

Halifax Fire Department

December 27, 2007

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

Emergency Operations Center

19.01 PURPOSE

The Emergency Operations Center (E.O.C.) is the Town's coordination center for emergency services during any major emergency affecting the Town. The E.O.C. is activated when ordered by the Selectmen or the Halifax Emergency Management Agency (H.E.M.A.). An EOC provides a central location of authority, information and allows for face-to-face coordination among personnel who must make emergency decisions.

The E.O.C. is located on the second floor of the Halifax Police Department, 540 Plymouth Street.

Day-to-day operations are conducted from departments and agencies that are dispersed throughout the Town. When a major emergency or disaster strikes, centralized emergency management is needed. This facilitates a coordinated response by the Board of Selectmen, Emergency Management Staff and representatives from Town and non-Town organizations that are assigned specific emergency management responsibilities.

19.02 POLICY

The EOC shall operate under the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

The following functions are among those performed in the Town of Halifax EOC:

- Receiving and disseminating warnings.
- Developing policies.
- Collecting intelligence from and disseminating information to the various EOC representatives and, as appropriate, to County and State agencies, Military and Federal agencies.
- Preparing intelligence/information summaries, situation reports, operation reports and other reports as required.
- Maintaining general and specific maps, information display boards and other data pertaining to emergency operations.

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- Continuing analysis and evaluation of all data pertaining to emergency operations.
- Controlling and coordinating, within established policy, the operations and logistical support of the departmental resources committed to the emergency operations.
- Maintaining contact with support EOC's, other jurisdictions and levels of government.
- Providing emergency information and instructions to the public. Making official releases to the media and the scheduling of press conferences as necessary.

Dispatch and Deployment will continue to operate in a normal manner, except for policy guidance and special instructions received from the E.O.C. All requests for special assistance from the field and significant status information should be directed to E.O.C.

The Incident Commander (IC) shall assign an additional dispatcher to act as a direct liaison and communication link to the E.O.C. frequent progress and status reports should be provided to the fire department E.O.C. staff.

Policy guidance from the E.O.C. will be relayed to field units through the IC or Dispatch.

19.03 PROCEDURE**A. ACTIVATION OF E.O.C.**

The E.O.C. is activated only on orders of the Board of Selectmen or the Halifax Emergency Management Agency. Notification of the activation of E.O.C. will be made to the Fire Chief (or Officer in Charge) directly or through Dispatch using the call order list. The Fire Chief will instruct Dispatch of what personnel should report to the fire department for assignments.

Upon notification that the Town E.O.C. has been activated the dispatcher shall immediately notify all fire department staff via the radio paging equipment and activate the appropriate tones for the personnel requested by the Chief.

The Fire Chief or his designee will report to the E.O.C. A minimum of one additional fire department staff member (at the Chief's discretion) may be required to operate the fire department position at the E.O.C. on a 24 hour basis during an active incident. Additional and relief personnel will be assigned as needed.

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B. FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES IN E.O.C.

The fire department personnel assigned to E.O.C. are responsible for:

- Obtaining and prioritizing resource needs for field incident commanders.
- Providing the Town Command Staff information on field conditions.
- Interpreting directives from Town Command Staff.
- Requesting policy direction from Town Command Staff when necessary.
- Communicating policy directives to field units.
- Providing liaison with other involved agencies.
- Maintaining constant awareness of field conditions and deployment.
- Obtaining authorization for expenditures for requested private sector resources needed to complete assigned functions.

All field Command Officers will keep the E.O.C. informed of conditions, progress, level of commitment, resource requirements and situation urgency during a major emergency. All significant changes in conditions will be directed to the E.O.C. through the assigned operations radio channel, telephone, cell phone, or through the Halifax Communications Center. All requests for policy direction or additional resources (beyond normal levels) shall be directed to the E.O.C. (particularly private sector resources).

The fire department staff assigned to the Town E.O.C. will maintain a log of all major decisions by the fire department staff, the Board of Selectmen or the Halifax Emergency Management.

The log will indicate the time, date, decision, and who made the decision. The E.O.C. staff should utilize the E.O.C. (NIMS) log sheets for this purpose.

C. E.O.C EQUIPMENT NEEDED

The Fire Department staff reporting to the Town E.O.C. should take the following items:

- Incident Command Board (from Chief's car)
- 2 Portable radios with a spare battery and charger
- Cellular telephone
- Fire Department Standard Operations Guideline Manual
- Note pads, Pencils, and pens

Some of these materials are stored in a box located in the closet (bi-fold doors) in the fire department administration office.

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D. E.O.C. IMMEDIATE TASKS AND DECISIONS

The Command Officer staff reporting from the fire department to the E.O.C. will be responsible for the following decisions and tasks:

- Confirm that Fire Station is manned and prepared to initiate recall.
- Determine the need for and initiate additional staffing of the Dispatch Center.
- Determine the need for additional Command staff at EOC or Fire Station.
- Confirm an FDEOC liaison is established and functioning at the Incident Command Post(s).
- Confirm that apparatus and equipment are being prepared for service as necessary.
- Determine what apparatus needs to be placed in service and activate apparatus as deemed necessary.
- Determine what personnel resource needs to be recalled and initiate recall as deemed necessary.
- Determine locations for recalled personnel.
- Make personnel assignments as necessary.

E. RECALL OF OFF-DUTY PERSONNEL

When a determination is made that the situation requires the recall of off-duty personnel, this request will be directed to the Fire Chief or his designee. Personnel may be recalled to place companies in service or to respond to the scene of an incident.

Dispatch will direct the deployment of those companies as they become available. The Emergency Operations Center will contact the personnel and advise them where to report.

The recalling of off-duty firefighting personnel will be accomplished by pager or telephone contact with the employee. A list of employees by rank and shift shall be maintained in the Emergency Operations Center.

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F. OPERATIONS DIVISION

The Operations Division has the direct responsibility for the delivery of all emergency services. All divisions will respond as necessary to support this primary mission of the fire department.

The Operations Division's responsibilities under this plan include:

1. Provide and manage emergency services.
2. A Fire Captain or Senior Firefighter shall respond to the emergency scene to analyze the situation, assume Command as necessary, and provide or cause to provide a liaison officer for communication to the FDEOC for progress reporting.

G. COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

The Communications Center is responsible for managing the short term deployment of fire department resources during both normal and unusual conditions. The basic response to unusual or emergency conditions will be governed by criteria described in this plan. During major emergency operation situations, additional staff will be recalled and assigned to the Communications Center in order to deal with the increased workload. The Communications Committee Chairman or an assigned staff Command Officer will respond to the Communications Center to direct operations during periods of extreme activity. The Emergency Operating Center may assign a Command Officer as a Strategy Officer to assist the Communications Officer in direction and decision making on an immediate basis.

The Communications Officer is responsible for managing communication operations and making routine decisions pertaining to incidents and the deployment of resources. The Communications Officer is also responsible for determining the need to upgrade operations in response to unusual situations.

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H. STRATEGY OFFICER

A Strategy Officer ***may*** be assigned to the Communications Center by the Emergency Operating Center. This Command officer will be responsible for:

- Determining the need for call back of additional dispatch personnel in the absence of the Communications Chairman.
- Directing deployment adjustments
- Assisting the Communications Chairman as necessary.
- Establishing a liaison communication link between dispatch and the Emergency Operating Center.
- Provide frequent progress reports to the Emergency Operating Center.
- Manage news media and other agency inquiries.

In the event of a major disaster in the Plymouth County area, the Fire Department EOC Officer will be responsible for directing the response and redeployment of fire department resources in conjunction with the Emergency Operating Center direction and policy throughout the area in accordance with the Plymouth County Mutual Aid Plan.