

# OKANOGAN COUNTY Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

## EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTION 4

### FIREFIGHTING

#### RESPONSIBILITY SUMMARY:

##### Primary Response

Fire Services  
Emergency Medical Services  
Okanogan County Department of Emergency Management

##### Supporting

Okanogan Emergency Communications Center (Dispatch)  
Amateur Radio Emergency Services/Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service  
The American Red Cross  
Okanogan County Public Information Officer  
Law Enforcement  
Public Works Departments  
Public Power Utilities  
DNR  
USFS  
BIA  
BLM  
Washington State Patrol (Fire Marshal)  
DFWS  
Washington State Parks

##### Plan Preparation & Maintenance

Lead – Fire Services  
Okanogan County Department of Emergency Management

#### I. INTRODUCTION

##### A. Purpose

To establish policies for effective coordination between fire agencies and units in detection and suppression of wildland, rural, and urban fires, whether occurring independently or in addition to other disasters. These policies also address the coordination of fire agencies and units for the performance of specialized rescue operations and emergency medical services, coordination between fire services and other agencies such as law enforcement, and any other events requiring fire response.

**B. Scope**

Fire service functions involve managing and coordinating a variety of activities, and providing personnel, equipment and supplies in support of the emergency response. This coordination may be for a local, county, or regional emergency or disaster. The specific actions required following an emergency or disaster would be determined by the event.

**II. POLICIES**

- A. The Fire Chief has the authority to implement coordination for a fire resource mobilization and to request a state fire mobilization through Washington State Emergency Management Division (WAEMD). The WAEMD has the authority to mobilize jurisdictions under the Washington State Fire Services Resource Mobilization Plan, RCW 38.54.030.
- B. Per Chapter 76.04 RCW, DNR has the responsibility for wildfire protection on 12.7 million acres of non-federal (private, state and tribally-owned) forestland in the State of Washington. The DNR, Resource Protection Division, has the authority to respond to wildland fire suppression efforts, as well as the responsibility to respond to requests from other agencies for assistance for non-fire emergencies or disasters. USFS and BIA have responsibility for federal lands.
- C. Local fire departments and districts also function under the applicable portions of RCW's 38.52, 52.02, 70.136, WAC 212, other State and local ordinances, and their own Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). All of the fire departments/districts within Okanogan County have signed mutual aid agreements with the other departments/districts in the county. It is understood that emergencies and disasters can overwhelm local resources, or in other ways prevent agencies and jurisdictions from fulfilling all their roles and responses to requests for assistance.
- D. Only trained personnel should be used in fire control activities. Emergency worker volunteers may be used for other emergency work when properly instructed in how to assist the trained personnel.

**III. SITUATION****A. Emergency/Disaster Conditions and Hazards**

- 1. Under the best of conditions, the management of a large firefighting operation is complex, which often involves a large number of personnel, departments, agencies, and jurisdictions. Fires resulting from, or independent of, but coinciding with a man-made or natural disaster, will place extraordinary demands on available resources and support systems.
- 2. A significant natural or technological event may result in many urban, rural, and wildland fires. Ignition sources could cause hundreds of fires, both during, and after a disaster. The damage

potential from fires in urban areas, both during and after a major earthquake, exceeds that of all other causes. Urban fire departments not incapacitated by an earthquake or other disaster may be totally committed to fires and other emergencies in their jurisdictions. Numerous fires are anticipated in rural and wild land settings as well. These fires have the potential to spread rapidly, cause extensive damage, and pose a serious threat to life, property and the environment. Firefighting resources that are normally available will be difficult to obtain and utilize during and after a disaster because of massive disruption of communication, transportation, utilities and water systems.

Okanogan County has a wide variety of roads and highways, private, public and government buildings, schools, hospitals, and the county jail. The county has eight airports, with the largest being the Omak Airport is the third largest in North Central Washington and has the capability to land large aircraft. A variety of planes use these facilities. There are several airplane and helicopter aerial spray applicators in the county as well. There are rivers and streams of various sizes and flow, and a wide variety of geographical features, from the desert areas to the mountains. Okanogan County is vulnerable to high winds, dust storms, winter storms, extreme heat, significant thunderstorms, and power outages. There are areas that are vulnerable to flooding, and earthquakes have been recorded in the county. The Hazardous Materials Vulnerability Analysis (HIVA) and the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan indicates that there is a significant risk of a transportation related hazardous materials incident.

**B. Planning Assumptions**

1. Urban, rural, and wildland fires may result from, or occur simultaneously with another significant emergency or disaster. Large, damaging fires could occur.
2. Landline communications will be interrupted. Radio communications will be relied on heavily. Other sources are Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES), Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES), and the State EOC.
3. Wheeled-vehicle access may be hampered by bridge failures, landslides, and debris on the roadways, making conventional travel to the emergency location extremely difficult or impossible. Aerial attack by air tankers and assistance from smoke jumpers and helicopters may be essential. Aircraft, especially helicopters, will be scarce and airports may be damaged and/or very congested.
4. Wildland firefighting forces may be diverted to assist in rural and urban areas because of more urgent threats to life, property, and

the environment due to shortages of urban firefighters. Local firefighters may aid in dissemination of warning to the public in addition to fighting large and numerous fires.

5. Efficient and effective mutual aid among the various local agencies and jurisdictions, state and federal agencies requires the use of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), together with compatible equipment and communications.
6. Emergency Medical Services will be overwhelmed with many requests for assistance and/or large numbers of patients, and will face the same communication and transportation problems as fire services. Additional EMS personnel, equipment, and alternate methods of transporting patients may be needed. Communication with Dispatch and the county EOC may be hampered, and alternate communications methods may be needed.
7. The majority of firefighters and basic life support EMS providers within Okanogan County are volunteers. Most of the volunteers are both firefighters and EMTs or can perform first responders' duties. Resources being used for EMS are not available for firefighting, and resources being used for firefighting are not available for providing EMS. As a result shortages of either or both services could occur rapidly.
8. DNR may station a Helo helicopter at the Omak Airport during fire season.

#### **IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

##### **A. General**

1. Established firefighting and support organizations, processes, and procedures as listed in the Washington State Fire Services Resource Mobilization Plan (WSFSRMP) will be used in support of firefighting activities. Responsibility for situation assessment and determination of resource needs lies primarily with local jurisdiction Incident Command (IC) in coordination with the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Okanogan County EOC. The State DNR will manage and coordinate state owned wildland firefighting activities.
2. Situation and damage assessment information will be transmitted through established fire communication channels between county and state EOCs.
3. Fire agencies need to have a representative at the county EOC. As a matter of practice, a non-affected area or agency, will assign a fire coordinator to be available to represent the affected region at the county EOC.

**B. Organization**

1. Fire protection within Okanogan County is provided by Fire Districts 1 through 12, 15 & 16 with city/town fire departments located in Omak, Okanogan, Conconully, Brewster, Pateros, and Coulee Dam. Portions of Okanogan County are also protected by DNR, USFS, BIA, and BLM.
2. In Okanogan County EMS personnel and equipment are provided by Aero Methow Rescue Services, Lifeline, Fire District #15 EMS, Lifeline-Oroville, and Lifeline-Tonasket. Fire departments/districts also provide EMS personnel and equipment. The Okanogan County Fire departments/districts provide basic life support and transportation. Some of the basic life support providers have transport vehicles, but most do not.

**C. Procedures**

Local agencies and jurisdictions will be managed under the Incident Command System (ICS) while performing firefighting, rescue, and EMS activities as outlined in state and local regulations, SOPs, and this plan. The IC, regardless of rank, has the authority to request support and assistance from Okanogan County EOC or emergency management staff. The IC or Unified Commander (UC) will coordinate with EOC or emergency management staff for requests for assistance and resources.

**D. Mitigation Activities**

1. Various county departments and agencies perform mitigation activities by inspection of vehicles and marine craft, enforcement of codes and regulations, and keeping grass and brush mowed by the edges of roads and highways.
2. Okanogan County provides mitigation through inspections, enforcement of codes, and regional planning.
3. Okanogan County DEM provides mitigation through public awareness, education, and working with Okanogan County Planning Department.
4. Okanogan fire departments/districts perform mitigation activities by conducting informal and formal fire and safety inspections, making recommendations, and enforcing codes, where applicable. They also provide information and education to the public.
5. Local schools and businesses that conduct fire and evacuation drills are participating in mitigation.

**E. Preparedness Activities**

1. Various state departments and agencies are involved with preparedness by developing emergency plans and resource lists, training personnel, and offering training to other agencies and

- departments. They conduct emergency and disaster drills, and evaluate them.
2. County DEM develops SOPs and resource lists for the EOC and emergency management staff for managing response and recovery activities. Emergency management provides training opportunities to emergency responders and support groups and personnel, conducts emergency/disaster exercises and drills, and evaluates the exercises and drills. County emergency management participates in state and regional exercises and drills. Emergency management develops and maintains this plan with input from emergency response and support agencies.
  3. Local fire departments/districts, public works, and EMS agencies develop SOPs in accordance with state and local regulations and this plan. They acquire and maintain necessary supplies and equipment, and train personnel in their use. Training all personnel in the implementation and use of the ICS is imperative. Contributing to the development and maintenance of this plan and participation in emergency/disaster exercises and drills are also a major part of preparedness.

**F. Response Activities**

1. General response to emergencies and disasters typically begins with a single agency or jurisdiction. As the incident expands or local resources are expended, the response effort expands. However, some incidents require an immediate, large-scale response. In either case, a major concern is accountability and management of resources. The IC or UC structures are vital to the operation, and must be implemented immediately. A prompt and ongoing size-up is critical, so that necessary resources can be requested and dispatched quickly, and coordinated goals and objectives can be developed. Initial response actions must include coordination with law enforcement and other agencies that may be needed to assure emergency access to the scene, traffic control and preventing access to the general public. A staging area must be identified, and a staging officer designated. Other traffic and transportation safety issues should also be addressed.
2. The IC should make an early request for EOC or emergency management assistance or support, to allow for response time of staff and/or the incident escalating faster than anticipated. Mutual aid agencies and departments must work within the established ICS, while maintaining authority/control of their equipment and personnel. At the point when the incident has become multi-jurisdictional or multi-agency, a unified command may be established.

3. If volunteer groups or citizens are assisting fire services and/or EMS, the IC must assign a person to supervise and monitor them. Accountability of volunteers is a significant safety issue, as is assuring that volunteers are given some basic information on how to do their assigned tasks and are aware of basic safety and emergency procedures.
4. County EOC/Department of Emergency Management  
The decision to activate the county EOC may be made by DEM staff when a need or potential need for EOC assistance has been identified. The IC may also request activation of the EOC or support from DEM staff. The EOC will provide support and assistance as needed, and will maintain liaison with the State EOC as necessary.

#### **G. Recovery Activities**

1. Each department, agency and individual shall maintain accurate records of the incident. They will be responsible for maintaining disaster and recovery expense records for future possible reimbursement. Financial issues such as supplies used, equipment lost or damaged, wages for hours worked including overtime, and other costs require documentation before reimbursement is issued. If emergency vehicles, communications equipment, or stations are damaged, special contracts may be needed for their quick repair or replacement, and temporary or long-term arrangements may be needed. During the Recovery phase, it is imperative to maintain communication and coordination with the EOC. Fire departments/districts may provide public information regarding safety issues as people return to their homes and businesses. Departments, districts, and individuals involved in the emergency or disaster should participate in post event reviews and critiques, and contribute to written reports regarding observations and recommendations.
2. Support for the fire/EMS personnel is also part of recovery and returning to normal operations. This support may include counseling, or Critical Incident Stress Management (**CISM**).
3. Fire Departments will continue to communicate with the EOC/DEM and coordinate recovery activities, as priorities and resources allow. They will continue to assist with damage assessment reports and other requirements necessary for obtaining financial assistance for the county and involved cities or towns.

### **V. RESPONSE PLANS FOR SPECIFIC SITUATIONS**

#### **A. Aircraft Incidents**

1. The first arriving first responder will assume IC duties and request assistance as needed to implement key ICS positions/requirements

(i.e. Staging Area, etc.). A prompt and ongoing size-up will help to assure that proper resources are requested and other agencies have been notified, as required. Dispatch will notify the FAA.

2. All mutual aid agencies and jurisdictions must work within the established ICS, while maintaining authority/control of their equipment and personnel. Fire personnel not involved with fire suppression activities or ICS positions may be asked to assist with extrication and/or carrying patients on backboards or litters under the direction of EMS personnel. Fire and EMS personnel should note locations of patients and where fire suppression and/or extrication activities may have altered possible evidence.
3. The FAA and other officials may interview responders, and/or request written statements about what was observed, actions taken, and what time they occurred. An aircraft cannot be moved, or the scene left unsecured without the direct permission from the FAA. The FAA is the legal authority, and law enforcement will work under their direction regarding the aircraft.

**B. Bomb Threats/Bomb Found, Acts of Terrorism, & Active School Shooter**

Law enforcement is the primary IC for these situations. Fire personnel are not usually trained and equipped for looking for, identifying and dealing with explosive devices, and should not be performing such activities. Fire should be staged in a safe location, and are there for fire suppression, medical care, and rescue related activities should a device detonate or a terrorist act occur. Again, fire response must be coordinated with law enforcement, and a UC structure should be established. Secondary explosive devices or booby traps may be present, and critical evidence may be destroyed unnecessarily if actions are not coordinated.

**C. Civil Unrest, Crowd Control**

Law enforcement is the primary IC for these situations. In most situations a UC should be established. Fire personnel are not to engage in aggressive type activities toward the crowd. Fire is a support agency, providing fire suppression and medical care for emergency responders and citizens. Law enforcement should assure that fire and EMS equipment and personnel are staged in a safe location, and should provide security to fire if fire suppression or medical assistance is needed.

**D. Fire - Requiring Large Scale Response**

IC should still be established by first unit on scene and will be transferred when appropriate. Large ground cover fires may require the activation of the regional fire response mobilization plan. Other ground cover or structural fires may initially or eventually require activation of mutual aid. ICS must be implemented quickly, so that incoming resources can be managed safely and effectively. The use of a UC structure is typically



used for multiple agency/jurisdiction responses. Law Enforcement should be part of the UC structure to provide assist with or identifying evacuation and safety zones, scene security, and traffic control.

**E. Hazardous Materials**

ICS should still be established by first unit on scene and will be transferred when appropriate. The IC is primarily the Washington State Patrol, but may be the relegated to the applicable fire department/district or DEM, depending on the jurisdiction and location of the incident. A quick size-up and identification of the material(s) involved should be done quickly. Identification may be provided by the responsible party, or by reading a placard(s), preferably with binoculars. Establishing a safety and evacuation zone is a high priority, the ICS must be implemented immediately, and a UC structure is advised. Coordination with law enforcement is crucial. Representatives from a variety of government and private industry groups may need to be included in the UC structure. The Department of Ecology should be contacted as soon as possible. The IC can request a hazardous materials team response, and may gather important information from the team while awaiting their arrival. The IC may also request assistance or support from the county EOC/DEM staff. See LEPC HazMat Plan for more specific details.

**E. Incidents Involving the County Jail**

Special safety concerns are present in the jail. Fire personnel must be accompanied by, or perform under the direction of corrections staff. Security bars and gates can present extreme danger to inmates and emergency responders in case of rapidly spreading smoke and fire. Medical personnel may be asked to leave some of their equipment outside of certain areas. All responders must assure that emergency vehicles and their keys are in an appropriate area. The ICS must be used to assure the necessary coordination between various emergency response agencies and the correctional facility staff. This is especially important if prisoners must be transported to hospitals and/or other correctional facilities because of the emergency or disaster. The IC may request assistance or support from the county EOC or emergency management staff.

**F. Search and Rescue (Mountain Rescue or Water Rescue and Recovery)**

As per RCW 38.52.400, the chief law enforcement officer of each political subdivision is responsible for search and rescue activities in their jurisdictions. The Sheriff's Office is the Command Agency for search and rescue in the county, but may not be the first unit on scene. ICS should still be established by first unit on scene and will be transferred when appropriate. The IC may request assistance from fire districts/departments, and utilize their knowledge of the area, use their personnel to help search and provide EMS, and utilize whatever

equipment and radios they have that are needed and available. The IC may request that a staffed ambulance be staged nearby. The Sheriff's Office may call out the volunteer Search and Rescue (SAR) group (i.e. Swift Water Rescue) and/or request search aircraft, or call for a rescue helicopter if needed. A UC structure needs to be established to coordinate the various agencies and activities. Fire/EMS/SAR must maintain a UC to continue coordination with law enforcement and other agencies, and assure all agencies continue working as a team. Fire/EMS/SAR will facilitate safe and timely medical care, extrication, and transport to the appropriate medical facility as needed.

**G. Mass Casualty or Fatality Incidents**

When there is a need for medical care for multiple patients at the same time, whether or not they are at the same location, several actions are needed. The Okanogan County Mass Casualty Plan (MCI), or if appropriate, the Mass Fatality Plan should be activated and used. Additional resources can be obtained from the three MCI trailers located geographically throughout the county. ICS must be implemented quickly. Fire Departments/Districts, EMS agencies and Law Enforcement will immediately initiate UC, with EMS being the primary IC. A prompt and ongoing size-up of the incident(s) is vital and resources requested as soon as possible. Dispatch is to be advised of the situation. The IC may request assistance or support from the county EOC or DEM staff if the need or potential need exists. If there is more than one multiple patient location, each location should have an Operations Chief or Medical Branch. All mutual aid agencies and departments must work within the established ICS, while maintaining authority/control of their equipment and personnel. Fire personnel not involved with fire suppression activities or ICS positions may be asked to assist with extraction and/or carrying patients on backboards or litters under the direction of EMS personnel. EMS personnel should not be the primary or only litter bearers. After the rescue and medical care is completed, command may transfer to law enforcement and other investigative officials. All involved agencies should strive to maintain scene integrity.

**H. Disruption to Transportation and/or Communication**

1. Transportation, communication, and other vital services may be disrupted due to earthquake, flooding, high winds, a severe winter storm, or other natural or man-made disasters. In most cases these incidents are categorized as major events. ICS should be established and the County EOC activated as appropriate.

a. Involved fire agencies should provide representation to the County EOC, or authorize another jurisdiction to represent them. A highly coordinated response from fire service, EMS, law enforcement, public works, and the EOC staff is required through the development of a UC system.

- b. Provide damage assessments reports to UC and/or EOC. These reports are critical and help establish priorities that impact life safety and the ability for emergency agencies to respond.
2. In the case of flooding, Fire personnel should not be performing or directing sandbagging efforts for private homes, or businesses. The individuals and agencies could be held liable for any damages to those, or other homes and businesses. Fire personnel may perform or direct sandbagging operations for critical buildings and facilities such as hospitals, fire and police stations, water treatment plants, and other critical infrastructure. In addition, fire personnel help execute evacuation notices or help with actual evacuation of residents.
3. Communications backup may be provided by the local Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)/Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES) group. Radio operators will respond with battery powered equipment and mobile antennas, and may supplement or replace missing communication between units and their base, between the EOC and departments/agencies, hospitals, emergency shelters, and between these areas and the EOC, depending on what is needed. ARES/RACES operations will be coordinated through their Emergency Coordinator and the county EOC. If agencies, departments or units have communications needs, those requests must go directly to the EOC. If telephone services are disrupted, it may be necessary to establish communication points throughout the involved community/communities.

## **V. RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. Fire may be the primary command agency involved in the emergency or disaster, or they may be the support agency. The designated primary command agency may change during the incident as the situation changes, and some incidents may have a shared designated command or UC. The IC is responsible for assuring a smooth transfer or sharing of the IC authority.
- B. When fire is designated as the primary or command agency, the IC will typically be from the jurisdiction involved. The IC is responsible for coordinating all the fire agencies involved, as well as coordinating with all the support agencies.
- C. When fire is designated as a support agency, the fire commander(s) will coordinate with, and provide assistance to the designated command agency.

**VI. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS**

- A. Whether working in a primary or a support role, fire departments/districts will provide their own internal support, such as vehicles, and equipment for their staff.
- B. Support agencies, departments and districts will provide workers, officers or other leaders, vehicles, and equipment as requested, if available.