



FEMA

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Regional Administrators
Regional Disaster Operations Division Directors

FROM: William L. Carwile, III *William L. Carwile*
Assistant Administrator for Disaster Operations

SUBJECT: Establishing FEMA Operational Centers of Excellence

During the July 2009 Regional Administrator's Conference, we discussed a number of priorities and initiatives that will help advance the mission of the Disaster Operations Directorate and FEMA in the coming months and improve our ability to prepare for and respond to all hazards events. One such initiative involves the creation of FEMA Operational Centers of Excellence (OCOEs) demonstrating expertise in discreet operational response functions.

FEMA Regions regularly and consistently respond to the same types of disasters, based on their geographic location and susceptibility to specific hazardous conditions or unique weather patterns. These regions could become Regional OCOEs or, combined with other regions, could form Territorial OCOEs for specific disaster response functions. In this capacity, the OCOEs could serve as a centralized body of subject matter experts responsible for leading the development of specialized guidance and best practices for the specific response function identified. Each OCOE would leverage the existing knowledge base and response, training, and exercise experience in a particular functional response area and share this expertise. For example, Regional and/or Territorial OCOEs could be established on a regional or territorial basis for earthquakes, hurricanes, flooding, tornados, cold weather, biological, man-made, or other response functional areas.

A Regional or Territorial OCOE will become the central repository of unique response doctrine, policies, procedures, techniques, best practices, and lessons learned specific to the disaster response functional area or hazard designated for the OCOE. The OCOEs would develop and maintain a digital library of specific resources, materials, and plans related to the designated operational/functional area of expertise and be expected to share this expertise with the other FEMA Regions, OCOE Territories, and Headquarters, as well as with our Interagency, state, local and tribal partners.

I want to also explore options and new approaches for pooling regional resources and further develop region-to-region and territorial support in different geographical areas of

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the country. You may remember that regional resources were successfully pooled to facilitate the planning for and response to the 2008 Hurricane threats along the East Coast. An integral part of this initiative will be better coordination of planning, training, interaction with the states, and incident response support. By creating combined regional and territorial pools of resources, we can optimize the use of our limited resources during disaster events to ensure that we provide the best service possible to disaster survivors.

I am interested in your thoughts and feedback on the proposals to (1) develop Regional and Territorial OCOEs and (2) pool resources either regionally or territorially. Please let me know if you would like to nominate your region as an OCOE, or team with another region to recommend formation of a Territorial OCOE, to focus on a specific hazard or threat.

Thank you for your continued assistance and support. I look forward to working with all of you on these and other new initiatives that will advance our abilities as a Directorate and as an Agency.