

# Continuity of Operations Guide

## For Local Health Departments



September 2023

### Overview

Continuity of Operations (COOP) is an individual organization or agency's effort to continue performing essential functions when normal activities are interrupted. To achieve this goal, organizations must identify their essential functions (EF) and guarantee those functions are maintained during, or resumed immediately after, an interruption in normal activities. Organizations should establish their continuity of operations in a continuity plan (COOP Plan).

### Elements of a Viable Continuity Capability

- **Essential Functions:** Critical tasks executed by organizations, particularly after an interruption in normal activities.
- **Orders of Succession:** Plans for the requisition of senior agency offices when any senior officials are unable to complete their legal duties during an emergency.
- **Delegations of Authority (DOA):** Temporary DOA to be used when normal channels of direction are interrupted and will stop once normal operations resume.
- **Alternate Facilities:** Locations (exclusive of the main facility) used to complete essential functions, especially during a COOP event. These facilities can include alternative options such as offices / working from home.
- **Communications and Information Systems:** Communications that maintain essential functions under all conditions, jointly with other agencies.
- **Essential Records Management:** The access, identification, and protection of the electronic and physical records, documents, information systems, and software necessary to support essential functions during a COOP event.
- **Human Resources:** During a COOP event, the emergency employees and other special employee groups activated by an agency to complete assigned response tasks.
- **Tests, Training and Exercises (TT&E):** Procedures to establish that an agency's COOP plan is able to maintain its essential functions throughout the duration of a continuity event.
- **Devolution:** The ability to transfer statutory authority & responsibility from an agency's primary operating staff & locations to alternative agency staff & facilities to sustain essential functions.
- **Reconstitution:** The process of the surviving or replacement agency staff resuming normal agency operations from the original or replacement operating facility.
- **Program Management, Plans and Procedures:** COOP is a plan with the intent to document and maintain the organization's essential functions during various potential emergencies.



## Steps in the Planning Process\*

- **Step 1** — Form a Collaborative Planning Team
- **Step 2** — Understand the Situation
- **Step 3** — Determine Goals & Objectives
- **Step 4** — Develop the Plan
- **Step 5** — Prepare and Preview the Plan
- **Step 6** — Implement and Maintain the Plan

\*Written by FEMA CPG 101

**Continuity planning ensures the preservation of essential functions in an organization**

## When is a Continuity Plan activated?

- The Continuity Plan can be activated in response to a variety of event, such as a fire in a lab, a flood or a terrorist threat.
- Any event that prevents employees from working in their regular office could activate the Continuity Plan.

## COOP Resources

- [Local Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinators](#)
- COOP POC / Regional COOP Program Manager for Region V (312-408-5500):
  - Manages COOP related activities, training and acts as a liaison between your organization and the National Continuity Programs (NCP) Directorate
- FEMA Headquarters (202-646-2500)
- [IS 1300 Introduction to COOP](#)
- [IS 520 Introduction to COOP for Pandemic Influenza](#)
- [Continuity Resources and Technical Assistance](#)
- [Continuity Assessment Tool](#)

For additional information on Emergency Preparedness:  
[in.gov/health/emergency-preparedness](https://www.in.gov/health/emergency-preparedness)

