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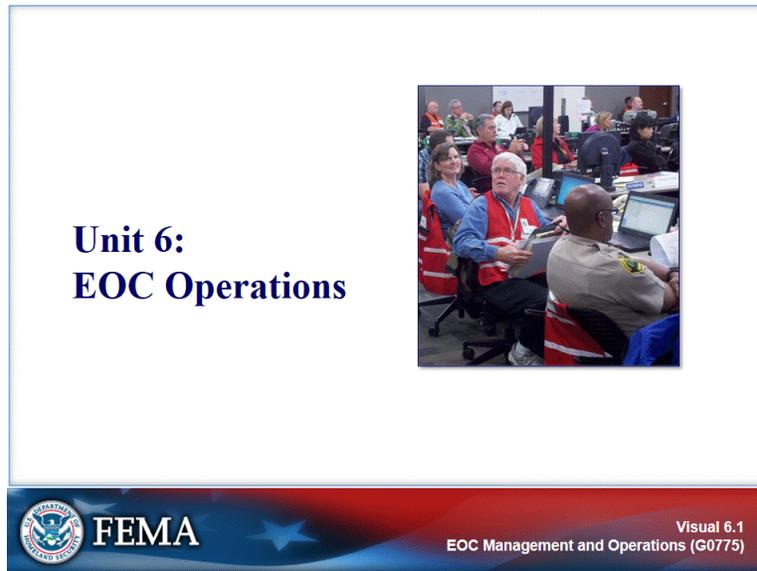
## **UNIT 6. EOC OPERATIONS**

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**INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

**Visual 6.1**



**Key Points**

Unit 6 will cover EOC operations from activation and deactivation to managing stress.

**INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

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**Visual 6.2**

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**Unit 6 Objectives (1 of 2)**

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- Discuss activation and deactivation of the EOC.
- Describe the common interface between the EOC and Incident Command.
- Discuss the importance of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- Develop strategies to resolve common operational problems at the EOC.



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**Key Points**

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At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Discuss activation and deactivation of the EOC.
- Describe the common interface between the EOC and incident command.
- Discuss the importance of SOPs.
- Develop strategies to resolve common operational problems at the EOC.

**INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

**Visual 6.3**

**Unit 6 Objectives (2 of 2)**

- Identify the concepts and purposes for detailed documentation in the EOC.
- Discuss the importance of “perception” during EOC operations.
- List the physical, cognitive, and behavioral challenges of long-term EOC operations.
- Provide effective psychological support to EOC staff.



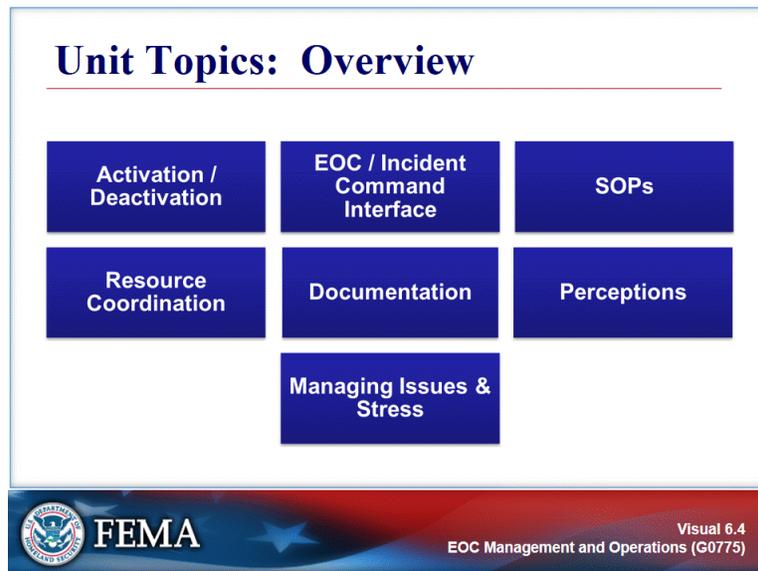
**Key Points**

At the end of this lesson, you also will be able to:

- Identify the concepts and purposes for detailed documentation in the EOC.
- Discuss the importance of “perception” during EOC operations.
- List the physical, cognitive, and behavioral challenges of long-term EOC operations.
- Provide effective psychological support to EOC staff.

### ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION

#### Visual 6.4



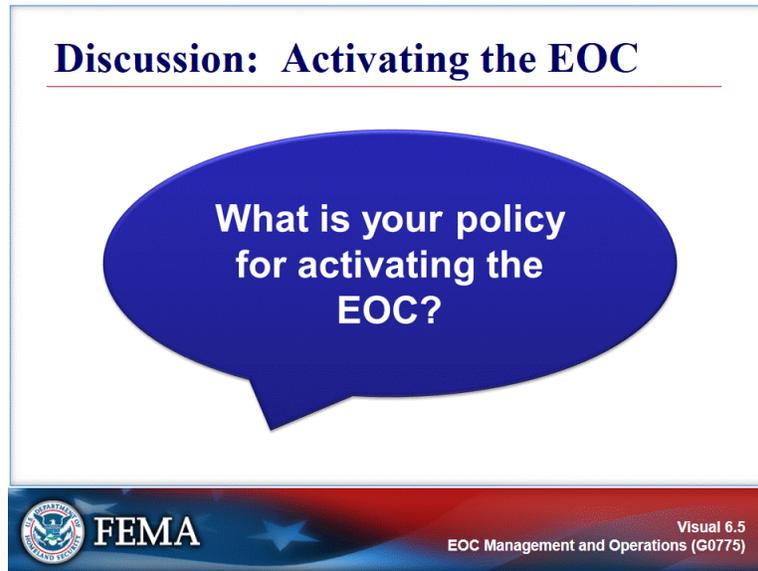
#### Key Points

This unit is divided into the following topics:

- Activation and Deactivation
- EOC Incident Command Interface
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Resource Coordination
- Documentation
- Perceptions
- Managing Issues and Stress

**ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION**

**Visual 6.5**



**Key Points**

**Discussion Question: What is your policy for activating the EOC?**

ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION

Visual 6.6

**Activating the EOC: Triggers**

- **Events:** Threshold event occurs as described in the EOP.
- **Type of Command:** Unified Command or Area Command established.
- **Complexity:** Multiple jurisdiction or intra-jurisdiction department responding.



**Key Points**

Some common triggers for activating the EOC include:

- **Events:** When threshold events described in the EOP occur (i.e., earthquake of a certain magnitude, terrorist event, etc.).
- **Type of Command:** When a Unified Command or Area Command is established.
- **Complexity:** When more than one jurisdiction or intra-jurisdiction department becomes involved in the response.

ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION

Visual 6.7

**Activating the EOC: Additional Triggers**

- **Expanding Incident:** Reports indicate the incident could expand.
- **Past Experience:** Similar incidents required EOC coordination.
- **Mutual Aid:** Other jurisdictions request support.
- **Policy:** Policy dictates activation.



Key Points

Additional triggers include:

- **Expanding Incident:** When an Incident Commander indicates that the incident could rapidly escalate or expand.
- **Past Experience:** If similar incidents have required EOC activation (historical context or data).
- **Mutual Aid:** When other jurisdictions request support.
- **Policy:** When policy dictates activation.

ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION

Visual 6.8

**Document Activation of the EOC**



The decision to activate an EOC:

- Will vary by jurisdiction.
- Should be codified and properly documented when executed.



Activating the EOC 6.1



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Visual 6.8  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

The emergency manager, the local sheriff, and elected officials are some of the individuals and groups who may have the authority to decide when to activate an EOC in a jurisdiction.

While the decision to activate an EOC will vary from one jurisdiction to the next, the process of activating the EOC should be codified and properly documented in every jurisdiction. Jurisdictions should document the name and position of the individual(s) who make the decision to activate and under what specific authority the decision can be made.

Job Aid 6.1, “Activating the EOC”, is an excerpt from Jefferson County, AL’s Emergency Operations Plan. It spells out under what circumstances the EOC will activate, who has the authority to activate the EOC, and several other aspects of EOC activation and operation.

**ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION**

**Visual 6.9**

**Activating the EOC: Leadership**



**Jurisdictional leadership should understand:**

- **Who has authority to make the activation decision.**
- **The circumstances for activation.**
- **Applicable timeframes for activation.**
- **Initial level of activation.**

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Visual 6.9  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

EOC leadership should have a thorough understanding of:

- Who has the authority to activate the EOC.
- The circumstances or triggers for activation.
- Applicable timeframes for activation (ensuring that the EOC is not activated too late).
- The initial level of activation.

**ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION**

**Visual 6.10**

**Time-Phased EOC Activation**



Time-phased activation may be appropriate when:

- An incident is expected to expand or escalate over time.
- There is an advanced warning period before the emergency.
- There are planned events such as a convention.

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Visual 6.10  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

Many EOCs are activated all at once. However, there are incidents when a time-phased activation may be appropriate such as:

- An incident is expected to expand or escalate over time. Such events can include flooding, winter weather, civil unrest, and volcanic activity.
- There is an advanced warning period before the emergency. Such events include hurricanes and encroaching violent storms.
- In preparation for planned events such as political conventions, sporting events, potential civil unrest, and international summits.

When properly employed, time-phased activations may save resources, personnel, and money.

**ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION**

**Visual 6.11**

**Sample Activation Phases**

- Level 3 (Monitor)**
  - Key Personnel Only
- Level 2 (Partial)**
  - Key Personnel from Responding Agencies
- Level 1 (Full)**
  - All Personnel

 **Time-Phased Activation 6.2**

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Visual 6.11  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

Most EOCs have several phases of activation, ranging from a minimal, “watch level” phase to full activation that includes all personnel attached to EOC activations.

The Time-Phased Activation Job Aid 6.2 in the appendix to this unit offers more details on time-phased activation.

ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION

Visual 6.12

**Helpful Hint**

If you are developing new EOC procedures, research your State and neighboring jurisdictions' phases of activation first.

Aligning activation terminology and phase levels may help avoid confusion when multiple EOCs activate simultaneously.



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Visual 6.12  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Before establishing policy on the various levels of EOC activation, examine the activation levels of adjacent jurisdictions or neighboring EOCs, as well as the levels used by your State. Consider matching your activation levels to those of these neighboring jurisdictions to avoid confusion during activation.

For example, a State may have its highest level of activation designated as “Level 1,” while a local jurisdiction may have its highest level as “Level 3.” The terminology should match as much as possible to avoid confusion during an incident.

ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION

Visual 6.13

**Implement Activation Levels**

Based on:

- Jurisdiction’s threat and hazard analysis.
- Established triggers.
- Communications with the Incident Commander (IC) or Unified Command.

Do you have other examples?

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Visual 6.13  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Activation levels should be based on the jurisdiction’s hazard analysis. For example, hurricane threats could warrant several levels or phases of activation, whereas earthquake-prone areas may only need two or three levels or phases.

Other considerations should include pre-established triggers for a certain level of activation:

**Level 3 Activation:** Watch level or internally managed event that only includes the Department of Emergency Management. An example is the potential for minor flooding.

**Level 2 Activation:** Enhanced level of activation that includes more than one EOC partner.

**Level 1 Activation:** Full-scale activation of the EOC with all leadership and Emergency Support Functions reporting to the EOC. An example is an earthquake of greater than magnitude 6.0.

Also, an Incident Commander or Unified Command may communicate information that leads to a specific activation level.

**Discussion Question:** Do you have other examples of triggers that may help establish the degree of activation within your community?

**ACTIVATION AND DEACTIVATION**

**Visual 6.14**

**Deactivating the EOC**

Communicate with incident command and/or your internal EOC staff to determine:

- The current incident status.
- Ongoing and future requirements.
- Length of time required to meet incident objectives.
- When demand for resources and coordination will slow down.



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Visual 6.14  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

While the decision to activate an EOC may be spelled out, the decision to deactivate is not always as clear cut. The best way to determine when to deactivate is by having well-established communication with key individuals including Incident Commanders, Unified Command or Coordination, and by discussing or observing your internal EOC staff.

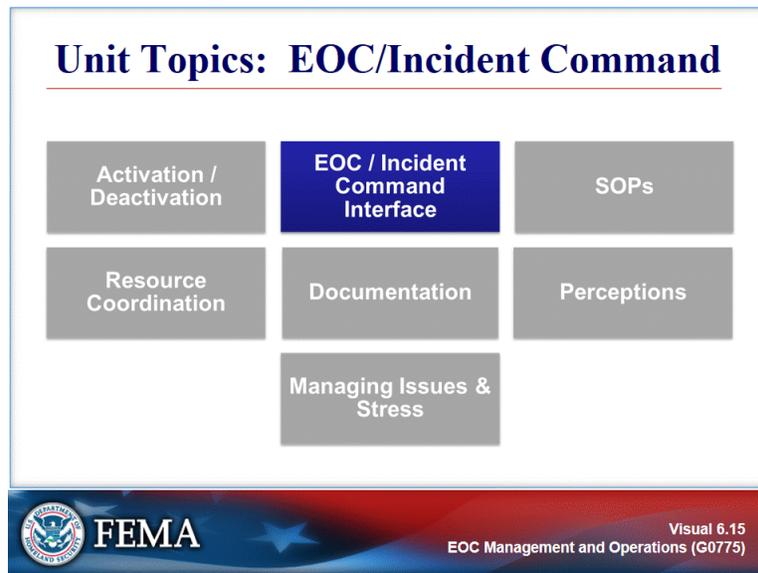
These individuals' best grasp:

- Current incident status and requirements for continued coordination and support.
- Ongoing and future requirements to meet incident objectives.
- Length of time required to meet incident objectives.
- When the demand for resources and coordination slows down.

Effective EOC managers can observe when staff in the EOC is “getting bored” or have nothing to do. When these observations become the dominate view of your EOC, it is time to consider deactivation of the EOC. However, it is critical that the EOC manager work in coordination and collaboration with senior EOC leadership and those impacted by events outside the EOC.

**EOC INTERFACE**

**Visual 6.15**

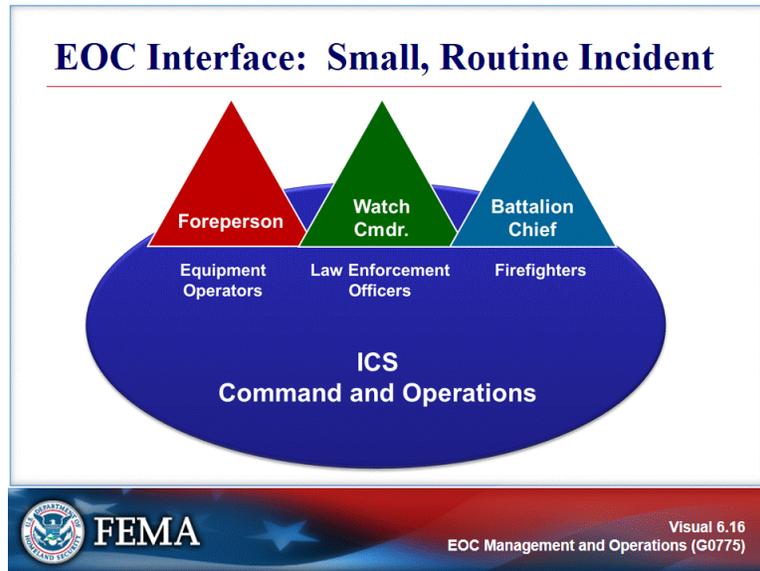


**Key Points**

The next topic in this unit is the EOC and Incident Command Interface.

EOC INTERFACE

Visual 6.16

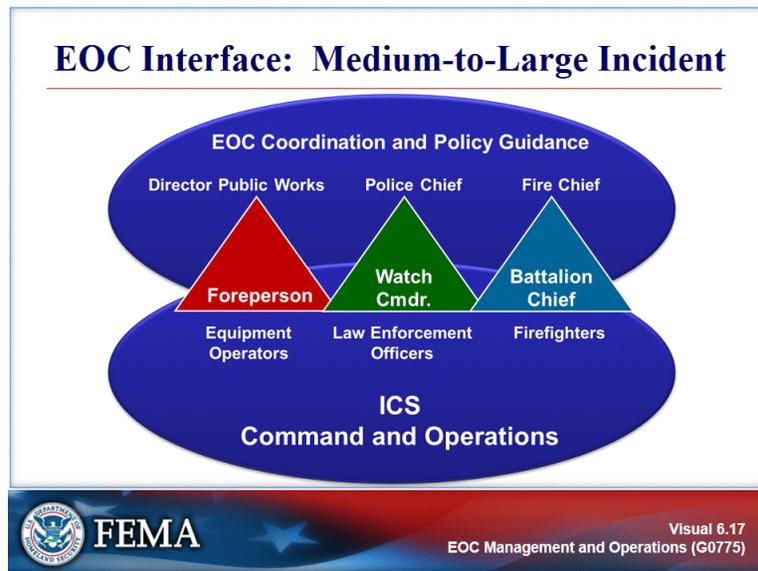


Key Points

The visual depicts an incident structure for a small, routine incident such as a house fire or traffic accident. Generally, policy and coordination functions are completed at the EOC. Routine incidents normally require little or no policy and coordination, so the EOC is not activated for these incidents. Incident coordination is handled on-scene by the Incident Commander and his or her staff.

EOC INTERFACE

Visual 6.17

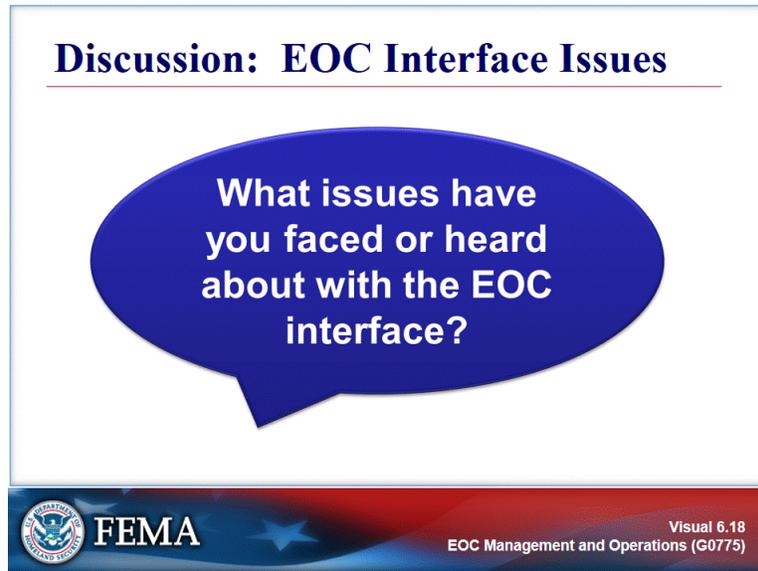


Key Points

As an incident expands in size or increases in complexity, central coordination is needed—and provided by the EOC. The visual depicts where an incident and the EOC may overlap. This point of overlap is called the ICS/EOC interface and it can be an area of disconnect in emergency planning.

**EOC INTERFACE**

**Visual 6.18**

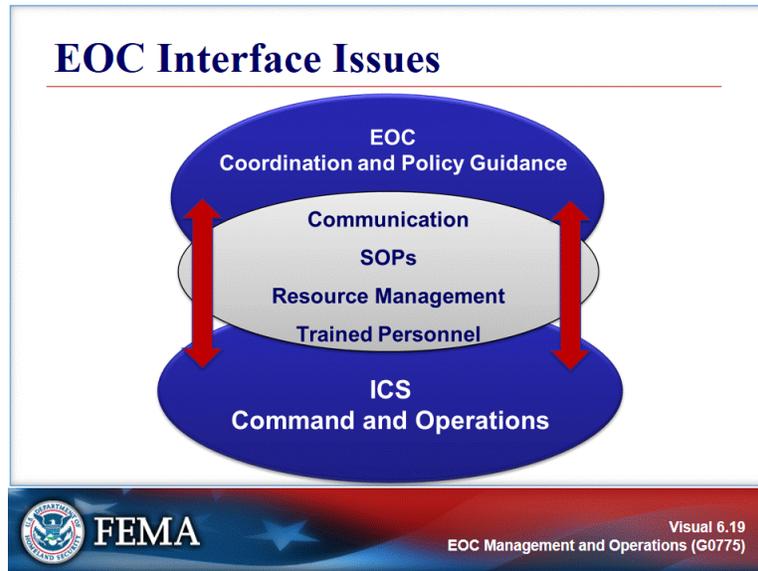


**Key Points**

**Discussion Question:** What issues have you faced or heard about with the EOC interface?

EOC INTERFACE

Visual 6.19



**Key Points**

Some of the more common ICS/EOC interface issues include:

- Communications (tactics, technology, and protocols for communication).
- Standard Operating Procedures.
- Resource Management (when and how to order and deploy resources as incidents grow).
- Trained personnel (EOC and incident personnel who do know or understand each other's jobs).

EOC INTERFACE

Visual 6.20

**Emerging Event**

What is the EOC's role at each stage of this emerging incident?



The visual contains three square images arranged horizontally. The first image shows a single house engulfed in bright orange and yellow flames with thick black smoke rising. The second image shows a residential neighborhood with multiple houses, some with smoke rising from them, and several fire trucks with flashing lights on the street. The third image shows a large-scale fire at night, with a bright orange glow illuminating the sky and silhouettes of buildings and cars in the foreground.

Single Home Fire      Neighborhood Fire      Community-Wide Fire

 **FEMA** 

Visual 6.20  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

The mission of the EOC as it activates is important to effective coordination of an incident. As an incident begins to emerge or grow, the scope of the EOC's operation should begin to come into focus.

The visual demonstrates a single event that is escalating and presenting potential challenges to an EOC.

**Discussion Question: What is the EOC's role at each stage of this emerging incident?**

**EOC INTERFACE**

**Visual 6.21**

**Emerging Event: Resource Management**

<b>Command Post:</b>	<b>EOC:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Identify needs</li><li>▪ Order resources</li><li>▪ Check-in resources</li><li>▪ Assign resources</li><li>▪ Track resources</li><li>▪ Demobilize resources</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Receive requests</li><li>▪ Prioritize requests</li><li>▪ Locate/order resources</li><li>▪ Assign according to priorities</li><li>▪ Track resource use</li><li>▪ Pay for resources</li></ul>



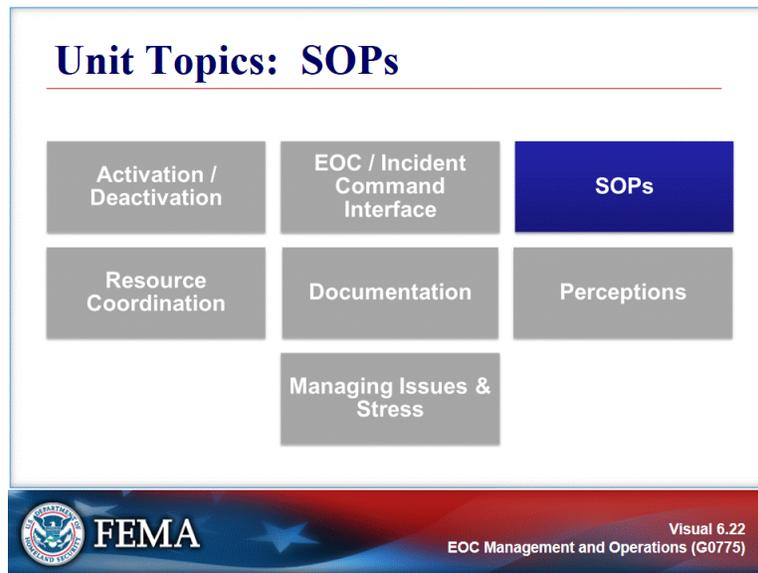
**Key Points**

Another aspect of an emerging event is resource management. This visual outlines the differences between an Incident Command Post (ICP) and the EOC when the issue is resource management.

Some EOCs will be working with multiple ICPs, exponentially increasing the complexity of resource management.

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

**Visual 6.22**

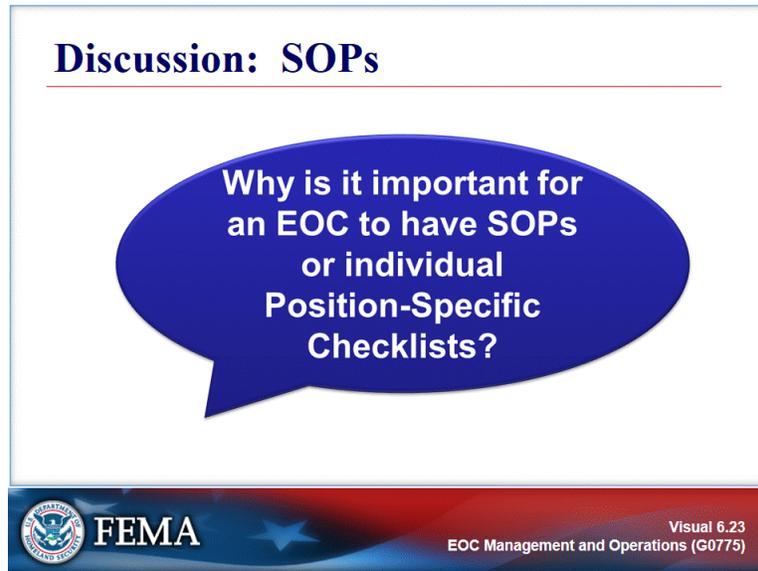


**Key Points**

The next topic in this unit is Standard Operating Procedures or SOPs.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Visual 6.23



Key Points

**Discussion Question:** Why is it important for an EOC to have SOPs or individual Position-Specific Checklists?

**Important Note:** If SOPs or Position-Specific Checklists are not in place when EOC staff report and begin coordinating, there is a risk of operations failure or disarray. In some cases, a new person or someone wholly unfamiliar with the particular position may report to the EOC. Emergency management professionals and EOC managers should not be explaining and training while an incident is occurring.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Visual 6.24

### SOPs: What is Included?

- What the position requires.
- When the SOP becomes effective/ineffective.
- A list of key tasks throughout operations.



**Develop SOPs or checklists for every EOC position.**

 **Sample Position Checklist 6.3**  
More checklists:  
<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/ICSResource/PositionChecklists.htm>



Visual 6.24  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

SOPs or Position-Specific Checklists should be developed for every EOC position.

Each SOP or Position-Specific Checklist should cover:

- What the position requires.
- When the SOP becomes effective/ineffective.
- A list of key tasks to be performed throughout operations at each activation phase.

There is an example of a Position-Specific Checklist (6.3) in the appendix for this unit. A comprehensive list of ICS position checklists can be found at:

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/ICSResource/PositionChecklists.htm>

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Visual 6.25

**Ongoing, Team Effort Approach**

Updating SOPs or Position-Specific Checklists should:

- Be a team effort in conjunction with leadership.
- Be part of the ongoing planning process.
- Occur after each activation, exercise, or (at a minimum) annually.

Do you have other suggestions?



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Visual 6.25  
EOC Management and Operations (G775)

Key Points

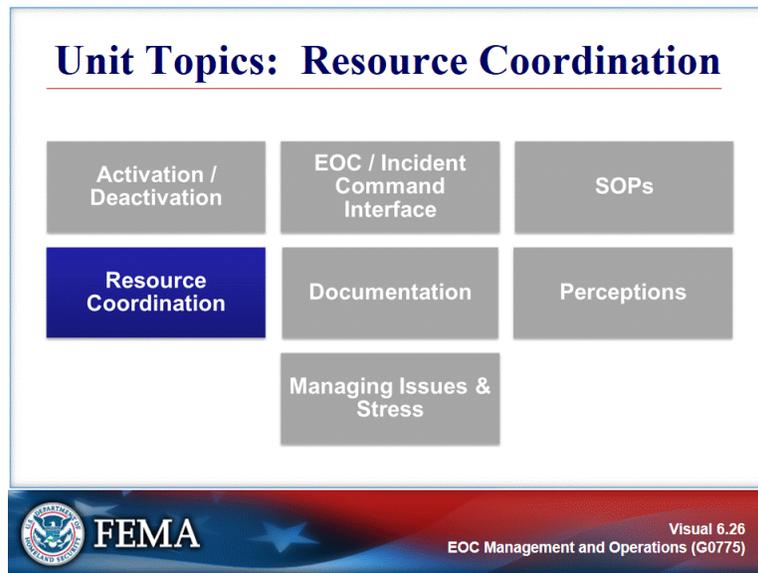
SOPS or Position-Specific Checklists should not be developed in a vacuum or by one person. Development should be a collaborative process including all relevant partners impacted by the potential actions and decisions made by the EOC staff member.

Checklists and SOPs should:

- Be a team effort in conjunction with leadership.
- Be part of the ongoing planning process.
- Occur after each activation, exercise, or (at a minimum) annually.

**RESOURCE COORDINATION**

**Visual 6.26**



**Key Points**

The next topic in this unit is Resource Coordination.

RESOURCE COORDINATION

Visual 6.27

**Resource Management**



**Triggers:**

- EOC activation (SOPs or Codified Policy)
- Dispatch workload increases beyond a specified threshold
- Unified Command or Area Command established
- Depleted mutual-aid resources

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Visual 6.27  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

Triggers for transitioning resource requests to the EOC will vary from one jurisdiction to the next, but some common triggers include:

- EOC activation (SOPs or Codified Policy).
- Dispatch workload increases beyond a specified threshold.
- Unified Command or Area Command established.
- Depleted mutual-aid resources.

Some communities have established policy that specifies coordination of resource requests through the EOC when the EOC has been activated. Although these types of policies can be controversial (Home Rule), such actions can eliminate confusion for first responders in the field on when to transition requests to the EOC.

Dispatch Centers such as 911 have unique situational awareness regarding incidents and can often recommend to an EOC coordination of requests—if a working relationship between the EOC and the Dispatch Center has been established.

Upon establishment of Unified Command or Coordination, many communities transition resource requests to the EOC.

A clear sign that the EOC should begin coordinating the resource management issues is when all available mutual aid resources have been exhausted.

RESOURCE COORDINATION

Visual 6.28

**Transitioning Resource Management**

Transitioning resource management from the ICP to the EOC must be:

- Clearly stated.
- Easily implemented.
- Supported by dependable communications.
- Documented.

What are your experiences transitioning resource management to EOC coordination?

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Visual 6.28  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

Regardless of the triggers to switch resource management to the EOC, activation must be:

- Clearly stated.
- Easily implemented.
- Supported by dependable communications.
- Documented.

**Discussion Question:** What are your experiences transitioning resource management to EOC coordination?

### RESOURCE COORDINATION

#### Visual 6.29

### Ensuring Qualified Staff



- Develop position descriptions and qualifying plans for every EOC position.
- Work closely with key personnel to ensure that external staff are fully qualified.
- Provide training opportunities for common tasks.
- Use information from exercises and operations to determine additional training needs.

 **FEMA**

Visual 6.29  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

#### Key Points

After completing the transition of resource management during an event, success of the EOC depends in many ways upon the staff selected or assigned to the EOC and their effectiveness in their specific position.

The Emergency Management Director or Coordinator may not have control over every staff member. He/she should:

- Ensure that Position-Specific Checklists are developed for every EOC position.
- Work closely with other key personnel to ensure that external staff are fully qualified.
- Provide training opportunities for common tasks.
- Use information from exercises and operations to determine additional training needs.

Trusted and established EOC staff (Operations Section Chief) may be able to help EOC leadership determine whether a staff member appointed or assigned to the EOC is performing as expected.

**RESOURCE COORDINATION**

**Visual 6.30**

**EOC Coordination With Other Entities**



**Common coordination points:**

- **Mutual aid requested.**
- **Technical specialists required.**
- **The emergency is widespread.**
- **A Federal disaster (Stafford Act declaration) is declared.**
- **An Emergency Declaration is declared in advance of a foreseen Stafford Act disaster.**

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Visual 6.30  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

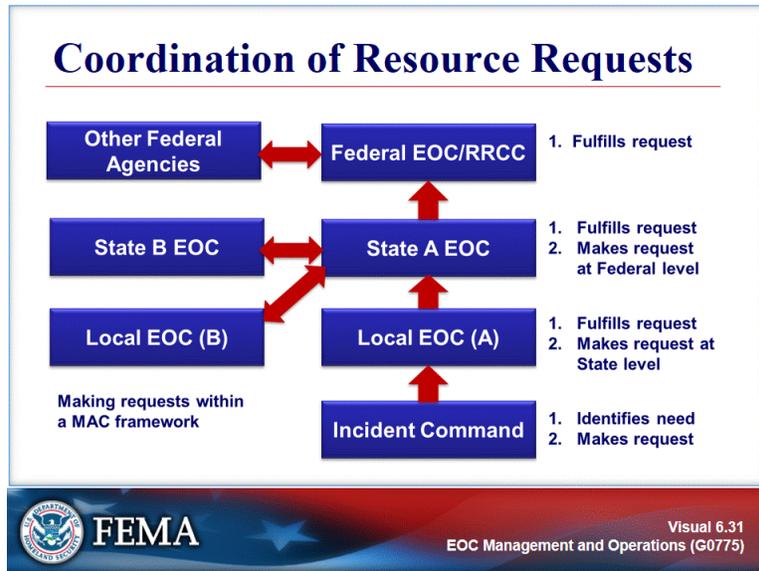
**Key Points**

Coordination points with other entities will vary, but there are common points:

- Mutual aid is requested.
- Technical specialists are required.
- The emergency is widespread.
- A Federal disaster (Stafford Act declaration) is declared.
- An Emergency Declaration is declared in advance of a foreseen Stafford Act disaster such as a hurricane.

RESOURCE COORDINATION

Visual 6.31



Key Points

This visual depicts the coordination of resource requests at a variety of levels: Federal, State, tribal, and local.

RESOURCE COORDINATION

Visual 6.32

### EOC Requests for Assistance

Initial requests may include:

- The type of incident.
- Time that the incident occurred/is expected to occur.
- Actions taken.
- Areas and number of people involved.
- Estimated loss of life, injuries, and extent of damage.
- Type and amount of assistance required.
- Contact for follow-up questions.

**Hint: Document your decisionmaking and requests!**



Key Points

Some of the information needed for an EOC request for assistance should include:

- The type of incident that has occurred.
- The time that the incident occurred or is expected to occur.
- Actions already taken.
- Areas and number of people involved.
- Estimated loss of life, injuries, and extent of damage (economy, environment, housing, etc.).
- The type and amount of assistance required.
- A contact for followup questions.

The information included in a request for assistance can influence key decisionmakers receiving the request by helping to paint an initial picture of the event as it has impacted the affected jurisdiction.

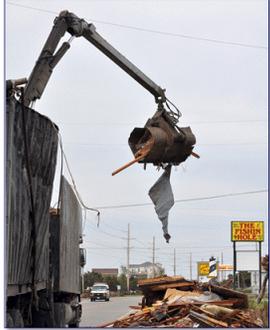
**Helpful Hint:** Documenting requests (what, to whom, and what time) can be a critical element of helping to recreate the incident if needed.

RESOURCE COORDINATION

Visual 6.33

**When You Request Assistance**

- Ask sooner, rather than later... you are competing.
- Be firm but realistic in your request.
- Focus on mission, task, objectives, and priorities.
- Follow established procedures and understand the existing nomenclature.



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Visual 6.33  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

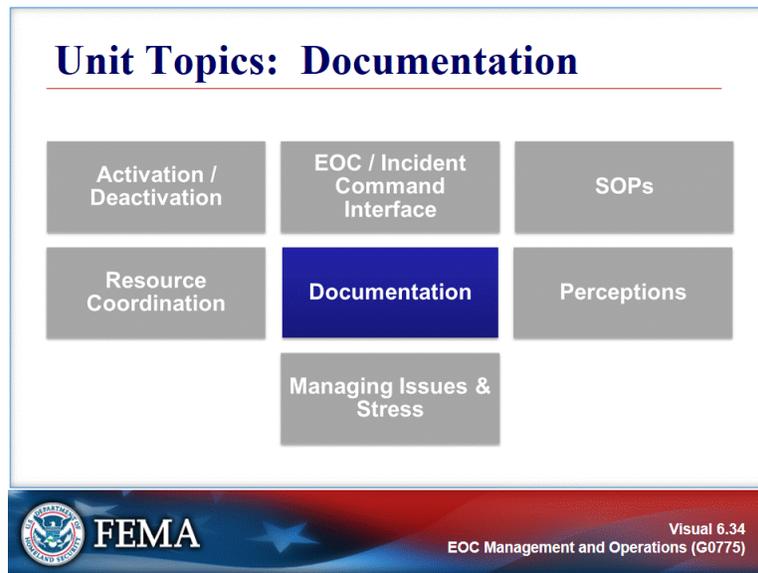
**Key Points**

The EOC is, in reality, competing for resources. During large incidents, EOCs are essentially incorporating situational awareness into their requests for assistance. Each request should consider the following:

- Ask sooner, rather than later.
- Be firm but realistic in your request.
- Focus on mission, task, objectives, and priorities.
- Follow established procedures and understand the existing nomenclature (how to speak the language).

**DOCUMENTATION**

**Visual 6.34**



**Key Points**

The next topic in the unit is Documentation.

**DOCUMENTATION**

**Visual 6.35**

**Documentation**

**Documentation is prevalent (and critical) before, during, and after EOC operations.**



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Visual 6.35  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

Documentation is a critical responsibility of the EOC before, during, and after EOC activation.

DOCUMENTATION

Visual 6.36

**Documentation During EOC Operations**

Provides:

- An archived account of activities.
- Data for reports:
  - Situation Report.
  - After-Action Report.
- Input for a Public Information Officer.
- Information for elected officials/policy makers.
- Information that may be required for legal issues.



**Key Points**

Documenting during EOC operations has several benefits for the impacted jurisdiction and for individual staff members working in the EOC. Documentation provides:

- An archived account of activities.
- Data for reports: Situation Report and After-Action Report.
- Input for a Public Information Officer.
- Information for elected officials/policymakers.
- Information that may eventually be required for legal issues (what exactly happened and what were they thinking at that time?).

Capturing information or decisions for the purposes of documenting will allow for those reviewing the event later, including emergency managers and the media, to view in real time the actions taken during an incident.

DOCUMENTATION

Visual 6.37

**Documentation: Decisionmaking**

Seattle Times  
December 16, 2009

**Situation:**

- The mayor called the county’s emergency coordination center to report a rising river.
- The assistant director of Emergency Management was to convey the information to the Corps of Engineers. They had no record of the call.
- The assistant director had no idea what number he called or who he talked to: “I’m positive I talked to somebody,” he said.

 Complete Seattle Times Article 6.4

 **FEMA**

Visual 6.37  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

The article from the 2009 flood events in the city of Pacific, Washington highlights the need to document decisions that are made within an EOC during activation.

Seattle Times  
December 16, 2009

Situation:

- The mayor called the county’s emergency coordination center to report a rising river.
- The assistant director of Emergency Management was to convey the information to the Corps of Engineers. They had no record of the call.
- The assistant director had no idea what number he called or who he talked to: “I’m positive I talked to somebody,” he said.

In the article, it appears as if the emergency management official failed to document who he had talked to, the time he talked to them, and the exact phone numbers of those he communicated with. While there may be more to the story than the article presents, it does appear that there were significant failures in documenting decisionmaking during an incident.

### DOCUMENTATION

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#### Visual 6.38

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#### Documentation After Response

- Provides record of recovery projects, plans, and costs.
- Tracks the progress of individual recovery projects.
- Identifies when a project is completed and can be closed.
- Supports financial and budgetary decisionmaking.
- Provides justification for cost recovery.



Visual 6.38  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

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#### Key Points

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When the impacted community begins to focus on recovering from the disaster, documentation plays a critical role in the ability of the jurisdiction in qualifying for and possibly receiving Federal assistance under the Stafford Act. Documentation:

- Provides a record of recovery projects, plans, and costs.
- Tracks the progress of individual recovery projects.
- Identifies when a project is completed and can be closed.
- Supports financial and budgetary decisionmaking.
- Provides justification for cost recovery (potential Federal reimbursement).

Documentation may also be important to a community even if it was not heavily impacted by an incident. For example, the community may have an opportunity to be added to a disaster incident as a contiguous community (county) if the State and neighboring community has been included in such a disaster declaration.

Unit 8 will explore the role of the EOC in the Transition to Recovery. Documentation is vital to the success of a jurisdiction as it seeks Federal and other types of assistance.

### DOCUMENTATION

#### Visual 6.39

### Documentation Strategies

- Develop a documentation plan.
- Establish policies before disaster strikes.
- Consider HR policies that offset potential Federal match requirements.
- Train and exercise all EOC personnel.
- Implement your documentation plan regardless of the prospect of Federal assistance.



 **FEMA** 

Visual 6.39  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

#### Key Points

There are several strategies an EOC can use to ensure that documentation occurs before, during, and after an incident. Strategies include:

- Develop a documentation plan or framework (purchasing technology for documenting).
- Establish documentation policies before disaster strikes.
- Consider HR policies that offset potential Federal match requirements.
- Regularly train and exercise all personnel involved in the EOC.
- Implement your documentation plan regardless of the prospects of obtaining Federal assistance.

DOCUMENTATION

Visual 6.40

**Documentation Tools**

- ICS forms
- Disaster assistance forms ([www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov))
- Video and audio
- GIS
- Off-the-shelf EOC management software

When high-tech tools fail during an EOC operation, revert to pencil and paper.

FEMA

Visual 6.40  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

Key Points

There are several ways to capture information from an EOC’s activation. Some of the documentation tools include:

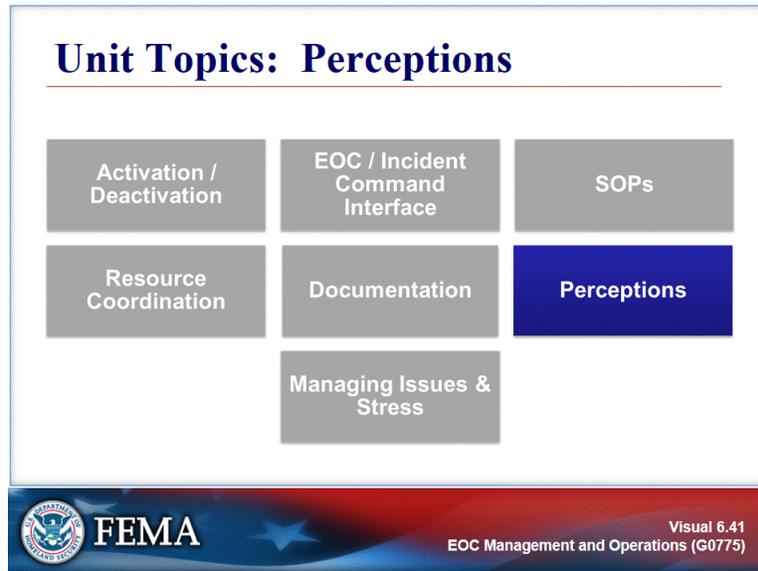
- ICS forms
- Disaster assistance forms
- Video and audio
- Geographic Information System
- Off-the-shelf EOC management software

And, when all else fails, a pencil and a piece of paper can be used for documentation.

**Important Note:** After documenting information, it must be archived for future use. Do not delete documentation until it is properly archived!

**PERCEPTIONS**

**Visual 6.41**



**Key Points**

The next topic in this unit is perceptions of the role of the EOC.

PERCEPTIONS

Visual 6.42

**Perceptions & EOC Success**



Understanding how your EOC is viewed, and what the expectations are for and from your EOC, is critical to your success.

Perception can influence the morale and the decisionmaking processes within the EOC if left unaddressed.

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Visual 6.42  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

Perception is often overlooked by emergency management professionals. While EOCs should never be overly concerned about image, they should have a clear understanding of what others perceive the EOC is doing ... or should do ... or would do. Emergency management professionals should know what first responders, elected officials, and the public expect of the EOC.

Perception of the EOC can impact the morale and decisionmaking processes within an EOC. During a disaster that includes coordination between several first responder groups and the EOC, perception and expectations must be consistent.

PERCEPTIONS

Visual 6.43

**A First Responder's Perception of the EOC**



Click image to play video.

Visual 6.43  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

This video provides insight into how first responders perceive the role of the EOC. Adam Thiel is Fire Chief for the Alexandria, VA Fire Department.

**Video Transcript:**

**John:** So let's begin with, I think, the primary question that a lot of students are going to ask regarding this particular module, and that is: How do first responders view or perceive the Emergency Operations Center in general?

**Adam:** You know, EOCs are really an essential aspect of support for those of us who work in the field. If we have a critical incident or a disaster approaching, it's one of the first things that I ask for is to have the EOC stood up and operational so we can get the coordination and support functions that we need.

**John:** So, there's clearly an impact. Can you talk about the impact that an EOC can have, whether it's positive or negative? Not just on fire, but you're working with first responders and in this case first responders, you know, fire, law enforcement, public works, and that list can go on depending on the incident. What kind of an impact, positive or negative, have you experienced with an Emergency Operations Center or Centers in the past?

**Adam:** You know, it's generally very positive. In the street, of course, we're always working together. But there's a lot of back end coordination that also has to occur across agencies and disciplines and sometimes even jurisdictions that we just can't do when we're in the middle of an emergency event. Whether it's standing out in the rain, the sleet, the snow, the heat, and the middle of a flood. So, a lot of that back end coordination/communication and that resource support has to come from the EOC because we just can't do it. We're really tasked and burdened with handling the incident and even though we do a lot of coordination on the scene, all of that back end stuff is really critical. You know, without a good logistics support, without

### PERCEPTIONS

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#### Visual 6.43 (Continued)

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good planning in the EOC, we're really sort of on our own out in the field, and it already kind of feels like that, so it's nice to know that the EOC has your back.

**John:** Great. Last question, and I know I'm asking this really on behalf of, I think, every emergency management organization, agency, department, or professional out there: What can we do as emergency management professionals in the EOC to help you guys?

**Adam:** You know I really think it comes down to support, support, support. Every Incident Commander understands that they're only as good as all the people who are taking care of them, who are supporting them and as long as it's, sort of, everybody stays in that lane and works together that way, it's an essential function and really, we are no good at all without the resources and the planning and everything that we get from the EOC and it's when those things start to diverge and clash a little bit that we have issues. But generally speaking, again, my experiences have been great and it really is nice to know that that EOC is there online and that they, somebody has your back.

PERCEPTIONS

Visual 6.44

**Activity: Perception of the EOC**

**Instructions:** Working in small groups:

- Think about how each of the following groups perceives the role of your EOC.
  - First responders
  - Elected or appointed officials
  - The larger community
- List three strategies for improving or enhancing your EOC's relationship with the whole community.
- Select a spokesperson and be ready to present in 10 minutes.



**Key Points**

**Instructions:**

Working in small groups:

- Think about how each of the following groups perceives the role of your EOC.
  - First responders
  - Elected or appointed officials
  - The larger community
- List three strategies for improving or enhancing an EOC's relationship with the Whole Community.
- Select a spokesperson and be ready to present in 10 minutes.

**MANAGING ISSUES AND STRESS**

**Visual 6.45**



**Key Points**

The last topic in this unit is Managing Issues and Stress.

**MANAGING ISSUES AND STRESS**

**Visual 6.46**



**Key Points**

During long-term operations, the issues you will most likely need to manage include:

- Documentation
- Resource depletion
- Fiscal issues
- Staff turnover and exhaustion
  - Heightened anxiety and shortened tempers

Suggestions for resolving long-term issues include:

- Advanced planning for long-term operations:
  - Disaster Reserves for operations.
  - Sufficient or “deep” staffing (planning for multiple shifts over long periods).
  - Pre-identified contracts when local resources begin to dwindle.
- Structured management of staff hours (ensuring staff is not over-working themselves voluntarily).
- Having rest periods and places available.
- A willingness to include counselors, stress managers, and mediators in the EOC.

**MANAGING ISSUES AND STRESS**

**Visual 6.47**

**Framework for Resolving Long-Term Issues**

- **Have all key decisionmakers at the EOC as soon as possible.**
- **Ensure the proper authority is present to resolve issues.**
- **Mediate when appropriate and necessary.**



**FEMA**

Visual 6.47  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

Resolving potential long-term EOC issues could be partially addressed by developing a simple resolution framework.

A Resolution Framework:

- Have all key decisionmakers at the EOC as soon as possible (EOC and Policy Group).
- Ensure the proper authority is present to resolve issues (Delegations of Authority).
- Mediate when appropriate and necessary.

This simple, three-step framework ensures that whatever issues arise, all stakeholders and the proper authority is present in the EOC to help resolve the problem.

MANAGING ISSUES AND STRESS

Visual 6.48

**Mediation Tips**

- Suspend judgment
- Listen carefully to all sides
- Analyze the discussion
- Offer recommendations



**Key Point:** Successful EOC operations can hinge upon a leader's ability to pull disparate pieces of his/her staff together when an internal crisis arises.

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Visual 6.48  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

Mediation may be an important strategy when issues and conflicts arise during long-term operations.

All parties involved in mediation should:

- Openly suspend judgment.
- Listen carefully to all sides.
- Analyze the discussion.
- Make recommendations and suggestions.

It is important to have an emergency manager or EOC Director/Manager with the skills to pull disparate individuals and issues together when an internal crisis arises.

**MANAGING ISSUES AND STRESS**

**Visual 6.49**

**Stress and Exhaustion**



- EOC operations can place tremendous stress on staff and leadership.
- Tension is inherent in the EOC environment after a certain (and unpredictable) period of time.
- It is possible to take action that mitigates tension.

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Visual 6.49  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

Sometimes stress and exhaustion are unavoidable in an EOC, placing pressure on leadership to resolve issues quickly.

While emergency management professionals may not be able to prevent stress and exhaustion, there are actions for mitigating them.

**MANAGING ISSUES AND STRESS**

**Visual 6.50**

**Signs of Stress and Exhaustion**

- **Personality changes**
- **Restlessness and/or aggression**
- **Changes in diet (inevitable) or failure to eat**
- **Inability to make decisions**
- **Reluctance to take breaks**



 Signs of Heightened Stress in Emergency Situations 6.5

 **FEMA** 

Visual 6.50  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

The first step is to recognize the signs that stress levels are rising in the EOC.

Some of the signs include:

- Personality changes.
- Restlessness and/or aggression.
- Changes in diet (inevitable) or failure to eat.
- Inability to make decisions.
- Reluctance to take breaks.

The appendix for this unit has a job aid listing several more ways that stress can present itself in your staff: Signs of Heightened Stress in Emergency Situations 6.5.

MANAGING ISSUES AND STRESS

Visual 6.51

**Managing Stress Levels: Before**

**Before EOC operations:**

- **Become a team.**
- **Provide all EOC staff with information about:**
  - **What causes stress.**
  - **How to reduce stress.**



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Visual 6.51  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

Managing stress levels actually begins before EOC operations. Before operations, emergency management leadership can make sure that the staff comes together as a team and pledges to watch out for each other. It is also helpful for leadership to provide all staff with information on the causes of stress and ways to reduce it. Helping staff identify signs of stress and providing useful techniques for reducing stress will help everyone during operations.

MANAGING ISSUES AND STRESS

Visual 6.52

**Managing Stress Levels: During**



**During operations:**

- Be alert for behavior changes.
- Act sooner rather than later.
- Protect the individual and the EOC's larger operations.

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Visual 6.52  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

To manage stress during EOC operations, you should encourage personnel to take breaks away from their desks and to get rest when the opportunity arises. Promote good eating habits and exercise. Be alert to behavior changes, such as irritability or the inability to make decisions. Act sooner, rather than later. Don't wait until an individual is unable to function. Mistakes made at the EOC can cause injury or death at the scene.

MANAGING ISSUES AND STRESS

Visual 6.53

**Managing Stress Levels: After**

**After operations:**

- **Demonstrate gratitude for service.**
- **Conduct stress debriefings.**
- **Follow up over a period of time.**
- **Involve other people (shared experience).**
- **Provide professional help, if necessary.**



 **FEMA** Visual 6.53  
EOC Management and Operations (G0775)

**Key Points**

Stress may not end when EOC operations end. After operations, some of the strategies you can use to manage stress include:

- Demonstrate gratitude for service. By demonstrating gratitude and compassion for your EOC staff, you set the stage for an even stronger commitment from them for the next event. More important ... you do the right thing.
- Conduct stress debriefings, both as personnel are demobilized and several days after returning to their day-to-day jobs.
- Follow up over time to ensure that personnel are coping effectively and returning to their “normal” state. Note that followup can be as simple as observing the individual as he or she completes daily job tasks or having a casual conversation around the coffee pot.
- Involve other people, especially managers and those who know and care about the person. The ability to talk through a troubling situation with a trusted friend is often helpful to resolving personal conflict and reducing stress.
- Provide professional help, if necessary. Professional help is often provided to responders at the scene but may be forgotten for those in the EOC. Professional counseling and other services should be made available to those EOC personnel who can benefit from it.

Additional information on stress management and the value of stress debriefings can be obtained from the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (<http://www.icisf.org>).

**MANAGING ISSUES AND STRESS**

**Visual 6.54**

**Discussion: Managing Stress**

What additional strategies have you used to manage stress levels?

The slide features a blue speech bubble with white text. At the bottom, there is a red and blue banner with the FEMA logo on the left and the text 'Visual 6.54 EOC Management and Operations (G0775)' on the right.

**Key Points**

**Discussion Question: What additional strategies have you used to manage stress levels?**

### REVIEW

#### Visual 6.55

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### Unit 6 Summary (1 of 2)

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#### We discussed:

- Activation and deactivation protocols and policies.
- The EOC interface and its relationship to incident command.
- The importance of SOPs in EOC operations.
- Strategies to resolve common operational problems at the EOC.



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### Key Points

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Key points from the unit include:

- Activation and deactivation protocols and policies.
- The EOC interface and its relationship to incident command.
- The importance of SOPs in EOC operations.
- Strategies to resolve common operational problems at the EOC.

**SUMMARY**

**Visual 6.56**

**Unit 6 Summary (2 of 2)**

**We discussed:**

- **Concepts and rationale for detailed documentation in an EOC.**
- **Perception and its impact on an EOC.**
- **Physical, cognitive, and behavioral challenges and signs of stress and exhaustion ... and how they impact EOC operations.**



**Key Points**

Additional key points include:

- Concepts and rationale for detailed documentation in an EOC.
- Perception and its impact on an EOC.
- Physical, cognitive, and behavioral challenges and signs of stress and exhaustion, and how they impact EOC operations.

**Notes:**