

Geographic Area Command



Appendix to:

Georgia Emergency Operations Plan-Incident Annex A: Hurricane CONPLAN ("Georgia Hurricane Plan")

2013



Incident Annex A: Hurricane CONPLAN

Appendix 4: Geographic Area Command

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Geographic Area Command shall be established to oversee the management of an area consisting of multiple counties that anticipates an allocation of numerous state resources and/or have multiple incident management teams (IMTs) assigned. The purpose of Geographic Area Command is to provide command authority and coordination of state resources for simultaneous incident response in multiple jurisdictions.

Scope & Applicability

The Geographic Area Command Annex provides a framework for managing an incident large in geographic scope. Geographic Area Command is a component of Command and Control under the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and is in compliance with the National Response Framework (NRF). The Geographic Area Command structure does not supplant the Incident Command (IC) or Unified Command (UC); rather, it supports and provides direction for existing protocols and procedures. The purpose of the Geographic Area Command structure is oversee the management of the incident(s) with a focus on cohesive direction from the State Operations Center (SOC) to individual counties; strategic assistance provided to individual areas or jurisdictions, prioritizing limited resources for the most critical needs; and to provide for interagency coordination of an incident or incidents among State and local authorities, as well as across agencies within these jurisdictions.

Glossary of Terms

Geographic Area Command: An organization established to oversee the management of multiple incidents that are each being handled by a separate Incident Command System organization or to oversee the management of a

very large or evolving incident that has multiple incident management teams engaged. The Director of GEMA or his or her designee(s) makes the decision to establish a Geographic Area Command. Geographic Area Command is activated only if necessary, depending on the complexity of the incident and incident management span-of-control considerations.

Incident Command (IC): Entity responsible for overall management of the incident. Consists of the Incident Commander, either single or unified command, and any assigned supporting staff.

Unified Command (UC): An Incident Command System application used when more than one agency has incident jurisdiction or when incidents cross political jurisdictions. Agencies work together through the designated members of the UC, often the senior person from agencies and/or disciplines participating in the UC, to establish a common set of objectives and strategies and a single Incident Action Plan.

State Operations Center (SOC): Typically, the State Operations Center (SOC) refers to the physical location at which the coordination of information and resources to support those incidents and or events that warrant a significant state response. The current Georgia SOC is co-located with GEMA Headquarters in Atlanta, GA. Alternate SOCs are identified and may be activated when necessary. In this context of this appendix, the SOC shall refer to the authority held by GEMA's Director of Operations or his or her designee(s).

Planning Assumptions

- A. Geographic Area Command will be established by the Director of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency/Office of Homeland Security or his or her designee.
- B. The Geographic Area Command structure shall be patterned after ICS Command and General Staff positions, in accordance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the National Response Framework (NRF).
- C. Geographic Area Command staff shall be given written, delegated authority to accomplish established objectives. This delegation of authority shall be conveyed to local jurisdictions, all members of the Georgia Emergency Operations Command, and state agencies with

emergency responsibilities as identified in the Georgia Emergency Operations Plan.

- D. The Geographic Area Command structure does not supplant the Incident Command (IC) or Unified Command (UC); rather, it supports and provides direction for existing protocols and procedures.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Activation

When it is anticipated there will be a need to activate Geographic Area Command, the State Operations Center shall convene to designate Area Commanders and other staff as appropriate. These selections shall be approved by the Director of GEMA. When Geographic Area Command is activated, Area Commanders will be designated and given appropriate delegations of authority in the form of written Delegation of Authority statements. These written statements will help to eliminate confusion and provide the Area Commanders with the authority to prioritize resources within their assigned areas. Each county within a Geographic Area Command shall be notified that Geographic Area Command has been established.

When Geographic Area Command is activated, the SOC shall determine the scale of the organization based on incident response needs. This information shall be conveyed to the Area Commander. The SOC shall designate staff for the Command Post. While the SOC has final authority regarding staffing, the Area Commander's opinion and concurrence should be sought. During activation, the SOC and Area Commander should agree on support needs (i.e., computers, printers, communication systems). The Area Commander and SOC should also establish initial operating procedures.

After Geographic Area Command has been activated and command staff has been designated, the Area Commander shall provide guidance to command staff on the scope of the assignment; convey the expectations, guidance, and authority of the SOC to command staff; and assign tasks to command staff as appropriate. Also, command staff shall clarify their individual roles and responsibilities and confirm individual support needs.

Duties and Responsibilities

In general, Geographic Area Command personnel are responsible for:

1. Supporting overall incident-related priorities, in keeping with the State's overarching objectives as established by the SOC;
2. Ensuring that incidents are managed properly and within the overarching objectives of the Georgia Emergency Operations Command, as directed by the SOC;
3. Ensuring that incident objectives are met and do not conflict with each other or with State policies or procedures;
4. Allocating critical resources based on priority, including, but not limited, to manpower, supplies, goods, and services, and other such resources.

Duties and responsibilities for essential Geographic Area Command personnel are outlined in a following section.

Staffing

The Geographic Area Command organization should be kept as small as possible. The size of the organization will be determined by the SOC, in consideration of the support requirements of the incident. The organization will follow the standard ICS principles of flexibility and scalability. Geographic Area Command staffing will typically consist of the following positions:

- a. Area Commander
- b. Deputy Area Commander
- c. Area Command Planning Chief
- d. Area Command Logistics Chief
- e. Area Command Finance Chief
- f. Area Command Public Information Officer

The Geographic Area Command organization does not, in any way, replace the on-scene incident organizations or functions. Rather, Geographic Area Command shall act as a coordinating body between the SOC and incident command within each county.

Geographic Area Command Positions

In order to serve within Geographic Area Command, candidates must have significant emergency response experience within the State of Georgia. He or she must be a current State employee; recent State retiree; GEMA Reservist; or have had current or prior experience in county or local emergency management. In addition, the individual must have an operations background and leadership experience.

The Area Commander position is critical for the proper functioning of the Geographic Area Command structure. Other positions may or may not be filled depending on the scope of the incident.

A. Area Commander

The Area Commander is responsible for the overall prioritization of resources being assigned to IMTs and EOCs in his or her area of responsibility. He or she shall ensure that conflicts are resolved, incident objectives are established, and that Geographic Area Command strategies meet the priorities and objectives established by the SOC. The Area Commander shall also coordinate with local, State, federal, volunteer assisting, and other cooperating organizations as appropriate for incident response.

For the incidents under its authority, the Area Commander shall utilize the priorities, objectives and resources allocated by the State to accomplish the following specific duties.

1. Receive the overarching objectives from the SOC and develop supporting area objectives and priorities.
2. Establish, in writing, critical resources use priorities for the incidents (or among various incidents as necessary).
3. Participate in established Incident Action Plan (IAP) development or Command and Control coordination calls with the SOC, local incident commanders, and local emergency management officials.
4. Ensure that incident management team personnel assignments and organizations are appropriately structured and tasked.
5. Rapidly assess each incident and ensure that incident action planning is addressing the priorities and direction set by the Georgia Emergency

Operations Command and SOC, and is addressing the needs of the local jurisdictions.

6. Provide the status of previously established, current, or future incident objectives to the SOC and local incident commands.
7. Coordinate the re-assignment or demobilization of resources for all assigned incidents.
8. Maintain contact with officials in charge of the SOC.
9. Maintain contact with local emergency management officials, who shall retain jurisdictional authority within individual counties.
10. Develop protocols and procedures including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Incident priorities as assigned to particular agencies or jurisdictions
 - b. Priorities for assignment of critical resources
 - c. Schedules for meetings and briefings
 - d. Incident Action Plans and other required reports
 - e. Points of contact for agency executives and subject matter experts
 - f. Media relations and media contact procedures
 - g. Unusual situation and emergency procedures reporting
 - h. Demobilization procedures
 - i. Record-keeping and cost tracking procedures

B. Deputy Area Commander

The Area Commander may have one or more Deputy Area Commanders from the same agency or from an assisting agency. The Deputy Area Commander should have the same qualifications as the Area Commander, and he or she must be ready to assume the position of Area Commander should there be a need. The Deputy Area Commander shall assist the Area Commander with command duties for his or her assigned Geographic Area Command. When span of control becomes an issue for the Area Commander, a Deputy Area Commander may be assigned to manage particular IMTs; act as liaison to particular local officials; or oversee a portion of the command staff.

C. Area Command Planning Chief

The Area Command Planning Chief is responsible for collecting, evaluating, managing, and disseminating information within the Geographic Area

Command. He or she will work closely with the Area Commander to develop objectives and priorities to present to the SOC for inclusion in the IAP. This position will coordinate closely with the Planning Chief in the SOC and provide him or her with information on planning issues, progress and status of response activities within the Geographic Area Command. Likewise, the SOC Planning Chief, as Planning Chief of the overall response, will communicate planning issues and the progress and status of response from a regional, statewide, and national perspective.

D. Area Command Logistics Chief

The Area Command Logistics Chief is responsible for maintaining the status of all critical tactical resources (equipment and associated personnel). This position will coordinate closely with the SOC regarding the status, location, and usage of critical tactical resources. The SOC will communicate regional and statewide resource availability to the Logistics Chief, and coordinate the allocation of these resources to other Geographic Area Commands as necessary.

E. Area Command Finance Chief

The Area Command Finance Chief is responsible for all financial, administrative, and cost analysis functions of the Area Command. The Finance Chief will serve a variety of functions on behalf of the Geographic Area Command. These include, but are not limited to, providing financial and cost analysis information as requested by the Area Commander; ensuring that personnel time records are accurately completed and reported to the SOC; briefing the Area Commander on all incident-related financial issues; providing financial input to demobilization planning; and maintaining daily contact with the Finance Chief in the SOC on finance matters related to the incident. The SOC will communicate to the Area Command Finance Chief any information pertinent to the financial operation of the Geographic Area Command.

F. Area Command Public Information Officer

The Area Command Public Information Officer will serve as the on-scene Public Information Officer for the Geographic Area Command jurisdiction. In coordination with ESF 15, the person in this position is responsible for developing and releasing information about the incident on behalf of the SOC to local news media, among incident personnel, and to other appropriate agencies and

organizations. The Area Command Public Information Officer will provide guidance to local PIOs on behalf of GEMA. In addition, he or she will serve as a conduit to disseminate information on behalf of county and local emergency management agencies. The Area Command Public Information Officer must coordinate very closely with the Public Information Officer in the SOC and with other Area Command Public Information Officers to ensure that news releases and other information disseminated is consistent and accurate. This coordination may take place in the form of daily meetings or conference calls, to be determined by the SOC Public Information Officer.

Integration with SOC Operating Cycle

The operations of the Geographic Area Command structure will be integrated with the operating cycle in the SOC during an emergency activation. This process is described as follows.

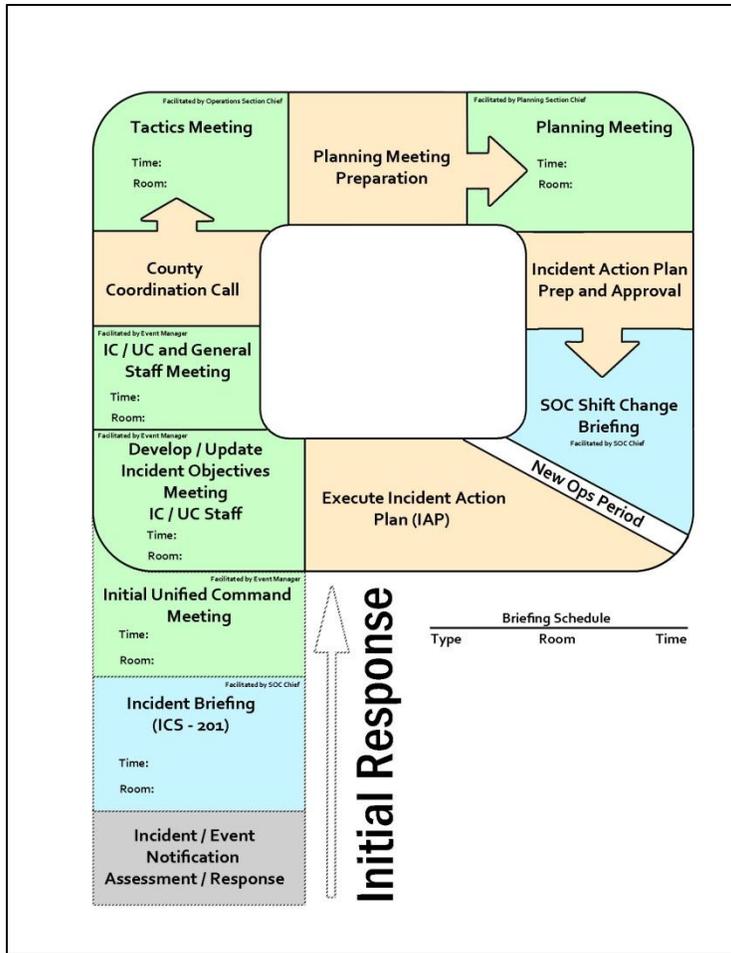


Figure 1. SOC Operating Cycle

For major incidents for which large-scale impacts and response are anticipated, Geographic Area Command may be initiated during the first phase of the operating cycle (Incident/Event Notification Assessment/Response). For all other large-scale incidents where the incident is not anticipated, Geographic Area Command may be initiated at the beginning of a new operating period.

- A. For the Geographic Area Command, incident briefings will coincide with the incident briefing schedule utilized in the SOC. During an initial Executive Briefing, Area Commanders and other Geographic Area Command staff shall be briefed by the SOC on the overall situation. Area Commanders shall receive policy guidance; clarify the scope of the effort; confirm critical information reporting requirements; identify any social, political,

environmental or economic issues; identify on-scene commanders; and receive information on the command post and other critical incident facilities.

A Geographic Area Command briefing will follow the Executive Briefing. This is an opportunity for each Area Commander to meet with the incident commanders (county emergency managers) that fall within his or her Geographic Area Command. The Geographic Area Command Briefing will have a structure similar to the Executive Briefing; the Area Commander and incident commanders will clarify the scope of the effort; confirm communication protocols; identify any social, political, environmental, or economic issues; and relay information on the command post and other critical incident facilities.

- B. During the phase “Develop/Update Incident Objectives Meeting – IC/UC Staff” in the SOC (see *Figure 1*), based on feedback received in the Geographic Area Commander briefing, each Area Commander will develop and submit to the SOC overall incident objectives. The incident objectives from each Geographic Area Command will be compiled into the incident objectives for the State. During the following IC/UC and General Staff Meeting (see *Figure 1*), the command and general staff will have an opportunity to discuss the submitted incident objectives with each Area Commander as necessary.
- C. Prior to the County Coordination Call (see *Figure 1*), each Area Commander will convene once more with his or her incident commanders to discuss potential strategies to achieve the established incident objectives. Area Commanders, with the assistance of the Area Command Logistics Chief, will also identify what resources are needed, and the availability and status of these resources within the Area Command. During the County Coordination Call, the SOC will discuss with each Area Commander the strategies that will be employed to achieve each area’s incident objectives. Any resource needs will be discussed; these will either be met by a neighboring Geographic Area Command or submitted to the SOC as a Request for Assistance (RFA). The feedback received during the County Coordination Call will be used by each Area Commander to finalize tactical strategies to achieve objectives; assign resources to implement the tactics; and identify

methods for monitoring tactics and resources. These will be presented in the Tactics Meeting (see *Figure 1*).

- D. As operations progress within each Geographic Area Command, the Area Command Planning Chief will gather information for inclusion in the statewide Incident Action Plan (IAP). (This takes place during "Planning Meeting Preparation" in the SOC's operating cycle.) He or she will draw from the following sources during the information-gathering process: deliverables from the Tactics Meeting, such as ICS Form 215 and 215a; an assessment of the effectiveness of current operations and resource efficiency; and other pertinent information that may be used to support incident management decisions. During the Planning Meeting (see *Figure 1*), the SOC will convene once more with the Geographic Area Commanders to review and validate the operational plan. The SOC Planning Chief will use the feedback from this meeting to prepare the IAP for approval.
- E. During the Operations Period Briefing (see *Figure 1*), the SOC will present the approved IAP to Geographic Area Commanders to brief them on current operations and discuss any possible changes in strategy. This phase typically signals the end of the operating period.
- F. During operations, as the IAP approved during the previous operating period is executed, the Geographic Area Command staff and SOC will monitor the progress and status of activities on an ongoing basis to ensure incident objectives are being successfully met. It is the Area Commander's responsibility to keep the SOC informed of progress and issues; resolve issues as they occur; follow-up with Geographic Area Command personnel on work assignments and open actions; attend pertinent meetings and briefings scheduled by the SOC (via conference call or other virtual means); evaluate staff effectiveness and order additional resources as needed; and provide clarification, guidance, and leadership for the Geographic Area Command unit. Likewise, the SOC has the responsibility to remain transparent and accessible to the Area Commander and Geographic Area Command personnel; provide State resources as available; serve as a liaison between the Geographic Area Command and State and federal government entities; and provide guidance, leadership, and support to assist the Geographic

Area Command in successfully meeting its objectives and supporting the needs of the impacted counties.