

# Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan Template Instructions

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**FEMA**

## GUIDE INSTRUCTIONS

This guide provides instructions for developing a Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan according to *Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Headquarters Continuity of Operations (COOP) Guidance Document, dated April 2004*. Although general guidance and sample information is provided in this guide for reference, organizations are encouraged to tailor COOP Plan development to meet their own needs and requirements. These instructions accompany an electronic template that may be downloaded from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Office of National Security Coordination (ONSC) website at the following address:  
<http://www.fema.gov/government/coop/index.shtm>

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## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The executive summary should briefly outline the organization and content of the COOP Plan and describe what it is, whom it affects, and the circumstances under which it should be executed. Further, it should discuss the key elements of COOP planning and explain the organization's implementation strategies.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

The introduction to the COOP Plan should explain the importance of COOP planning to the organization. It may also discuss the background for planning, referencing recent events that have led to the increased emphasis on the importance of a COOP capability for the organization.

## **III. PURPOSE**

The purpose section should explain why the organization is developing a COOP Plan. It should briefly discuss applicable Federal guidance and explain the overall purpose of COOP planning, which is to ensure the continuity of mission essential functions. Because of today's changing threat environment, this section should state that the COOP Plan is designed to address the all hazard threat.

## **IV. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE**

This section describes the applicability of the plan to the organization as a whole, headquarters as well as subordinate activities, co-located and geographically disperse, and to specific personnel groups of the organization. It should also include the scope of the plan. Ideally, plans should address the full spectrum of potential threats, crises and emergencies (natural as well as man-made).

## **V. ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS**

The essential functions section should include a list of the organization's prioritized essential functions. Essential functions are those organizational functions and activities that must be continued under any and all circumstances.

Organizations should:

- (1) Identify all functions, then determine which must be continued under all circumstances
- (2) Prioritize these essential functions
- (3) Establish staffing and resource requirements
- (4) Integrate supporting activities
- (5) Develop a plan to perform additional functions as the situation permits.

*For additional information on essential functions, see Section X of the DHS HQ COOP Guidance Document.*

### SAMPLE

The following table shows examples of prioritized essential functions for a fictitious organization, the Bureau of Water Management:

Priority	Essential Functions
1	Administer programs to protect the region's water supply and the health of the public.
2	Ensure the protection of fish and aquatic life.
3	Ensure pollution prevention and compliance assurance.
4	Provide technical support and information to assist in planning and restoration.
5	Approve and oversee cleanups of contaminated sites.
6	Plan and implement regional flood control programs.

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## VI. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

This section should reference an annex that outlines all supporting authorities and references that have assisted in the development of this COOP Plan.

*Annex A of the DHS COOP Guidance Document provides a list of authorities and references.*

## VII. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

This section should explain how the organization will implement its COOP Plan, and specifically, how it plans to address each critical COOP element. This section should be separated into three phases: activation and relocation, alternate facility operations, and reconstitution.

### A. PHASE I: ACTIVATION AND RELOCATION

The Phase I section should explain COOP Plan activation procedures and relocation procedures from the primary facility to the alternate facility. This section should also address procedures and guidance for non-relocating personnel.

#### 1. Decision Process

This section should explain the logical steps associated with implementing a COOP Plan, the circumstances under which a plan may be activated (both with and without warning), and should

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identify who has the authority to activate the COOP Plan. This process can be described here or depicted in a graphical representation.

## 2. Alert, Notification, and Implementation Process

This section should explain the events following a decision to activate the COOP Plan. This includes employee alert and notification procedures and the COOP Plan implementation process.

## 3. Leadership

### a. Orders of Succession

This section should identify orders of succession to key positions within the organization. Orders should be of sufficient depth to ensure the organization's ability to manage and direct its essential functions and operations. The conditions under which succession will take place, the method of notification, and any temporal, geographical, or organizational limitations of authority should also be identified in this section.

*For additional information on succession, see Section XI.I of the DHS HQ COOP Guidance Document.*

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### SAMPLE

The following table shows the order of succession for the Director of the Bureau of Water Management:

Successors
Director, Bureau of Water Management
Deputy Director, Bureau of Water Management
Division Head, Enforcement and Remediation Division
Division Head, Standards and Planning Division

### b. Delegations of Authority

This section should identify, by position, the authorities for making policy determinations and decisions at headquarters, field levels, and other organizational locations, as appropriate. Generally, pre-determined delegations of authority will take effect when normal channels of direction are disrupted and terminate when these channels have resumed. Such delegations may also be used to address specific competency requirements related to one or more essential functions that are not otherwise satisfied by the order of succession. For example, once again referring to the Bureau of Water Management sample: because of particular technical skill, the authority to remediate contaminated sites could be pre-delegated directly to the Division Head,

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Enforcement and Remediation Division, bypassing the intervening successor. Delegations of authority should document the legal authority for making key decisions, identify the programs and administrative authorities needed for effective operations, and establish capabilities to restore authorities upon termination of the event. Pre-determined delegations of authority may be particularly important in a devolution scenario.

*For additional information on delegations of authority, see Section XI.2 of the DHS HQ COOP Guidance Document.*

**c. Devolution**

The devolution section should address how an organization will identify and conduct its essential functions in the aftermath of a worst-case scenario, one in which the leadership is incapacitated. The organization should be prepared to transfer all of their essential functions and responsibilities to personnel at a different office or location.

*For additional information on Devolution, see Section XI.3 of the DHS HQ COOP Guidance Document.*

**B. PHASE II: ALTERNATE FACILITY OPERATIONS**

The Phase II section should identify initial arrival procedures as well as operational procedures for the continuation of essential functions.

**1. Mission Critical Systems**

The section should address the organization’s mission critical systems necessary to perform essential functions and activities. Organizations must define these systems and address the method of transferring/replicating them at an alternate site.

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**SAMPLE**

The following table shows examples of mission critical systems for the Bureau of Water Management:

System Name	Current Location	Other Locations
Hazardous Spill Cleanup Unit	Warehouse 11	Storage Unit B, Storage Unit C
Mobile Analytical Laboratory	Primary Facility	Alternate Facility
Mobile Operations Center	Primary Facility	Alternate Facility

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**2. Vital Files, Records, and Databases**

This section should address the organization’s vital files, records, and databases, to include classified or sensitive data, which are necessary to perform essential functions and activities and

to reconstitute normal operations after the emergency ceases. Organizational elements should pre-position and update on a regular basis those duplicate records, databases, or back-up electronic media necessary for operations.

There are three categories of records to be reviewed and prioritized, then transferred (either hard copy or electronic media) to an alternate location:

- Emergency operations records;
- Legal/financial records; and,
- Records used to perform national security preparedness functions and activities (EO 12656).

*For additional information on vital files, records, and databases, see Section XV of the DHS HQ COOP Guidance Document.*

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### SAMPLE

The following table shows examples of vital files, records, and databases for the Bureau of Water Management:

Vital File, Record, or Database	Form of Record (e.g., hardcopy, electronic)	Pre-positioned at Alternate Facility	Hand Carried to Alternate Facility	Backed up at Third Location
GIS Mapping Database	Electronic	X		X
List of Licensed Spill Cleanup Contractors	Hardcopy		X	
List of Regional Dams	Hardcopy		X	
Pollution/Chemical Incident Database	Electronic	X		
Public and Private Sewage System Records	Electronic	X		X
Water Treatment Regulations	Hardcopy		X	
Flood Control Policies	Hardcopy		X	
Federal Water Facilities Contact List	Hardcopy		X	

The following table shows sample vital files, records, and databases pertaining to COOP coordination for the Bureau of Water Management:

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Vital File, Record, or Database	Form of Record (e.g., hardcopy, electronic)	Pre-positioned at Alternate Facility	Hand Carried to Alternate Facility	Backed up at Third Location
COOP Plan	Electronic	X		X
Phone Roster	Hardcopy		X	
Devolution Contact List	Hardcopy		X	
Legal Authority List	Electronic	X		
Emergency Water Resources List	Hardcopy		X	

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### C. PHASE III: RECONSTITUTION

The Phase III section should explain the procedures for returning to normal operations – a time phased approach may be most appropriate. This section may include procedures for returning to the primary facility, if available, or procedures for acquiring a new facility through General Services Administration (GSA). Notification procedures for all employees returning to work must also be addressed. The conduct of an After Action Report (AAR), to determine the effectiveness of COOP plans and procedures should be considered.

### VIII. COOP PLANNING RESPONSIBILITIES

This section should include additional delineation of COOP responsibilities of each key staff position, to include individual Emergency Relocation Group (ERG) members, those identified in the order of succession and delegation of authority, and others, as appropriate.

**SAMPLE**

The following table shows examples of some COOP responsibilities for the Bureau of Water Management:

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Position</b>
Update COOP plan annually.	Division Head, Standards and Planning Division
Update telephone rosters monthly.	Communications Specialist, Standards and Planning Division
Review status of vital files, records, and databases.	Records Specialist, Standards and Planning Division
Conduct alert and notification tests.	Communications Specialist, Standards and Planning Division
Develop and lead COOP training.	Training Specialist, Standards and Planning Division
Plan COOP exercises.	Training Specialist, Standards and Planning Division

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**IX. LOGISTICS**

**A. ALTERNATE LOCATION**

The alternate location section should explain the significance of identifying an alternate facility, the requirements for determining an alternate facility, and the advantages and disadvantages of each location. Senior managers should take into consideration the operational risk associated with each facility. Performance of a risk assessment is vital in determining which alternate location will best satisfy an organization’s requirements.

Alternate facilities should provide:

- (1) Sufficient space and equipment
- (2) Capability to perform essential functions within 12 hours, up to 30 days
- (3) Reliable logistical support, services, and infrastructure systems
- (4) Consideration for health, safety, and emotional well-being of personnel
- (5) Interoperable communications
- (6) Computer equipment and software

*For additional information on alternate facilities, see Section XII of the DHS HQ COOP Guidance Document.*

## **B. INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS**

The interoperable communications section should identify available and redundant critical communication systems that are located at the alternate facility. These systems should provide the ability to communicate within the organization and outside the organization.

Interoperable communications should provide:

- (1) Capability commensurate with an agency's essential functions
- (2) Ability to communicate with essential personnel
- (3) Ability to communicate with other agencies, organizations, and customers
- (4) Access to data and systems
- (5) Communications systems for use in situations with and without warning
- (6) Ability to support COOP operational requirements
- (7) Ability to operate at the alternate facility within 12-hours, and for up to 30 days
- (8) Interoperability with existing field infrastructures

*For additional information on interoperable communications, see Section XIII of the DHS COOP Guidance Document.*

## **X. TEST, TRAINING, AND EXERCISES**

This section should address the organization's Test, Training, and Exercise (TT&E) Plan. Tests, Training, and Exercises familiarize staff members with their roles and responsibilities during an emergency, ensure that systems and equipment are maintained in a constant state of readiness, and validate certain aspects of the COOP Plan. Managers may be creative when it comes to COOP readiness and include snow days, power outages, server crashes, and other ad-hoc opportunities to assess preparedness.

COOP TT&E plans should provide:

- (1) Individual and team training of agency personnel
- (2) Internal agency testing and exercising of COOP plans and procedures
- (3) Testing of alert and notification procedures
- (4) Refresher orientation for COOP personnel
- (5) Joint interagency exercising of COOP plans, if appropriate

*For additional information on TT&E, see Section XVII of the DHS COOP Guidance Document.*

## **XI. MULTI-YEAR STRATEGY AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT PLAN**

This section should discuss how the organization plans to develop their Multi-Year Strategy and Program Management Plan (MYSPMP). The MYSPMP should address short and long term COOP goals, objectives, and timelines, budgetary requirements, planning and preparedness

considerations, and planning milestones or tracking systems to monitor accomplishments. It should be developed as a separate document.

*For additional information on MYSPMP development, see Section XVIII of the DHS HQ COOP Guidance Document.*

## **XII. COOP PLAN MAINTENANCE**

This section should address how the organization plans to ensure that the COOP Plan contains the most current information. Federal guidance states that organizations should review the entire COOP Plan at least annually. Key evacuation routes, roster and telephone information, as well as maps and room/building designations of alternate locations should be updated as changes occur.

*For additional information on COOP Plan maintenance, see Section XIX of the DHS HQ COOP Guidance Document.*

### **Annex A: Authorities and References**

This annex should cite a list of authorities and references that mandate the development of this COOP Plan, and provide guidance towards acquiring the requisite information contained in this COOP Plan.

### **Annex B: Operational Checklists**

This section should contain operational checklists for use during a COOP event. A checklist is a simple tool that ensures all required tasks are accomplished so that the organization can continue operations at an alternate location. Checklists may be designed to list the responsibilities of a specific position or the steps required to complete a specific task.

Sample operational checklists may include:

- Emergency Calling Directory
- Key Personnel Roster and Essential Functions Checklist
- Senior Emergency Response Team (SERT) Roster
- Emergency Relocation Team Checklist
- Alternate Site Acquisition Checklist
- Emergency Operating Records and IT Checklist
- Emergency Equipment Checklist

### **Annex C: Alternate Location/Facility Information**

This annex should include general information about the alternate location/facility. Examples include the address, points of contact, and available resources at the alternate location.

### **Annex D: Maps and Evacuation Routes**

This annex should provide maps, driving directions, and available modes of transportation from the primary facility to the alternate location. Evacuation routes from the primary facility should also be included.

### **Annex E: Definitions and Acronyms**

This annex should contain a list of key words, phrases, and acronyms used throughout the COOP Plan and within the COOP community. Each key word, phrase and acronym should be clearly defined.