

Lesson Overview

Continuity of Operations (COOP) is a Federal initiative, required by Presidential Directive, to ensure that Executive Branch departments and agencies are able to continue to perform their essential functions under a broad range of circumstances.

This lesson will introduce COOP, including:

- What COOP is and why it's important.
 - How COOP differs from Continuity of Government (COG).
 - The roles and responsibilities of key players in COOP planning.
 - Family support measures to take in case of COOP implementation.
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What is COOP?

COOP is an effort within individual departments and agencies to ensure continuity of their essential functions across a wide range of emergencies and events.

- Today's changing threat environment and recent emergencies have increased the need for COOP capabilities and plans.
 - COOP planning is part of the fundamental mission of all Federal agencies.
 - COOP is a Federal initiative to ensure that Executive Branch departments and agencies can continue to perform their essential functions under a broad range of circumstances.
 - COOP is also "good business."
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COOP Planning Considerations

FPC-65 describes the planning considerations and requirements for COOP plans. FPC-65 requires that all Federal Executive Branch agencies must:

- Be capable of implementing their COOP plans with and without warning.
 - Be operational not later than 12 hours after activation.
 - Be capable of maintaining sustained operations for up to 30 days.
 - Include regularly scheduled testing, training, and exercising of personnel, equipment, systems, processes, and procedures used to support the agency during a COOP event.
 - Provide for a regular risk analysis of current alternate operating facilities.
 - Locate alternate facilities in areas where the ability to initiate, maintain, and terminate COOP is optimal.
 - Take advantage of existing agency field infrastructures and give consideration to other options, such as telecommuting, work-at-home, and shared facilities.
 - Consider the distance of the alternate facility from the primary facility.
 - Include development, maintenance, and review of COOP capabilities using a Multi-Year Strategy and Program Management Plan (MYSPMP).
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Benefits of COOP Planning

Agencies realize the benefits from COOP planning aside from preparedness. These benefits include the agencies' ability to:

- Anticipate events and necessary response actions.
- Adapt to sudden changes in the operational environment.
- Improve their performance through the identification of essential functions, work processes, and communications methods.
- Improve management controls by establishing measures for performance.
- Improve communication to support essential functions throughout the agency.

What COOP is Not

Ensuring the safety of all agency personnel is a critical element of COOP planning. However, COOP is not the same as an agency's Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP). OEPs are intended to ensure the safety of personnel in the event of an incident inside or immediately surrounding an agency's building. For example, the OEP would be implemented in the event of a minor fire that required evacuating the building or if an emergency occurred outside the building that required sheltering in place.

Depending on the emergency, the COOP plan may be implemented at the same time as the OEP.

At the Federal level, COOP is also different from Continuity of Government—or COG plans. For Federal departments and agencies, the term COG is used to describe activities for specifically designated offices. COOP supports the continuity mission for all offices, including alternate facility/relocation missions and functions.

At the State and local levels, COOP and COG planning and operational activities are generally the same.

Why Develop a COOP Plan?

Aside from the requirements set forth in FPC-65, COOP planning is just good business. COOP planning requires agency personnel to review the functions that are truly critical to the agency. COOP planning also requires agencies to:

- Consider the threats that could impact the office and plan for them.
- Determine the vital information, personnel, and other resources required to continue the agency's essential functions.
- Plan for the safety of all personnel.

Who Should be Involved in COOP Planning?

COOP planning is a team effort. It involves personnel at every level of the organization including:

- Senior management.
- The COOP Program Manager.
- COOP planners.
- Emergency Relocation Group (ERG) personnel.
- Non-ERG personnel.

Agency Leaders' Role in COOP Planning

Overall, senior management is responsible for planning and ensuring that the agency is capable of carrying out each respective function related to COOP programs. These responsibilities include complete oversight of COOP:

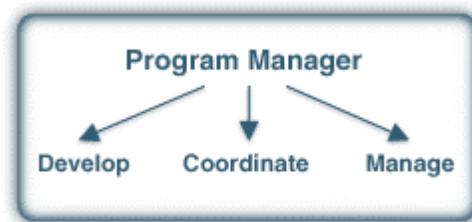
- Planning.
- Activation.
- Reconstitution.

Agency leaders may delegate many of their responsibilities. However, the overall accountability remains with the leadership.

The COOP Program Manager's Role in COOP Planning

The COOP Program Manager serves as the agency's coordinator for all COOP activities. The Program Manager has overall responsibility for developing, coordinating, and managing all activities required for the agency to perform its essential functions during any emergency or other situation that would disrupt normal operations.

When these responsibilities are taken in total, the COOP Program Manager is responsible for ensuring a "viable COOP capability" at the agency.



The COOP Program Manager develops, coordinates, and manages the response.

Role of ERG Personnel in COOP Planning

Persons designated as ERG personnel contribute to COOP planning by:

- Sharing their expertise as active members of, or advisers to, the COOP planning team.
 - Familiarizing themselves with the COOP plan and their roles in it.
 - Participating in COOP tests, training, exercises, and after-action reporting sessions.
 - Preparing a personal "Go Kit" for COOP activation.
 - Ensuring their families' safety and security in the event of COOP activation.
 - Reporting to the alternate facility upon COOP activation.
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Role of Non-ERG Personnel in COOP Planning

Even personnel not designated as ERG members during COOP operations may have a role in the planning process. These personnel can contribute by:

- Providing input on the execution of essential functions.
 - Assisting in identifying and backing up vital records.
 - Becoming familiar with the agency's OEP and COOP plans.
 - Providing contact information.
 - Ensuring that their families are prepared for emergencies.
 - Being prepared to deploy to support the ERG, if required.
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Family Support Planning

During a COOP situation, employees will need to focus on maintaining essential functions. This focus will be disrupted if the employees are also concerned about their families' safety and security.

Agency leaders should encourage all personnel to plan for their families' safety and security during COOP operations.

Prepare a "Go Kit"

It makes good sense to prepare for emergencies. All personnel should ensure that their families have a "Go Kit" that is readily accessible in case of an emergency. At a minimum, the family Go Kit should include:

- **Personal items and necessities**, including food and water, clothing, prescription medications, and other items that may be required for family survival.
 - **Financial and legal documents** that cannot be replaced easily.
 - **The name and phone number of an out-of-area contact.** It may be easier to call someone outside the area than to make local calls during an emergency. An out-of-area contact can relay messages about the location and safety of family members.
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Develop a Plan

Emergencies can occur quickly, and a quick response can be the difference between life and death or serious injury. Therefore, it is important for employees and their families to develop a plan for responding in an emergency and discuss:

- The types of emergencies that are most likely to occur.
- How the family will get information about the emergency (e.g., Emergency Alert System broadcasts).
- What family members will do in each case.

If some family members are at school or work, find out about the emergency plans at those places as well.

Agencies' Role in Family Support Planning

During an emergency, employees and their families will appreciate knowing that the agency is concerned for safety. The COOP program should include:

- **Processes for activating an emergency information call-in number** for employees to get information about agency operations, pay and benefits, and other items of interest.
 - **A process for accounting for and tracking all employees.** As the COOP situation progresses, it may be possible to expand operations. It is important to be able to account for and track employees so they can be reached if needed.
 - **Provisions for providing guidance and assistance** to employees and their families. Anticipating questions and providing guidance will help employees focus on their work, while being assured that their families are taken care of.
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Communicating During an Incident

Lessons from 9/11 showed that during an emergency, even basic communication can be neglected in the face of pressing decisions. The agency should develop a communications plan for all employees. The plan should:

- Incorporate regular communications to employees.
- Update information as necessary.
- Include procedures for securing the worksite.
- Include provisions for safeguarding vital records.

During COOP activation, a priority for **all** employees should be to contact family members to ensure them that they are safe.
