



# Institution of Higher Education Planning and Response Teams: Developing and Enhancing the Higher ed Emergency Operations Plan

To ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff, institutions of higher education (IHEs) nationwide can create comprehensive emergency operations plans (EOPs) that address all hazards in all settings and all times and that focus on the five preparedness mission areas — prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. This plan can be one of an IHE's most powerful tools for dealing with emergency incidents; ensuring the security and preparedness of the campus community; and addressing the safety needs of all students, staff, and visitors, including those with access and functional needs. To support the creation of a comprehensive, high-quality higher ed EOP, the U.S. Federal government published in 2013 the [Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education](#), representing the first joint effort among the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and Justice on this topic. Also known as the *IHE Guide*, this resource assists IHE emergency planning teams, as well as those who support campus safety, security, and emergency management, in understanding their roles and responsibilities before, during, and after emergency incidents and in supporting the higher ed EOP design and enhancement.

## Creating and Revising EOPs Using a Six-Step Planning Process

The *IHE Guide* outlines a six-step planning process for creating and continually enhancing a higher ed EOP. This federally recommended process may be used by colleges and universities to plan for a range of hazards and threats that may occur in all settings and at any time in their local campus communities.



## Using This Checklist

The following checklist can assist IHEs in developing a new EOP or refreshing their current one. To use the checklist, higher ed emergency planning teams should consider the extent to which the EOP aligns with each of the activities listed and check the appropriate box.



# THE PLANNING PROCESS



## STEP 1: FORM A COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TEAM

To begin the process of developing and maintaining an EOP, a higher ed emergency planning team should be assembled. These multidisciplinary IHE teams should work closely with local emergency response teams to develop campuswide and building-specific EOPs and related annexes.

### Identify Core Planning Team

Campus leadership, faculty, and staff from IHE departments

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Affairs                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Office                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Information Technology                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Central Administration or Designee    | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Counsel                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling and Mental Health Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Information Office             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Medical Services            | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Safety Operations              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Health and Safety       | <input type="checkbox"/> Residential Life                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facilities and Operations             | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Affairs                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events Staff                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Services                         | <input type="checkbox"/> International Student Services Office |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services                       |  |

Individuals and organizations representing the diverse interests of the whole campus community

- Students
- Families
- People with disabilities and access/functional needs
- People from diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds

Local community partners with a responsibility in campus emergency management and with information on the community

- Law enforcement
- Fire
- Emergency medical services
- Public health
- Mental/Behavioral health

State community partners

Additional partners with a role in campus emergency management

### Form a Common Framework

Take time to learn one another's vocabulary, command structure, and culture to facilitate effective planning.

### Define and Assign Roles and Responsibilities

Develop policies and procedures to ensure that each person involved in developing and refining the higher ed EOP knows his or her roles and responsibilities. Partner agreements, or memoranda of understanding, may also be created by the IHE emergency planning teams to clearly delineate team members' and community partners' roles and responsibilities.

### Determine a Regular Schedule of Meetings

Set campuswide expectations for holding regular but flexible planning meetings within each campus building, and establish a regular schedule to facilitate collaboration, coordination, and communication.



## STEP 2: UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION

Insight from the higher ed emergency planning and response team will be critical as EOPs are developed and continually enhanced. The team members can help ensure that EOPs address the threats and hazards the campus, and its individual campus buildings, may face because of their historical knowledge as well as their understanding of the culture and climate within the whole campus community.

### **Develop a Comprehensive List of Possible Threats and Hazards**

- Data from campuswide assessments
  - Site assessment
  - Behavioral threat assessment
  - Culture and climate assessment
  - Capacity assessment
- Information from local, state, and Federal partners
- Information from the whole campus community

### **Evaluate Risks and Vulnerabilities**

- Consolidate the information obtained into a format that is usable for comparing the risks and vulnerabilities posed by the identified threats and hazards.

### **Prioritize Threats and Hazards**

- Use the evaluation data to compare and prioritize threats and hazards that will be addressed directly in the EOP.



## STEP 3: DETERMINE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

EOPs are designed to provide defined specific actions that planning and response team members can take in the event of an emergency. Goals and objectives that are based on threats, hazards, and common emergency management functions can help ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of why specific protocols and policies are included within the EOP.

### **Select Threats and Hazards to Address in the EOP**

### **Develop Goals and Objectives for Threats and Hazards**

- Develop goals (before, during, after phases).
- Develop corresponding objectives.
- Identify cross-cutting functions.

### **Develop Goals and Objectives for Functions**

- Develop goals (before, during, after phases).
- Develop corresponding objectives.



## STEP 4: IDENTIFY COURSES OF ACTION

Goals and objectives define the “what and why,” but courses of action combine the “who” and “how” in emergency management planning. Who will be responsible for carrying out certain actions, and how will they accomplish those actions?

### Use Scenario-Based Planning

- Depict the scenario.
- Determine the amount of time available to respond.
- Identify decision points.
- Develop courses of action.

### Develop Courses of Action for Threats and Hazards

### Develop Courses of Action for Functions



## STEP 5: PREPARE, REVIEW, AND APPROVE PLANS

Goals, objectives, and courses of action will serve as the foundation for an EOP, which can be formatted using the outline recommended in the *IHE Guide* or in a format that best suits the needs of the IHE.

Once the EOP is formatted and revised, the higher ed planning team should review the plan for quality, approve it, and determine with whom the entire EOP or portions of it should be shared.

### Prepare the Draft EOP

- Edit and format the Threat- and Hazard-Specific Annexes.
- Edit and format the Functional Annexes.
- Write the Basic Plan.

### Review, Approve, and Share the Plan

- Develop a framework outlining the process for officially approving EOPs created for campus buildings.
- Approve the EOP.
- Share the plan with community partners and additional stakeholders who have a responsibility for or a role in the EOP.
- Protect the EOP from those unauthorized to have it.
- Establish a system for sharing secure documents electronically.
- Maintain a record of people and organizations that receive a copy of the plan.



## STEP 6: IMPLEMENT AND MAINTAIN THE PLAN

Once created, an EOP should be continually updated and enhanced based on lessons learned from campus emergencies, exercises conducted, and insight from the whole campus community. Higher ed planning and response teams should meet on a recurring basis to exercise the plan, as well as review and revise it to ensure compliance with local, state or Federal legislation and that roles and responsibilities remain clearly outlined.

### Train Stakeholders

- Hold a meeting.
- Visit evacuation sites.
- Give involved parties appropriate and relevant literature on the plan, policies, and procedures.
- Post key information throughout the building.
- Familiarize students and staff with the plan and community partners.
- Train staff in the necessary skills to fulfill their roles.

### Exercise the Plan

- Tabletop exercises
- Drills
- Functional exercises
- Full-scale exercises

### Review, Revise, and Maintain the Plan

- Set a schedule for exercising the plan.
- Set a schedule for updating the plan.
- Set a schedule for reviewing and updating who has access to the plan.

Once the EOP is complete, IHE planning teams can use the REMS TA Center's EOP EVALUATE Web application to evaluate and update their EOP based on the guidelines set forth in the *IHE Guide*. Upon completion of EOP EVALUATE, responses will result in a customized downloadable report containing a variety of additional resources and information.



### Evaluate Your Plan Using REMS TA Center's EOP EVALUATE Tool

The REMS TA Center's Web application helps planning teams evaluate their EOP against the guidelines set forth in the *IHE Guide*. Users are prompted through the federally recommended six-step planning process to determine whether there are areas where an existing EOP can be improved. Upon completion of EOP EVALUATE, responses will result in a customized downloadable report containing a variety of additional information and resources on enhancing areas of your IHE's EOP. Access additional information on the REMS TA Center Website: <https://rems.ed.gov/EOPEvalTool/K12IHEvalTool.aspx>.

# PLAN CONTENT

As Step 5 of the *IHE Guide* suggests, each plan contains three main sections — the Basic Plan, Functional Annexes, and Threat- and Hazard-Specific Annexes. Each section of the plan supports the other sections, and, together, they create a comprehensive, high-quality higher ed EOP. The following portion of the checklist outlines the contents of each EOP section in detail and can assist IHEs in developing a new EOP or in evaluating their existing EOP against Federal guidance.

## THE BASIC PLAN

- Introductory Material**
  - Cover Page
  - Promulgation Document and Signatures
  - Approval and Implementation
  - Record of Changes
  - Record of Distribution
  - Table of Contents
- Purpose, Scope, Situation Overview, and Assumptions**
  - Purpose
  - Scope
  - Situation Overview
  - Planning Assumptions
- Concept of Operations**
- Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities**
- Direction, Control, and Coordination**
- Information Collection, Analysis, and Dissemination**
- Training and Exercises**
- Administration, Finance, and Logistics**
- Plan Development and Maintenance**
- Authorities and References**

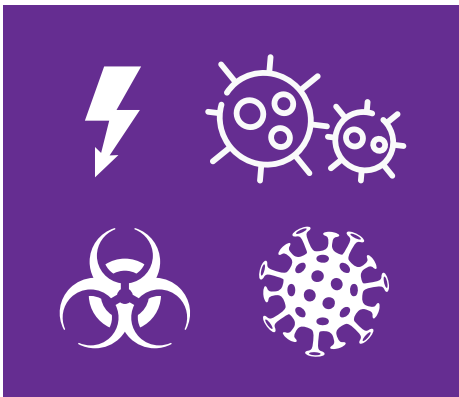
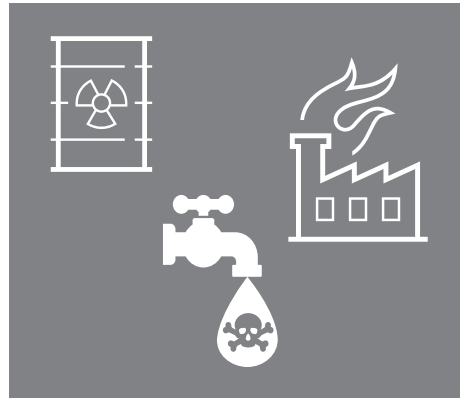
## FUNCTIONAL ANNEXES

- Evacuation Annex**
- Deny Entry or Closing (Lockdown) Annex**
- Shelter-in-Place/Secure-in-Place Annex**
- Accounting for All Persons Annex**
- Communications and Notification Annex**
- Continuity of Operations (COOP) Annex**
  - Continuity of Teaching and Learning
  - Continuity of Feeding and Food Distribution
  - Continuity of Business Services
  - Continuity of Essential Services
- Recovery Annex**
  - Academic Recovery
  - Physical and Structural Recovery
  - Business Services Recovery
  - Health, Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Recovery
- Public Health, Medical, and Mental Health Annex**
  - Public Health
  - Medical
  - Mental Health
- Security Annex**
- Rapid Assessment Annex**



## THREAT- AND HAZARD-SPECIFIC ANNEXES

- ❑ **Natural Hazards** (animals, earthquakes, extreme temperatures, floods, hurricanes/typhoons, landslides or mudslides, lightning, severe wind, tornadoes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, winter precipitation, etc.)
- ❑ **Technological Hazards** (accidental release of hazardous materials from within the campus, dam failure, explosions or accidental release of toxins from industrial plants, hazardous materials from major highways and railroads, lead exposure or poisoning, power failure, radiological releases from nuclear power stations, water failure, etc.)
- ❑ **Biological Hazards** (contaminated food outbreaks, infectious diseases, toxic materials present in campus laboratories, etc.)
- ❑ **Adversarial, Incidental, and Human-Caused Threats** (active shooters, adult sexual misconduct, bomb threats, bullying and cyberbullying, criminal threats or actions, cybersecurity and cyber safety, domestic violence or abuse, fire, gang violence, human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, kidnapping, opioid overdoses and drug-related emergencies, protests and walkout demonstrations, sextortion, sexual violence or assault, suicide, violent extremism, etc.)



# EOP REVIEW

As Step 6 of the *IHE Guide* outlines, it is important for higher ed planning team members to carefully review the EOP before sharing it with members of the campus community to ensure that it clearly outlines goals, objectives, and courses of action and to ensure that the IHE remains in compliance with local, state, and Federal laws. Efforts to practice the plan may reveal areas of improvement that can help ensure plan effectiveness and efficiency. Find tips below to support your EOP review efforts.

## Plan Writing Practices

- Summarizes important information with checklists/visual aids
- Uses clear writing, plain language, short sentences, and active voice; avoids jargon, qualifiers, and vague wording
- Uses a logical and consistent structure
- Provides enough detail to convey the plan/specific actions clearly
- Effectively communicates the plan to diverse audiences with appropriate auxiliary aids and services


## Plan Effectiveness and Efficiency

- Incorporates all courses of action to be accomplished for the selected threats and hazards and identified functions
- Integrates the needs of the whole campus community
- Provides a complete picture of what should happen, when, and at whose direction
- Estimates time for achieving objectives, keeping safety first
- Identifies success criteria and a desired end state
- Conforms to the planning principles outlined in the *IHE Guide*

## Plan Compliance

- Complies with applicable Federal, state, and local requirements
  - The *Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act*
  - Americans with Disabilities Act*
  - Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*
  - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*
  - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996*

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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