training room*

There may be need for various forms of rapid disaster training for NEOC staff. This should be done in a fairly secluded training area.

(9) *Wash rooms (male and female)*

7. NEOC RESOURCES

The operation of the NEOC will be much like the operation of a very busy office. Consequently, a wide range of supplies will be needed. Ideally, all supplies, equipment and data for the effective and efficient running of the NEOC should be stored on site in lockers or cabinets until actually needed. Under no circumstances should these supplies be available for everyday use. It should be assured that items needed under disaster conditions are readily available when required.

A suggested inventory of such supplies, data and equipment is attached at annex C.

The possibility exists that disaster conditions may make it impossible, or at least impractical for operations to be conducted from a pre-designated NEOC. The entire NEOC should be prepared to move to another location at short notice. That need suggests that supplies, data and small equipment should be stored in boxes or other containers suitable for quick packing and easy movement from the NEOC to trucks or vehicles for transportation to an alternate NEOC site. The packing and transportation should be done in such a way as to enable the new NEOC facility to be set up, equipped and made operational in a short time.

It would be a good idea to keep a duplicate set of all supplies, data and equipment needed to establish an NEOC in another location. If the pre-designated NEOC is hit by the disaster, there may be nothing to move to the alternate site.

Material may have to be gathered from other sources to create an entire new operation.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

One of the critical reasons for creating an NEOC is the consolidation of the National Communications Network. Without proper communications, the effectiveness of the NEOC would be severely limited. As mentioned before, one of the primary concerns of the NEOC is the efficient movement, assimilation and dissemination of information from disaster sites to the resource managers and to the public at large.

a. Disaster site to NEOC

In order for the NEOC to have an accurate picture of the situation at the site, it must make use of all available resources for communicating. It may be possible for the Emergency Site Manager (ESM) to establish a telephone link with the NEOC from the site. While this is a most desirable link, it may not be a viable one, depending on the nature of the disaster and possible damage to the telephone system. It is therefore essential that other means of communication are established. Some alternative means are:

- Military radios
- Police radios
- Fire radios
- Cellular telephones
- CBers
- HAMs
- Taxi or courier companies

b. Within the NEOC and to other EOCs

Once the information is received at the NEOC, it is vital that it is efficiently handled. (Section 13 and Annex G deal with message handling within the NEOC). Telephone will be the primary means used for inter EOC communications, but radio will have to be used in many instances where telephone lines are down.

c. NEOC to Public

The NEOC should be able to issue disaster warnings and give direction to the public, which may necessitate the installation of remote broadcast connections through radio and television stations. Advance hookups at the NEOC for remote broadcast capability may be possible to arrange with radio and/or television stations.

Special bulletins or newsletters from the NEOC may also be appropriate. Communications procedures and net diagrams are described in the ***EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURES MANUAL***.

9. WARNING AND ALERTING SYSTEMS

Warnings of impending or actual emergency/disaster situations may be received by the NDC in a number of ways, depending upon the type of situation. Warnings will, however, normally be received from one or more of the following sources: (See warning and alerting systems chart Annex D):

a. Weather situations including hurricanes and flooding

- The Meteorology Office.

b. Flooding caused by dam failure

- National Water Authority
- Public
- Media

c. Marine emergencies

- Coast Guard
- Harbour Master
- Port Authority

d. Hazardous fire situations

- Fire Authority
- Public
- Media

e. Major human health problems

- Ministry of Health

f. Veterinary health problems

- Veterinary division, Ministry of Agriculture

g. Industrial/Traffic accidents

- Police
- Public
- Media

h. Rail accidents

- Railway Corporation
- Public
- Media

i. Other situations

- General public
- Media

Warning information may be received by any of the following means:

- Telephone
- Fax
- Radio
- Teletype
- E-mail
- Personal contact

j. Initial action

On receipt of a warning of a potential or the report of an occurrence of an actual emergency/disaster, the NDC will:

- Obtain all possible and relevant information utilizing the checklist at Annex E.
- Advise the lead agency and all other agencies likely to be affected or involved in the emergency/disaster.
- The lead agency will immediately dispatch an officer to the scene, if appropriate, who will make an initial assessment of the situation and report the results to the NDC and his headquarters using the initial assessment form shown at Annex E.
- If an officer from the NEOC is dispatched to the scene before the lead agency's officer, he/she will assume command of the emergency/disaster site until relieved by the lead agency.

k. Subsequent action

On receipt of a report from the officer dispatched to the scene, the appropriate agency and/or the NDC will take the following actions:

- Pass the details of the SITREP to all other affected agencies
- Advise all agencies of the name of the on-site commander
- Advise appropriate agencies of any requests for assistance from the on-site commander
- Issue necessary warnings, survival information or evacuation instructions to the affected population by all available means.
- Further action determined as the situation develops

10. ACTIVATING THE NEOC

In activating the NEOC, the NDC in effect has called for the transformation of pre-determined facilities in the NEOC. This could mean the changing of existing offices, halls, lounges, etc into Executive, Operations, Communications, Public Information, Rest and Security areas.

Boxes of emergency food, office supplies, additional telephones, logs, status boards, and other material and equipment necessary for the NEOC should be readily accessible. Individual action lists in the disaster plan will outline specific responses to NEOC personnel.

a. During duty hours

Upon receipt of a severe weather warning or notification of the actual occurrence of an emergency/disaster during normal working hours, which requires centralized coordination of response and relief operations, the NDC will initiate notification and "call-up" procedures using a "fan-out" method and alert lists as outlined at annex F. Appropriate agencies will send representatives to the operations room.

b. Non duty hours

In the event that a warning or notification of an emergency/disaster is received during non-duty hours, the incoming notification will be automatically switched to the home phone or pager of the NDC or designated duty officer. The duty officer will immediately notify the NDC. If the NDC cannot be immediately contacted, the duty officer will take the necessary actions to activate the NEOC.

c. Twenty four hour operations

When the disaster situation requires the NEOC to operate on a 24-hour basis, as soon as possible after activation, a minimum of two 12-hour shift schedules should be prepared by each NEOC section and posted on the bulletin board. Relief shifts should arrive 30 mins early so that briefings can be conducted on what has occurred, what decisions have been reached, and what problems remain. Timings should be as follows:

- shift 1 0630 1900 hrs
- shift 2 1830 0700 hrs

The day shift (shift 1) will be under the direction of the Operations officer, while the night shift (shift 2) will be under the direction of the Assistant operations officer.

Annex F shows example checklists for activation, setup and deactivation of the NEOC. These checklists will vary widely between NEOCs and are only meant as a guide.

11. SECURITY AND SIGN-IN

Depending on the nature of the emergency/disaster, the NDC may decide to establish special security for the NEOC, in which case the police would be responsible for the physical security of the NEOC and its critical systems. In such an event, the police shall establish an NEOC roster and sign in sheet as conditions require or at the request of the NDC.

12. MESSAGE CONTROL

a. Incoming messages

(1) Radio messages

All emergency radio messages received in the NCCC will be delivered by messenger to the message controller for his routing. The message form described in the **EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURES MANUAL** will be used for recording radio messages.

The Emergency Coordinator (message controller), under supervision of the Operations officer, will take the following actions upon receipt of an emergency message:

- Enter a message number at the top of the form. The message number should begin with a two letter agency

identifier and then a number. Incoming messages should be numbered consecutively. Examples:

DC-1 First message received by NDC

CO-3 Third message received by the communications officer.

Section identifiers could be as follows:

DC NDC
CO Communications officer
OO Operations officer
DF Defence Force
WA Water authority

Assign a priority number from 1 (highest) to 4 (lowest) as follows:

Priority 1 Lives endangered immediate response required

Priority 2 Lives endangered fast response required

Priority 3 Timely operational response required

Priority 4 Routine data and logistics messages

- Review the nature of the message and assign the problem for action to the appropriate agency representative in the operations room. Since many emergency actions or problems do not fall within the area of responsibility of a single agency, the message controller has flexibility in assigning responsibility and can, to some degree, balance the work load among the agencies.
- Log the message in the NEOC journal incoming message log (Annex C-11) indicating which agency is assigned the message for action.
- The agency assigned responsibility for the message will take the required action, indicating on the bottom half of the message form the action taken and time taken, and return a copy to the message controller.
- The message controller will see that a summary of the message and actions taken are posted on the status or action board, as appropriate and follow up until the problem is solved or until no further action is necessary.
- After posting, the message controller will ensure that the journal clerk files the message for use in compiling the after action report and for historical purposes.

- Carbon copies of messages may be made in cases where multiple agency action is frequently required, in order to avoid excessive photocopying.

(2) Telephone messages

Telephone messages may be received by a number of people in the NEOC. The person receiving the message will record the message on the message form at Annex G-2. The message will then be delivered to the message controller. The message controller will handle the message in the same manner as a radio message.

b. Outgoing messages

The drafter of an outgoing message will write the message in the upper half of the message form at annex H, assign a priority at the top of the form and deliver a copy to the message controller.

The message controller will review the contents, assign a priority, and determine the best means to transmit the message, after which he/she will pass it to the journal clerk for logging on the outgoing message log.

Due to the urgency of the situation, agency representatives may transmit disaster information directly by telephone either to their headquarters or operating units in the field. In such cases, agency representatives should capsule the essence of the message when time permits and provide the message controller with a copy for posting and filing. The journal clerk will maintain the message file.

13. DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

Damage assessments will be coordinated by the NEOC operations group. This is a vital area of disaster coordination as there will be tendencies for some assessors to underestimate, and for others to overestimate damage and needs. As such, assessments from as wide a range of assessors as possible is usually desirable. A form for recording and displaying the salient damage assessment information is shown at Annex I.

14. SITUATION REPORTS (SITREPS)

A standardized format for situation reports is desirable in an emergency, and is in most cases attainable, eg casualties, physical damage, needs, etc, but a degree of flexibility is always necessary.

The writer of a situation report requires:

- The ability to carry in his mind a comprehensive and accurate picture of the situation.
- The ability to distinguish between, and concentrate upon the important facts, however small they may be, and the trivial, however large they may be.
- The ability to write clearly and concisely.

The suggested SITREP format shown at Annex J attempts to structure that which can be structured in the emergency situation, but also gives allowance for a free-hand description of the emergency/disaster.

15. **DISPLAYS**

Because the disaster operation center's major purpose is accumulating and sharing information to ensure coordinated and timely disaster response, display devices must be maintained so that agencies can quickly comprehend what actions have been taken and what resources are available.

Display needs will vary with the nature and scope of the disaster, but the following charts are the core of the NEOC display system whenever the facility is activated.

a. **Problem Log**

All major problems should be entered on the Log as they are received. The log is a large plastic covered or white board with pre-assigned columns for problem #, nature of problem, response agency, response and remarks, as shown at Annex K-1. This log is maintained by the journal clerk.

b. **Event Logs**

All major and significant events resulting from or affecting the disaster in any way should be displayed for all to see. Main and significant display formats are shown at Annex K2&3. These are maintained by the journal clerk.

c. **Damage Assessment Chart**

This chart contains columns for towns and cities, reported damage, time of report and extent of reported damage. A copy is shown at Annex K-4. This chart is maintained by the plotter.

d. Country/County/Parish/City/Town Map

The following information is particularly important to all agencies in the NEOC and should be posted immediately:

- Transportation routes closed or impeded
- Areas of major damage
- Locations of medical treatment and shelter facilities open.
- Expected inundation areas (flood emergencies)
- Limits of evacuation areas, control points and exit routes.

This map is maintained by the plotter

e. Weather Map

This map should show current forecasts and wind patterns as well as used for plotting fallout in appropriate cases. This map is maintained by the plotter.

f. Planning Map

This is a duplicate of the master ops maps kept in ops room.

g. Briefing Maps

These are large and small scale maps for briefing or specific purposes.

h. Medical Facilities Chart

This chart must show current information on the status of permanent and temporary medical facilities, including locations, beds available, blood and other critical supply needs, manpower requirements and communications links. The chart on which this information is displayed is shown at Annex K-5 with sample entries. It is particularly important to note locations of temporary medical facilities so that the public information officer and other NEOC elements can instruct the public. This chart is maintained by the rep from the Ministry of Health.

i. Shelter Facility Chart

This chart includes information on shelter locations, spaces still available and communications links as shown at Annex K-6. It is maintained by the shelter rep. (usually Red Cross)

j. Law Enforcement Resources Chart

This chart provides information on numbers, status and locations of full time, reserve and auxiliary manpower, as shown at Annex K-7. It is maintained by the Police rep in the ops room.

k. Fire Resources Chart

This chart displays current deployment and availability of fire units as shown at Annex K-8. It is maintained by the Fire representative in the ops room.

l. Transportation Resources Chart

This chart displays the current status and availability of all public and private transportation as shown at Annex K-9. It is maintained by the Administrative and support department.

m. Other Displays

These may include:

- Evacuation route maps for crisis relocation
- Utility system maps
- Blackout block assignments
- Fault line, soil, and landslide potential maps
- Maps of predicted inundation in tsunami areas and below dams
- Flood plain maps
- Locations of hazardous materials and storage sites
- List of town organizations, their location and status
- Personnel location board (for key people)
- Officers duty roster
- Courier service schedule
- Communications diagram
- Comms status board
- Radio diagrams for each network
- Key resource location board
- Reception center control board
- Chart of NEOC layout showing rest area
- Location of electronic news media transmitters, reporters and coverage areas

- Overlays of maps to show:
 - Impact zones
 - Site layout
 - Plumes, effects of dangerous gases
 - Flood lines based on empirical data
 - Any other special requirements (nuclear weapons effects etc)
 - Air photos
 - EIS resource displays

16. BRIEFINGS AND CONFERENCES

Briefings for the NDC, the Parish council, and the Public Information officer should be scheduled at six-hour intervals. The NDC will post a briefing schedule on the bulletin board. NEOC section heads should be prepared to participate in these briefings with a three minute summary of their section's progress. The briefings by each section will include:

- Unresolved problems
- Major new problems during previous six hours
- Assistance needed from other agencies or outside organizations.
- Information developed by the section that should be passed to other NEOC sections or to the public.

Additional briefings may be organized at the request of the NDC. These may include VIP, news media briefings, and situation reviews for newly arrived agency representatives.

Conferences of key NEOC personnel may be convened at any time by the NDC to discuss and resolve major issues. These conferences will be held in the conference room.

The NEOC Director is responsible for ensuring that any decisions reached at conferences are quickly relayed to all NEOC personnel.

17. REPORTS

a. NEOC reporting

The Ops officer is responsible for ensuring that all required reports are forwarded to the next higher EOC (CDERA) on time. He/she is also responsible for preparing and sending any special reports on damages, threats or assistance needed.

The PIEO is responsible for informing all NEOC sections of special information needed by personnel in the field in order to respond to citizens inquiries. Locations and services offered at temporary medical, feeding, or shelter facilities in particular, should be rapidly disseminated to all disaster workers in the field.

b. After Action Reports

An after action report must be completed on deactivation of the NEOC, which signals the official end of the response. This report will be used in a debrief of the operations, which is vital for learning lessons, good and bad, which are meant to continuously improve disaster response. This report format is shown at Annex L.

18. OTHER TOPICS

a. Stress management

Some people will find responding to disasters quite stressful. Others will find it extremely stressful. Often, members of the NEOC work 20-30 hr shifts without adequate rest. In the event of a major disaster, it is recommended that a counsellor be made available to conduct a stress debriefing. This debriefing must be incorporated in the plan, to allow for an open discussion of the feelings, frustrations and anxieties experienced by crisis personnel. Failure to do this can result in a form of aftershock, with stress and depression presenting themselves shortly after the crisis.

It is vitally important that everyone, including the manager, gets adequate rest and relief. Therefore all agencies and/or committees will be responsible for ensuring that a proper relief system exists within their respective agencies while operating in the NEOC.

The operations, logistics and assistant operations officers should have adequate reliefs to enable the NEOC to continue running effectively throughout each 24 hr period.

(NO PERSON SHOULD WORK ANY LONGER THAN 12 HOURS)

b. Managing Public Information

Below are some useful guidelines for managing public information:

- Hold the first news conference as soon as possible after the event
- Set media guidelines regarding accessibility to information, length of question periods, conference/briefings, site tours, etc.

- Ensure good communications with frequent updates on the bulletin board or white board.
- Ensure a messenger is available to assist the media where possible.
- Media pooling is the practice of selecting a small number of media personnel from different media houses to represent print and electronic news personnel on the disaster site. A good practice is to have the media select (from their own ranks) one print journalist, one stills photographer, one video camera man and one audio technician. Media pooling is used when access to the disaster site is limited. Otherwise the media will expect full access to the site.
- Ensure monitoring of print and electronic coverage for rumour control and awareness. This can either be done by contracting monitoring to an outside company, or by installing in-house electronic equipment and monitoring personnel.
- Ensure expert spokespersons are available for credibility
- Ensure bilingual capabilities, as appropriate. Certain circumstances may warrant professional translation services.

c. Rumour control

One of the necessary items to consider in preparing for an emergency/disaster is rumour and information. Monitoring of both the news media and incoming public calls will enable awareness of rumours and innuendos, which could both have negative consequences for public safety and should be corrected promptly.

d. Disaster management vs Programmed management

Some essential differences between disaster and programmed (normal) management are outlined below. It is important that disaster managers are aware of these differences, to mitigate adverse responses to stress and fatigue.

PROGRAMMED

DISASTER

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ● Peacetime | ● Combat zone |
| ● Scope of auth & legal base defined | ● Scope of auth & legal base often in question |
| ● Paid workers | ● Volunteers |
| ● Resources largely in house | ● Resources often not in house & MOUs needed |
| ● Deal with problems at onset | ● Often inherent job - after first response |
| ● Resources largely known | ● Resources often unknown |
| ● Predictable nature | ● Highly emergent nature |
| ● Life directing "get around to it" | ● Life threatening & time dependent |
| ● 8-hour day | ● 12-hour shift |
| ● Physically easy | ● Physically demanding |
| ● Long term goals | ● Short term goals |
| ● Known staff | ● New staff |
| ● May or may not have high or pressure for results | ● High public visibility & public visibility pressure for results |
| ● Known turf | ● New country |
| ● Decision making decentralized | ● Decision making centralized |
| ● Traditional, organizationally approved leaders, managers | ● No traditional or approved managers |

e. Common Mistakes in NEOC Management

Below are some common mistakes and weaknesses experienced by disaster managers over time. Awareness of these failings may help to prevent them in future. They are:

- Lack of a viable disaster plan
- Lack of knowledge of the availability of disaster resources by disaster personnel
- Lack of visible leadership
- Making incorrect decisions that lead to deterioration of the situation.
- Trying to obtain too much information whilst not establishing control of the information flow
- Focusing on the insignificant
- Unknown NEOC staff
- Physical fatigue and 'burnout'
- Information void
- Lack of flexibility
- Unpreparedness for likely litigation to follow
- Not avoiding unknowns
- Negative dealings with the media
- Inability to keep "people statistics"
- Not remembering who we are working for
- Post disaster letdown
- Doing a half hearted job.

19. GLOSSARY

ADMIN	-	Administration
A/Ops O	-	Assistant Operations Officer
ASO	-	Administration and Support Officer
ASP	-	Assistant Superintendent of Police
Asst	-	Assistant
BDF	-	Barbados Defence Force
CDERA	-	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency
CES	-	Chief Executive of State
CO	-	Communications Officer
DEOC	-	Divisional Emergency Operations Center
EC	-	Emergency Controller
EOC	-	Emergency Operations Center
ESM	-	Emergency Site Manager
GPO	-	General Post Office
HAZMAT	-	Hazardous Material
HF	-	High Frequency
HQ	-	Headquarters
LO	-	Liaison Officer
Lt	-	Lieutenant
Nat	-	National
NCCC	-	National Communications Coordination Center
NCOs	-	Non Commissioned Officers
NDC	-	National Disaster Coordinator
NEOC	-	National Emergency Operations Center
Ops O	-	Operations Officer
PIEO	-	Public Information and Education Officer
PM	-	Prime Minister
RO	-	Radio Operator
Sgt	-	Sergeant
SITREP	-	Situation Report
SOP	-	Standing Operating Procedures
SP	-	Support
SW	-	Short Wave
TV	-	Television
VCR	-	Video Cassette Recorder
VHF	-	Very High Frequency
VIP	-	Very Important Person
UHF	-	Ultra High Frequency
Vol	-	Voluntary