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Continuity of Operations/Continuity of Government for State-Level Transportation Organizations

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MTI Project: 2976

September 2011

As a result of a federal requirement, all non-federal entities that own or operate critical infrastructure are required to develop Continuity of Operations/Continuity of Government (COOP/COG) Plans. Transportation is a critical infrastructure component. The MTI researchers partnered with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to review their existing COOP/COG Plan, evaluate the gaps in the plan, develop a strategy to “harmonize” all Caltrans’ emergency management plans, and evaluate the adequacy of the employees’ training to implement the COOP/COG Plan system.

Study Methods

MTI researchers partnered with Caltrans’ lead staff members in the gap analysis, based on the latest federal guidance, taking the plan beyond the traditional nuclear war focus. Analysis of the employee training program started with headquarters emergency operations center (EOC) staff members. The researchers visited eleven Caltrans Districts, and piloted an EOC course. The study showed that there was also a gap in the delivery of the basic ICS/NIMS training.

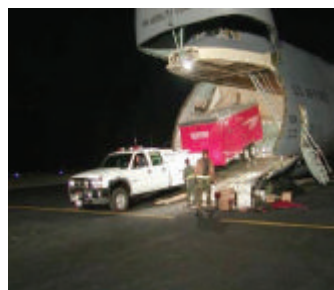
The researchers conducted an extensive literature review, including FEMA and Department of Homeland Security websites and course materials, and expert interviews, seeking training for those who would staff the COOP/COG Plan

implementation. The researchers found no courses to train state-level transportation agency (State DOT) staff in the delivery of essential functions, as required by COOP/COG.

Findings

The first gap identified was lack of a definition of how the COOP/COG work fitted with the EOC in NIMS. They concluded that the most functional structure was to make the COOP/COG organization a branch of the EOC Management Section, ensuring coordination of COOP/COG essential functions with EOC critical tasks.

Training materials to guide the creation of COOP/COG plans for State DOTs were lacking. While the Transportation Research Board (TRB) had developed a guide for COOP/COG for Transportation, it was written before the post-Katrina legislation, and it relied on the Disaster



Emergency Response

Recovery Institute (DRI) model of business recovery, lacking the response component that is the hallmark of the disaster-related work of a State DOT. Finally, it pre-dated FEMA's CGC 1 and CGC 2.

Policy Recommendations

The outcome of the research is a two part document to assist State DOTs with the development of their COOP/COG plans and the supporting training materials. The first portion describes the research and its conclusions about COOP/COG and State DOT work. It includes an proposal for using ICS in the EOC, as suggested in FEMA's IS 775, offering the best coordination for emergency management and COOP/COG work. Second, it provides a set of training materials for ICS in the EOC. This section includes a complete set of EOC annexes for each of the five ICS sections in the EOC: Management, Operations, Planning, Logistics and Finance. Finally, it includes a set of training materials for COOP/COG functions. The segments include an overview of COOP/COG, training on the integration of emergency management and COOP/COG, and a set of position descriptions for a State DOT's Essential Functions Unit, sample position checklists and a "drive away" kit.



Transportation Emergency Operations Center

About the Authors

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Dr. Edwards, Deputy Director of MTI's National Transportation Security Center of Excellence, teaches emergency management in the MTI MSTM program. She is also professor of political science and director of the MPA program at San José State University. She has twenty-two years of experience in local government emergency management.

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Edwards and Goodrich are the authors of a number of other MTI reports, most recently the Generic COOP Cog Plan with Bill Medigovich.

To Learn More

For more details about the study, download the full report at transweb.sjsu.edu/project/2976.html