



*Georgia Department of Public Health*

# Function and Form of a Command Center

Presentation to:

***Advanced Healthcare Emergency  
Management Course***



*We Protect Lives.*



# Objectives

After completing this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify the purpose of a Command Center
- Differentiate a Command Center from an EOC
- Differentiate Command Center “function” from “form”
- Identify key tasks that take place in a Command Center
- Identify major design considerations for a Command Center
- Understand levels of Command Center activation and factors that determine those levels

# True or False?

The Command Center is *really a place where...*

Uncomfortable people  
meet in cramped conditions  
to play unfamiliar roles  
making unpopular decisions  
based on inadequate information  
in much too little time.



# What is a Command Center?

A central location to provide **command**, **coordination** and **decision-making** in support of the incident response



# Command Center vs. Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

## Command Center

- Focused on **Command and Control**
- Usually organization/facility-specific

## EOC

- Focused on **Coordination** of response/recovery activities
- May have representation from multiple agencies/organizations

# What is the Purpose of a Command Center?

To gather and process all of the information required to manage incident(s) and situational awareness...**quickly** and **effectively**.



# What Makes the Command Center Work?

Good **Function**  
and  
Good **Form**



*We Protect Lives.*

# FUNCTION: Key Tasks of the Command Center

- Communication and Intelligence
- Command and Control
- Coordination and Documentation





# FUNCTION: A Closer Look

# Communication and Intelligence

## Intelligence

To optimize decision-making, incoming messages and information must be:

- Gathered
- Evaluated/verified
- Analyzed
- Categorized
- Displayed

## Communication

To optimize situational awareness, ongoing communication is necessary with:

- Command and General staff
- Executive leadership
- Staff throughout the organization
- External partners (local and regional)

# FUNCTION: A Closer Look

# Command and Control

## Command:

The act of directing, ordering, or controlling by virtue of explicit statutory, regulatory, or delegated authority

## Command and Control

- Manage by objectives, relying on an Incident Action Plan
- Adhere to chain of command and unity of command principles
- Establish and maintain a common operating picture
- Make decisions and assign tasks
- Prioritize, deploy, and track critical resources
- Transfer command when appropriate

# FUNCTION: A Closer Look

## Coordination and Documentation

### Coordination

#### **Internally:**

- Command Center (Command and General staff)
- Executives
- Departments

#### **Externally:**

- Local emergency management
- Response partners
- Healthcare partners
- Media
- Regional/State partners

### Documentation

For legal and cost-recovery purposes, documentation of info received and response steps taken to include:

- ICS assignments
- Incident logs
- Plans
- Response actions
- Use of resources
- Costs incurred
- Timeline of activities

# So what makes the **function** of a Command Center effective?

- Use of basic management principles (Incident Command System)
- A good concept of operations
- Objective-based incident action planning
- Trained staff
- Delegation
- Unity of command (report to only one supervisor)
- Span of control (3 to 7 subordinates; 5 is optimal)
- Support staff
- Good use of technology
- Adequate space
- **Other?**

# FORM: Command Center Location

The Command Center location is driven by many factors:

- Space availability
- Political decisions
- Accessibility
- Proximity to hazards
- **Others?**

# FORM: Design Considerations

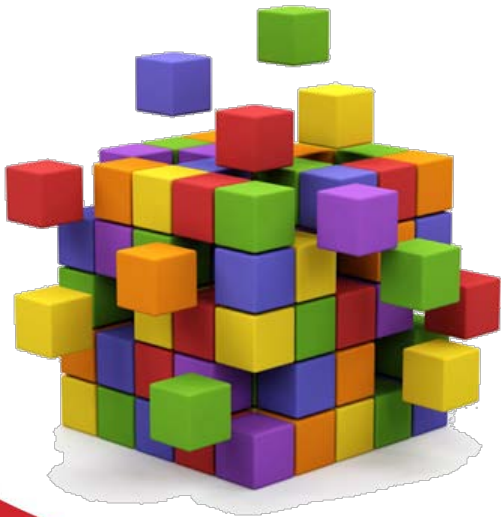
**Survivability**

**Redundancy**

**Communications**

**Flexibility**

**Security**



# FORM: Design Considerations

## Survivability

- **Command Center remains operational during incident** (for instance, you may not want it to be in a Board Room that has a whole wall of windows, if located in a tornado-prone region)
- **Backup Command Center is pre-designated and able to be activated and operational when needed** (exercise the backup Command Center!)



# FORM: Design Considerations

## Redundancy

- Closely aligned to Survivability
- Linked to the number of redundant systems that support the Command Center (IT, communications, utilities, generator power, etc.)



- Generator powered, BUT...a backup to the generator (One thing you can count on in a power outage is that generators will fail.)





# FORM: Design Considerations

## Communications

### Remember:

The Command Center exists for command and control purposes by gaining/maintaining situational awareness and coordinating resources and response activities; therefore...

**Communication is KEY!!!**

### Requires multiple communication systems:

- Hardline phones (landline/T1 lines)
- Cell phones
- Satellite phones
- Multiple radio systems (800 mghz, etc.)
- Amateur radio (HAM operators)
- IT/computers/projectors
- Internet connection/WebEOC (GHA911, Public Health)
- SouthernLINC
- Television (cable and “rabbit ears”)
- Weather radio
- **Other?**



# Design Considerations

## Flexibility

Design flexibility for:

- Scalable operations (requiring additional staff)
- Mission requirements (short activation vs. long activation)
- Information management and display (wall space, overhead projection, easels, whiteboards, etc.)
- New technology (requiring different wiring, etc.)



# Design Considerations

# Security

**Access control** (card readers, security checkpoints, etc.)

- Limit extra bodies
- Reduce chaos
- Away from media access



# Form Follows Function



Regardless of  
the space and setup  
you have, always remember that  
**FUNCTION is more important**  
than form.

**DON'T LET \$  
BE AN EXCUSE!**

# Does YOUR Command Center look like this?



The exterior of the new "Arlen Specter Headquarters and Emergency Operations Center", otherwise known as Building 21, located on CDC's Roybal campus in Atlanta, Georgia. *(Photo by James Gathany)*

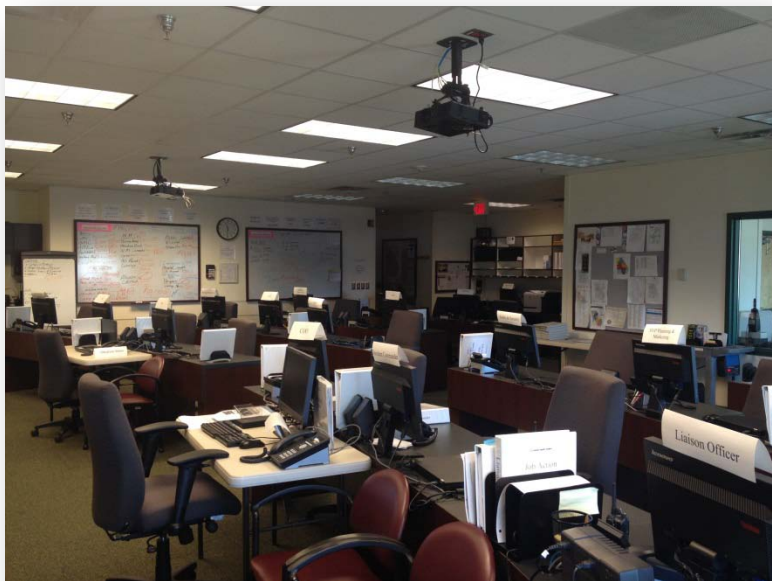


CDC Presentation by Julie L. Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H. Before the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee On Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education March 9, 2007

# OR like this?



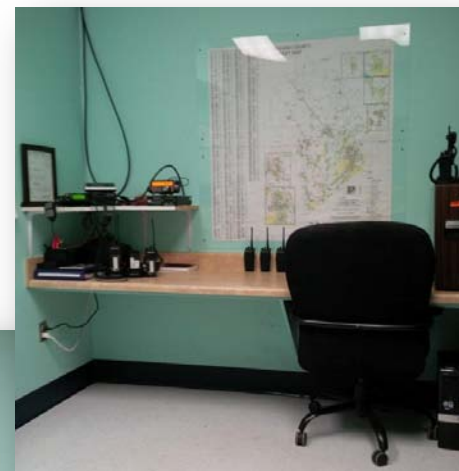
# OR this?



**Grady Health System  
Command Center**



**Effingham Health System  
Command Center**



# Remember:



*We Protect Lives.*



# Command Center Activation Levels

- **Determined by the organization**  
(examples: monitoring, partial, full OR Level 1, 2 or 3, **other?**)
- **Take into account:**
  - Type of incident
  - Location of incident
  - Impact of incident
  - Level of staffing
  - Resources



# Command Center Facility Considerations

## Communications Room

Consider using separate but adjacent space to keep noise pollution and interference in check.



# Command Center Facility Considerations

- Back-up power
- Potable water
- HVAC / air quality Concerns
- Weather monitoring
- Seating
- Computers
- Break-out rooms
- Telephones (multiple lines in and out)
- Alternate communications
- Video
- Large screen display/ multiple displays
- Meeting space
- Food
- “Chill-out” space
- Other?

**Be Flexible!**

# Space Challenges

- Problems when arranging and sharing space include:
  - Noise
  - Distraction
  - Clutter
- Additionally, when sharing space, consider:
  - Conflicts
  - Set-up time
  - Storage



# Practical Activity

My Command Center





*Georgia Department of Public Health*

## Function and Form of the Command Center

Questions?



*We Protect Lives.*

