VA INTEGRATED OPERATIONS CENTER (VA IOC)

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This Handbook establishes procedures for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Integrated Operations Center (VA IOC).

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS: This Handbook documents Department roles and responsibilities and establishes overarching procedures related to the VA IOC.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Office of Operations, Security, and Preparedness (007), Office of Emergency Management is responsible for the contents of this Handbook.

4. RELATED DIRECTIVES: VA Directive 0322, VA Integrated Operations Center (VA IOC)

5. RESCISSION: None

CERTIFIED BY:

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:

/s/
Roger W. Baker
Assistant Secretary for
Information and Technology

/s/
Jose D. Riojas
Assistant Secretary for
Operations, Security, and Preparedness

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic Distribution

Department of Veterans Affairs
Integrated Operations Center (VA IOC)

Contents

VA Integrated Operations Center

1. PURPOSE

This Handbook documents Roles and Responsibilities and establishes overarching procedures related to the mission and mission execution of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Integrated Operations Center (VA IOC). This handbook provides supplemental guidance to VA Directive 0322 to enable the VA IOC to functionally organize, train and flexibly respond to the dynamic challenges of continuous or emergent operational events.

2. BACKGROUND

The genesis of the VA IOC is rooted in the national response actions associated with events such as the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. The Federal response and related recovery operations associated with 2005's Hurricane Katrina further evolved VA's understanding and concept of preparedness. The initial Readiness Operations Center (ROC) was established in 2001 to maintain situational awareness and monitor world incidents or events that could potentially impact Veterans, the Department, or the Nation as a whole thereby increasing VA's posture to respond as a national asset. In 2009, VA Senior Leadership initiated transformational changes encompassing broader corporate functions and responsibilities as they related to VA's operational functions. VA Senior Leadership identified the need to incorporate the essential contributions of all Administrations and Staff Offices/Organizations as a constituent element to an enhanced operations center supporting situational awareness and decision support. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs (SECVA) tasked the Office of Operations, Security, and Preparedness (OSP) to oversee and implement process changes to increase the integration and fusion of information/data to enable Departmental Administrations and Staff Offices/Organizations to function more cohesively. In June 2009, VA's operations center, formerly identified as the ROC, was renamed as the VA Integrated Operations Center (IOC) to reflect its new mission and focus as the Integrated Operations Center.

As detailed in VA Directive 0322 (signed April 2010), the VA IOC is to serve as the Department's single office for data integration, fusion, and proactive analysis for the purpose of developing and presenting recommendations relative to developing and ongoing events and incidents that have the potential to impact VA. The VA IOC is to facilitate timely decision-making and enhance the situational awareness of VA leadership.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

a.   Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security, and Preparedness (OSP) will:

(1) Serve as the Senior VA Official for the oversight, management and operation of the VA IOC as designated by SECVA.[1]

(2) Implement and maintain policies and procedures regarding VA IOC operations, reporting, training, and system functions.

(3) Establish VA IOC staff requirements in support of VA requirements.

(4) Develop and implement VA Emergency Action Procedures in support of the SECVA.

(5) Develop a VA IOC Watch Officer Education and Training Plan to ensure completeness and compliance with VA requirements and the Incident Command System.

(6) Develop and implement guidance for the deployment of VA resources.

(7) Ensure OIT provides reliable and redundant secure/non-secure voice/data connectivity systems with the National Capital Region Operations Centers and VA resources.

(8) Provide primary and alternate facilities for VA IOC operations to ensure Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Continuity of Government (COG).

b.   Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries and other Key Officials will:

(1) Establish Administration and Staff Office/Organization procedures to

(a) Implement VA policy regarding VA IOC operations, reporting, training, and system functions.

(b) Establish Administration's/Activity's/Staff Office Watch Officer requirements in support of VA requirements.

(2) Develop policy and procedures for Administration's/Activity's/Staff Office response to:

(a) VA IOC Emergent Incident Procedures in support of SECVA.

(b) Ensuring timely and accurate reporting of information to the VA IOC.

(c) Disseminated information from the VA IOC to Administration/Staff Office officials and decision-makers.

(d) Implement SECVA guidance for the deployment of VA resources as required.

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[1] VA Directive 0322, para. 3b(1)

(3) Provide appropriate guidance to relevant field offices and field officers regarding timely and accurate information flow to/from the VA IOC through the applicable Watch Officer.

(4) Ensure viability of voice/data connectivity with the VA IOC.

c.   Director, VA Integrated Operations Center will:

(1) Organize the VA IOC to accomplish its assigned mission and functions.

(2) Train VA's Watch Officers to empower their success.

(3) Support VA Senior Leadership's decision making processes via timely recommendations prepared from VA IOC data integration, information fusion and, whenever possible predictive analytics.

(4) Support the requirements development and budgetary processes essential to mission capabilities, equipage, and staffing the VA IOC.

(5) Wherever feasible, ensure the IOC leverages best practices developed and proven by other recognized/authoritative operations centers (example: Department of Homeland Security (DHS) National Operations Center (NOC)). Serve as the representative for the Department of Veterans Affairs at the Interagency Operations Center Working Group, and any other forum for shared best practices among operations centers at the federal, state, and local levels.

(6) Be responsible for the development and creation of detailed standard operating procedures (SOPs), checklists and work guides to support the execution of the mission of the VA IOC and the related work of the assigned Watch Officers.

d.   VA IOC and VA Administration and Staff Office/Organization Watch Officers (WO):

(1) This section is applicable to all VA Staff assigned by any VA Administration, Staff Office, or Organization as a resource to the VA IOC as prescribed in VA Directive 0322.

(2) The WO will be assigned by their sourcing Administration/Staff Office/Organization to support the VA IOC mission as delineated in VA Directive 0322 and supplemented by VA Senior Leadership.

(3) The WO serves as the representative of their Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary or Key Official[2] to the IOC.

(4) The duty function of the WO is to receive, integrate, analyze, disseminate, track, and archive information concerning continuous operations and emergent situations/incidents,

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[2] VA Directive 0322, para 3d(2) and 3f

interagency information, intelligence, and threat communications that have the potential to effect VA operations, facilities, or Veterans[3].

(5) As an essential member of the VA IOC, the WO supports the actions and mission related activities of the VA IOC. The WO is authorized to initiate contact throughout their respective Administration or Staff Office/Organization as the representative of their Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary or Key Official.[4]

(6) When functioning as a member of the VA IOC Duty Watch (shift), the normal workplace for the on-duty WO will be the VA IOC Operations and Analysis Center located at VACO, 810 Vermont Ave, NW, Washington DC, or other designated alternative VA IOC location (e.g. circumstances requiring relocation due to COOP or other emergent conditions could require designation of a non-VACO location as place of duty). As detailed in VA Directive 0322, VA IOC utilizes the Incident Command System to enable transition from normal operations to crisis management, and thus always operates within a National Incident Management System (NIMS), Incident Command System (ICS) framework (see Appendix B).

(7) Under continuous operations[5], the WO is the IOC's first point of contact to interface with and exchange information with, or provide outreach to their sourcing "Administration and Staff Office/Organization." The WO's efforts will be focused on supporting the VA IOC mission and responsibilities to the level required by VA's operations tempo.

(8) The WO is authorized to initiate and staff Requests for Information (RFI) and Requests for Action (RFA)[6] to all Administrations and Staff Offices/Organizations regarding but not limited to: reporting requirements, information sharing, operational status, personnel accountability, asset (personnel/equipment) location, availability and deployability, and continuity of operations.[7]

(9) During VA IOC "normal operations" and on a non-interference basis with IOC functions and related training, the Administration, Staff Office, or Organization WO will usually have the ability to support "other duties as assigned" by the sourcing Administration, Staff Office, or Organization. These "other duties as assigned" by their Administration, Staff Office, or Organization supervisor may be distinct from VA IOC related work.

e.   VA Watch Officers (VAWO):

(1) WOs from the OSP who represent both the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary for OSP[8]. VAWOs will provide the coordination function within the IOC.

(2) Are authorized to initiate contact with personnel throughout VA[9] in order to ensure timely situational awareness reporting in support of SECVA decision processes.

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[3] VA Directive 0322, para 3c(4)
[4] VA Directive 0322, para 3d(2) and 3f
[5] Defined in APPENDIX D, this handbook
[6] Defined in APPENDIX D, this handbook
[7] VA Directive 0322, para 3f
[8] VA Directive 0322, Definitions
[9] VA Directive 0322, para 3e

(3) Will remain in the immediate vicinity of the VAWO workstation ("Watch Desk") to facilitate situational awareness between all WOs in the IOC and in order to respond to information fusion management or emergent actions in a timely manner.

(4) Will obtain and maintain proficiency in VA emergent management operations in support of the SECVA via completion of IOC VAWO initial and continuation training and form the core staff of an Incident Command System (ICS) based IOC organization

(5) Will ensure accurate, timely and complete submission of reportable incidents in accordance with VA guidance.

(6) Will initiate emergent incident[10] event notification, coordination (and disaster response actions as directed by appropriate ICS authority) utilizing and completing appropriate checklists and work guides.

(7) Will maintain an archivable written (computer based) journal or record of all activities occurring during a tour of duty (referred to as the VA IOC Watch Log).

(8) Will maintain the VA IOC Common Operating Picture (COP) and other displays as assigned by the Director, VA IOC or the Director's delegated representative.

(9) Will support the development of work guides, standard operating procedures (SOPs), checklists and other related products under the supervision of VA IOC leadership. Further, VAWOs may be tasked with development of staff-level briefings, support/research papers or other OSP related tasks in support of the VA IOC and broader OSP mission.

(10)   Additional OSP Staff Assigned to Support the IOC: OSP/Office of Security and Law Enforcement (OSLE) WO:

(a) The OSLE WO is a member of the OSP staff and serves as the VA IOC's primary source of information regarding OSLE operational activity.

(b) The OSLE WO serves as the VA IOC's primary source of information regarding law enforcement activity, law enforcement related information, and VA facility security. The OSLE WO also carries the title OSLE Duty Agent.

(c) The OSLE WO reviews information and provides recommendations regarding the sanitization of law enforcement sensitive information as required by Law, Regulation or Directive before it is released from the VA IOC to ensure that the information released does not jeopardize active investigations or violate criminal intelligence statutes.

f.   VA Veterans Health Administration (VHA) WO:

(1) The VHA WO is the VA IOC's primary source of information regarding VHA operational activity.

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[10] Defined in APPENDIX D, this handbook

(2) The VHA WO ensures the IOC maintains situational awareness through the ability to access information, anticipate critical information requirements, determine necessary follow-up actions for the facility, VISN, VHA Central Office, and/or Leadership (Offices of the Deputy and Assistant Deputy Under Secretaries for Health for Operations and Management, Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards and the Emergency Management Strategic Health Care Group) by sharing information regarding crisis or routine events, emerging situations, untoward events and issues of potential interest to the SECVA.

g.   VA Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) WO:

(1) The VBA WO is the VA IOC's primary source of information regarding VBA operational activity.

(2) The VBA WO facilitates situational awareness by sharing information regarding crisis or routine events, emerging situations, untoward events and issues of potential interest to the SECVA through the WO's ability to access information, anticipate critical information requirements, and develop recommendations regarding necessary follow-up actions.

h.   VA National Cemetery Administration (NCA) WO:

(1) The NCA WO is the VA IOC's primary source of information regarding NCA operational activity.

(2) The NCA WO facilitates situational awareness by sharing information regarding crisis or routine events, emerging situations, untoward events and issues of potential interest to the SECVA through the WO's ability to access information, anticipate critical information requirements, and develops recommendations regarding necessary follow-up actions for the facility, Memorial Service Network (MSN), NCA Central Office, and/or Leadership.

i.   VA Office of Information and Technology (OIT) WO:

(1) The OIT WO is the VA IOC's primary source of information regarding OIT operational activity. The OIT WO is the central point of contact (POC) for situational awareness of all events related to VA Information Technology (IT).

(2) The OIT WO Team provides the interface between the OIT and the IOC.

(3) VA OIT WOs will:

(a) Prepare, update, and brief a daily status report called the OIT Daily Brief (ODB). The ODB is a report of unexpected IT events with significant operational or political impact – or the potential impact - as escalated by OIT field sites.

(b) Provide near/real-time reporting and tracking of OIT unscheduled disruptions that are impacting patient care, Veteran services and VA operations. Events that may affect VA services or support situational awareness may be listed at the discretion of the OIT WO.

(c) During emergency operations, additional personnel from Business Continuity (BC) may be deployed to augment the OIT WO by reporting to the VA IOC or other location (to be

designated) if the situation warrants, throughout the duration of emergency response augmentation activation.

(d) The OIT WO will review and then direct VA IOC Request for Action (RFA) or Request for Information (RFI) to the appropriate staff within OIT. When necessary, the OIT WO will seek clarification of the RFA/RFI to facilitate the timely response by the OIT staff.

(e) The OIT WO will communicate operational status updates fro OIT to the VA IOC.

j.   VA Office of Human Resources and Administration (OHRA) WO:

(1) The OHRA WO is the VA IOC's primary source of information regarding OHRA operational activity.

(2) OHRA WO facilitates situational awareness by sharing information regarding crisis or routine events, emerging situations, untoward events and issues of potential interest to the SECVA through the WO's ability to access information, anticipate critical information requirements, and develop recommendations regarding necessary follow-up actions for OHRA. The OHRA WO duties include responsibility for situational awareness of VACO building facilities as it relates to inoperability due to threat, damage or safety hazards.

k.   VA Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA) WO:

(1) The OPIA WO is the VA IOC's primary source of information regarding OPIA operational activity.

(2) The OPIA WO facilitates situational awareness by sharing information regarding crisis or routine events, emerging situations, untoward events and issues of potential interest to the SECVA through the WO's ability to access information, anticipate critical information requirements, and develop recommendations regarding necessary follow-up actions.

l.   VA Administration and Staff Office/Organization "On-Call" WO:

(1) "On-Call" WOs (e.g. Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs (OCLA), Office of Management (OOM), Office of Policy and Planning (OPP), Office of General Counsel (OGC), Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA), Office of Inspector General (OIG), other activities if specified by VA Senior Leadership) provide the VA IOC's primary source of information regarding the activities of their sourcing function.

(2) "On-Call" WOs facilitate situational awareness by sharing information regarding crisis or routine events, emerging situations, untoward events and issues of potential interest to the SECVA through the WO's ability to access information, anticipate critical information requirements, and develop recommendations regarding necessary follow-up actions.

m.   VA Office of Acquisitions, Logistics and Construction (OALC) WO:

(1) The OALC WO is the VA IOC's primary source of information regarding OALC operational activity.

(2) The OALC WO ensures the IOC maintains situational awareness through the ability to access information, anticipate critical information requirements, and determine necessary follow-up actions for all OALC facilities and personnel by sharing information regarding crisis or routine events, emerging situations, untoward events and issues of potential interest to the SECVA. The OALC WO represents the Executive Director for the Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction in the VA IOC.

(3) The OALC WO will review and then direct all VA IOC Requests for Action/Information to the appropriate subject matter expert(s) within OALC. When necessary, the OALC WO will seek clarification of the action/information requested to facilitate the timely response by the OALC subject matter expert(s).

(4) The OALC WO will forward all Mission Assignment/Sub-Taskings/Inter-Agency Agreements to the appropriate Acquisition personnel for processing upon receipt from the VA IOC. When necessary, the OALC WO will seek clarification of the action/information requested to facilitate the timely response by the Acquisition personnel.

(5) The OALC WO will review and communicate relevant operational information and updates to OALC leadership as needed.

(6) The OALC WO will communicate with OALC field locations for operational status as needed and provide updates to the VA IOC.

4. TASK BASELINE

a. Staffing of the VA IOC

(1) As the VA's 24/7/365 operations, information fusion and analytic center, the VA IOC is directly responsible to the SECVA for facilitating command and control operations in the execution of the VA mission. Command and control authority resides with the SECVA as delegated for continuous and emergent/crisis Departmental operations. As detailed in VA Directive 0322, VA "Administrations and Staff Offices/Organizations" are responsible to maintain a 24/7/365 staffing capability for their respective functional areas in support of continuous, emergent and crisis response operations of the VA IOC.

(2) WOs will staff their IOC duty stations as documented in VA Directive 0322. Those VA "Administrations and Staff Offices/Organizations" who are not required to physically staff their respective WO positions 24/7/365 will maintain an actual or virtual presence within the IOC per the VA Directive 0322 requirements. Those VA "Administrations and Staff Offices/Organizations" may consider development of a staff recall capability to provide physical staffing support to VA IOC on a situationally dependant basis

(3) WO Staffing Schedule. Due to their distinct functional requirements, each VA "Administration/Staff Office/Organization" will develop their respective Watch Officer staffing schedule and provide a copy to the VA IOC Director when requested. WO contact information will be maintained by the VA Watch Officer.

(4) Lines of Authority supportive of VA IOC Operations. The VA IOC Director, supported by the compliment of assigned VAWOs and WOs (as the Administration/Staff Office/Organization's executive agent) will execute duties in accordance with VA Directive 0322 and other applicable VA policy, plans, and handbooks.

b. Training of WOs Assigned to the VA IOC

(1) The Director, IOC will be responsible for the development and creation of detailed IOC training implementation plans coordinated with OSP Training Office / OSP Training Program Manager.

(2) Initial WO orientation and training will be provided by the VA IOC to all VAWOs and WOs. Training will be documented per the VA IOC training plan.

(3) All WOs will be eligible for communications specific training in accordance with National Communications System (NCS) 3-10.

c. VA IOC Continuous Operations
VAWOs and WOs are responsible for the following functions during all operations:

(1) Information and Data fusion

(a) VAWOs and WOs will request Administration/Staff Office/Organization support or will initiate related tasks as required to action/respond to IOC or Interagency/Intergovernmental Request for Information (RFI) inclusive but not limited to:

     1.   Reporting requirements.

     2.   Information sharing ("need to share vice need to know").

     3.   Operational status of VA facilities, personnel or equipment.

     4.   Personnel accountability including leadership availability and location.

     5.   Asset location for VA equipment (i.e. VSAT, generators, chainsaws, etc) and key personnel (i.e. Emergency Response Group members, key administration/staff officers, etc).

     6.   Availability and deployability of assets/personnel.

     7.   FEMA/ESF Mission Assignments/Mission Taskings

(b) VAWOs and WOs will request Administration/Staff Office/Organization support or will initiate related tasks as required to reply to IOC or Interagency/Intergovernmental Requests for Action (RFA) or Requests for Information (RFI).

(2) Produce IOC operational updates/reports. The VAWOs will draft, coordinate, and publish incident "spot reports" (SPOTREP) and "situation reports" (SITREP) in accordance with Director IOC guidance. VAWOs will ensure immediate voice notification is made to appropriate VA Senior Leadership for incidents or events as required. All data transmitted within the report will be timely, accurate and complete, as well as verified through VA

resources or appropriate official channels before final report submission to VA Senior Leadership.

(3) Threat/Risk and potential impacts

(a) Reception, analysis, dissemination, tracking, archiving information, intelligence, and threat communication that have the potential to impact VA; VA IOC Watch Officers will analyze information and present VA Senior Leadership a joint situational overview with courses of actions, (COAs), to assist VA Senior Leadership with the decision making process. The circumstances surrounding the incident will determine the timeliness and criticality of the VA incident response.

(b) OSP assigned VAWOs are responsible for initial emergent incident actions and recommendations for immediate VA responses or actions.

(c) All on-duty WOs are responsible to directly support analysis and decision recommendations regarding emergent incidents.

(4) VA Serious Incident Reports

(a) The Serious Incident Report (SIR) was implemented as a means for VA Senior Leadership to receive information of any event or incident likely to result in significant national media or Congressional attention. [11]

(b) Events or incidents should be reported immediately upon awareness of the incident to the VA IOC (direct e-mail, telephone call or relay through WO) by the VA facility or activity and followed by a written report (e-mail, fax, or other hard-copy) no later than 2 hours after awareness of the incident.

(c) All WOs are responsible for report accuracy, timeliness and validity. WOs will draft, coordinate, and submit reports in accordance with SECVA special interests and VA or VA IOC guidelines.

(5) Facilitation of development of Intra-Departmental positions for events/incidents with potential impact to VA.

(a) All Watch Officers receive, analyze, and coordinate information to develop VA response for Inter-agency and Intra-agency reporting and correspondence.

(b) All Watch Officers facilitate routine and crisis information exchanges and staff procedures among their respective Administration/Staff Office/Organizations. All Watch Officers are responsible to obtain their respective Administration/Staff Office/Organizations position (or concurrence/non-concurrence) on all RFAs and RFIs.

(6) Complete non-emergent routine and crisis response tasks as required by respective Administration/Staff Office/Organizations.

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[11] VA Directive 0321

(7) All Watch Officers will maintain proficiency in their respective Administration/Staff Office/Organization's functional support to the ICS. All WOs will be provided training, checklists, and SOPs to ensure a seamless transition between normal daily operations, emergent operations, and crisis management. The WO Training Program will include NIMS specified requirements.

d. Emergent Operations
VAWOs and WOs are responsible for the following additional functions during crisis or emergency operations:

(1) VACO Campus Emergencies Where Shelter-in-Place/Evacuate Recommendations Are A Consideration

(a) VAWOs and WOs will execute checklists and work guides designed for immediate response to emergent situations.

1. Checklists will include notifications to critical VA Senior Leadership responsible for crisis management decisions.

2. Checklists will support the rapid development of recommended immediate actions focused on preserving life or VA mission capability or property.

(b) In response to threats or incidents affecting the VACO Campus, the IOC will develop, coordinate, and implement emergent action procedures supportive of the VA Office of Administration.

(c) VAWOs will maintain detailed Emergency Action Checklists in response to Continuity of Government and Continuity of Operations for the VA.

(2) Actions in Support of VA's Comprehensive Emergency Management Program and related COOP actions (transition to SITE B operations)

(a) SITE B will be equipped and operated so that SITE B maintains a 'no-notice' activation capability that allows Site B to immediately assume VA IOC operations should SITE A become inoperative.

(b) SITE B steady-state operations are based on a Continuity of Government Condition (COGCON) level 2 except during COOP situations when SECVA, the Deputy Secretary or a Successor is operating from SITE B. In accordance with The National Continuity Policy Implementation Plan (NCPIP)), COGCON level 2 is defined as deployment of up to 50-75% of continuity staffs to relocate from their normal work sites to alternate locations, establish their ability to conduct operations, and prepare to perform their organization's essential functions in the event of a catastrophic emergency.

(c) Wherever practical, SITE B operations, processes and capabilities mirror SITE A.

(d) VA will assure similar operational, procedural and support capabilities are developed at SITE C.

(3) Crisis Management

(a) National Incident Management System

1. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) provides a systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work seamlessly to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life and property and harm to the environment.

2. All WOs will receive NIMS compliant/ICS training in accordance with the VA IOC Watch Officer Master Training Plan and the VA IOC Training Program. Initial training will include completion of the on-line FEMA NIMS training *ICS 100: Introduction to the Incident Command System*

3. VAWOs will complete the following additional on-line FEMA NIMS courses prior to Watch Officer certification: IS 700, National *Incident Management Systems (NIMS) an Introduction*; IS 800, *National Response Framework (NRF) an Introduction.*

(b) Transition to Crisis Management: Incident Command System (ICS) structure and ICS operations in support of VA Crisis Response Team (CRT).

1. To assure the capability to support VA CRT activation and operations, some VAWOs may receive more advanced ICS training in support of VA IOC mission areas (such as FEMA NIMS ICS 200-400 training).

2. The VAWO's assigned duties and responsibilities in accordance with the position description will determine the required NIMS qualification level.

(4) As supervised by the IOC Director, the VA IOC will develop checklists and work guides designed to support the WO processes and actions related to immediate response or emergent situations.

e. General Support to Interagency and Federal, State and Local Departments and Agencies in the National Capital Region (NCR)

(1) All WOs will be included in the development of procedures for their respective Administration/Staff Office/Organization's functions that support VA's tasks in support of the National Response Framework (NRF).

f. The NRF is a guide to how the Nation conducts all-hazards response. Additional information is included in Appendix A of this handbook.

g. VA IOC Common Operating Picture Supporting Situational Awareness

(1) The VA IOC Common Operating Picture (COP) provides VA Senior Leadership real-time decision support data. The on-duty VAWO retains continuous responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of COP data.

(2) The VA IOC will maintain COP data on the following subjects: (a) Intelligence (b) National Situation Incidents (c) External Activities Impacting VA operations (d) Scenarios involving SECVA (e) SECVA Interest Items (f) VA Resource Readiness Status (g) Continuity of Government (h) "Other Subjects" as directed by SECVA, Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, or VA IOC Director.

(3) VA IOC COP Tools will be inclusive of but not exclusive to WebEOC (as long as WebEOC is supported/funded by VA for VA IOC use).

(4) VA IOC COP will leverage geographic information system (GIS) enabled tools, models and related technology and techniques as an enabler of knowledge management. IOC GIS tools will enable the IOC to capture, manage, display and analyze all forms of geographically and temporally referenced information in support of developing accurate, credible and timely recommendations.

(5) The VA IOC will coordinate with Program Manager under Preparedness (Major Initiative #9) for classified and unclassified COP IT systems requirements.

(6) The VA IOC Director will direct and implement training and validation of COP systems for all assigned WOs.

h. Actions in Support of Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Government (VA LINE OF SUCCESSION (LOS))

(1) Develop checklists, provide coordination, support training, and implement actions, in accordance with the VA Continuity Program, Continuity of Government (COG), and Continuity of Operations (COOP) in support of the SECVA.

(2) Maintain/update a living contact directory of SECVA, DEPSECVA, and officers in the established VA line of succession.

(3) Track and monitor the location of SECVA, DEPSECVA, and successors in the established line of succession on a daily basis.

(4) Inform the Assistant Secretary for OSP when all successors are projected to be within the same city limits simultaneously in order to make timely decisions to enable VA succession to meet federal continuity criteria.

(5) Inform continuity Sites B, C, D, and E of VA Senior leadership location on a daily basis.

(6) Annually confirm with OSP Continuity Manager that all Emergency Relocation Group (ERG) members have a signed "VA ERG Member Designation" form. (Form is maintained by VA/OSP Plans and can be found as an attachment within the VA Master COOP Plan).

5. AUTHORITIES.

a. Federal Continuity Directive 1 (FCD 1), *Federal Executive Branch National Continuity Program and Requirements*, February 2008.

b. Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-5: Management of Domestic Incidents, February 28, 2003.

c. Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-7: Critical Infrastructure Identification, Prioritization, and Protection, December 17, 2003.

d. National Communications System Directive (NCSD) 3-10[12], December 8, 2006.

e. National Incident Management System[13], U.S. Department of Homeland Security, December 2008.

f. National Response Framework, January 2008.

g. National Security Presidential Directive-51/Homeland Security Presidential Directive-20 (NSPD-51/HSPD-20) National Continuity Policy, May 9, 2007.

h. Presidential Memorandum for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, February 12, 2003.

i. VA Directive 0321: Serious Incident Reports, January 21, 2010.

j. VA Directive 0322: VA Integrated Operations Center, April 29, 2010.

k. VA Directive 0323.3: Continuity Program, Nov, 05 2010

l. VA Strategic Plan FY 2011-2013.

m. National Continuity Policy Implementation Plan (NCPIP), August 2007.

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[12] This directive describes the Minimum Requirements for Continuity Communications capabilities enabling departments and agencies to execute their mission essential functions. The NCS also developed engineering implementation guidance to assist in this effort.

[13] The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a structured framework used nationwide for both governmental and nongovernmental agencies to respond to natural disasters and or terrorist attacks at the local, state, and federal levels of government.

APPENDIX A: ESSENTIAL AND EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

1. National Essential Functions

The following National Essential Functions (NEFs)[14] are the foundation for all continuity programs and capabilities and represent the overarching responsibilities of the Federal Government to lead and sustain the Nation during a crisis, and therefore sustaining the following NEFs shall be the primary focus of the Federal Government leadership during and in the aftermath of an emergency that adversely affects the performance of Government Functions:

a. Ensuring the continued functioning of our form of government under the Constitution, including the functioning of the three separate branches of government;

b. Providing leadership visible to the Nation and the world and maintaining the trust and confidence of the American people;

c. Defending the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and preventing or interdicting attacks against the United States or its people, property, or interests;

d. Maintaining and fostering effective relationships with foreign nations;

e. Protecting against threats to the homeland and bringing to justice perpetrators of crimes or attacks against the United States or its people, property, or interests;

f. Providing rapid and effective response to and recovery from the domestic consequences of an attack or other incident;

g. Protecting and stabilizing the Nation's economy and ensuring public confidence in its financial systems; and

h. Providing for critical Federal Government services that address the national health, safety, and welfare needs of the United States.

2. Department of Veterans Affairs Primary Mission Essential Function

The Department of Veterans Affairs Primary Essential Function (PMEF)[15] is (to) *"Provide medical and hospital services for Veterans, and during a disaster or emergency, for civilian victims as appropriate."*

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[14] Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 20: *National Continuity Policy*, May 9, 2007: "National Essential Functions," or "NEFs," means that subset of Government Functions that are necessary to lead and sustain the Nation during a catastrophic emergency"

[15] "Primary Mission Essential Functions," or "PMEFs," means those Government Functions that must be performed in order to support or implement the performance of NEFs before, during, and in the aftermath of an emergency.

Department of Veterans Affairs Mission Essential Functions

The following table summarizes VA's Mission Essential Functions.

Mission Essential Function (MEF)	Responsible VA Administration or/ Responsible Staff Office/Organization
Healthcare to Veterans	Veterans Health Administration
VA/DoD Contingency System	Veterans Health Administration
Furnish VA hospital care to responders and victims	Veterans Health Administration
National Disaster Medical System (NDMS)	Veterans Health Administration
Process insurance	Veterans Benefits Administration
Pay Veterans and beneficiaries	Veterans Benefits Administration
Veteran burial services	National Cemetery Administration
Support to National Response Framework (NRF)	Office of Operations, Security, & Preparedness
Account for employees	Office of Human Resources & Administration
Maintain communication capabilities related to MEFs/PMEF	Office of Information Technology
Ensure payment capabilities	Office of Management
Acquisition support	Office of Acquisitions, Logistics & Construction

Department of Veterans Affairs Support to Emergency Support Functions (ESF)

In January 2008, the National Response Framework (NRF) replaced the National Response Plan. The NRF is a guide that details how the Nation conducts all-hazards response from the smallest incident to a large scale catastrophe. The NRF establishes a comprehensive, national approach to domestic incident response. The NRF describes how Federal, State and Local government, and private and non-governmental partners apply incident management principles to ensure a coordinated, effective national response. The NRF divides overall response and recovery responsibilities into Emergency Support Functions (ESF); VA has a supporting role in 7 of the 15 ESFs:

ESF# 3-Public Works & Engineering
ESF# 5-Emergency Management
ESF# 6-Mass Care
ESF# 7-Resource Support
ESF# 8-Public Health & Medical
ESF#13-Public Safety & Security
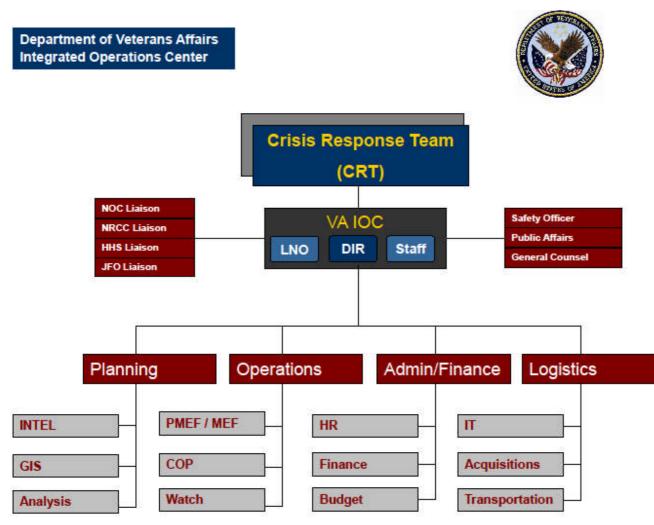ESF#15-Emergency Public Information & External Communications

The NRF defines a catastrophic incident as any natural or man-made incident that results in large numbers of casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, and/or government functions. A catastrophic incident could result in impacts which exceed resources normally available to State, tribal, local, and private-sector authorities in the impacted area; and significantly interrupts governmental operations and emergency services to such an extent that national security could be threatened. VA plays a major role in the catastrophic incident supplement of the NRF[16]. VA is intimately involved in the 15 national planning scenarios which are designed to prepare VA and the nation for hurricanes, earthquakes, pandemic flu, smallpox, improvised nuclear devices, terrorist use of explosives, and terrorist attacks involving chemical and biological weapons.

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[16] The term "response" as used in the NRF includes immediate actions to save lives, protect property and the environment, and meet basic human needs. Response also includes the execution of emergency plans and actions to support short-term recovery.

APPENDIX B: VA IOC-ICS STRUCTURE

In support of the Emergency Relocation Group (ERG), the VA IOC may expand to include "on call" IOC participants in order for VA to maximize the Department's National Incident Management System (NIMS)[17] Incident Command System (ICS) structure. In accordance with NIMS/ICS guidelines[18], the following structure will be adapted by the VA IOC Director as required by the situation.

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[17] Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5, *Management of Domestic Incidents*
[18] Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) guidelines (example: FEMA *National Incident Management System*, December 2008)

APPENDIX C: COMPOSITION OF VA CRT/ERG

When directed by SECVA or delegated authority, the VA Crisis Response Team (CRT) or the Emergency Relocation Group (ERG) may be activated. Additional VA "Administration and Staff Office/Organization" staff members may be tasked to support the ERG.

1. VA Integrated Operations Center
2. Veterans Health Administration
3. Veterans Benefits Administration
4. National Cemetery Administration
5. Office of Information Technology
6. Office of Human Resources & Administration
7. Office of Public & Intergovernmental Affairs
8. Office of Congressional & Legislative Affairs
9. Office of Management
10. Office of Acquisition, Logistics & Construction
11. Office of Policy & Planning
12. Office of Operations, Security, and Preparedness
13. Office of General Counsel
14. Board of Veterans Appeals
15. Office of Inspector General
16. Office of Secretary
17. Sites B, C, D, & E

APPENDIX D: TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Administration and Staff Office/Organization Watch Officer: Representatives from the Administrations and Staff Offices/Organizations who represent their Undersecretary, Assistant Secretary, or Key Official in the IOC. They will be referred to as VHA Watch Officer, OIT Watch Officer, etc.

Analytic Function: A generic term referencing any process or procedure or technique a WO may use to advance information fusion management. Examples could include the development of computer models/simulations, spreadsheets, GIS visual depictions, etc.

Augmented IOC: If directed by VA Senior Leadership, the VA IOC can be supported by additional VA staff members to provide sufficient staffing to support extended Emergency Response Group, Crisis Response Team or other emergent response or recovery operations.

Continuous Operations: VA IOC activities/processes that are ongoing and sustained, and are not generally expected to cease except to respond to urgent or emergency situations. VA The term encapsulates those VA IOC tasks that are on-going, are repeated or continuous seven days a week, 24-hours a day.

Crisis Response Team (CRT): VA's Senior Management (Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and other Key Officials), who provide oversight to the VA IOC and COOP Team during an incident or event.

Emergency Relocation Group (ERG): Designated staff that will relocate to a pre-identified alternate facility to continue essential functions in the event their primary work location is threatened or has been severely impacted by an incident. The VA ERG is comprised of three teams; VA Continuity of Operations (COOP) Team; VA Integrated Operations Center (IOC) Team, and VA Crisis Response Team (CRT). Members of the ERG can be deployed at anytime, with little or no warning, to ensure the continuity of the Department's essential functions.[19]

Emergency Response Operations: The mobilization/activation of VA's emergency response begins with the identification of a credible threat, an emerging threat or situation, or notification of an event of national significance. At the direction of the Secretary, the A/S OSP will notify VA Senior Leadership and Staff Offices that the Department is initiating emergency response operations.

Emergent Incident: An incident/event that may take precedence over continuous activities/processes due to urgency that may or may not also be related to an emergency or crisis situation.

Incident Command System: The staff and response structure dictated by the National Incident Management System (NIMS) that the IOC utilizes for organizational structure.

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[19] VA Directive 0323

Information Fusion Management: The value-added processes that VA IOC WOs execute to translate raw data/unfiltered information into recommendations that can support VA Senior Leadership decision making. Examples could include predictive projections based on analysis of output from computer models/simulations, spreadsheet manipulations, GIS visual depictions, etc.

Intelligence: As used within this handbook, the term intelligence means that information gathered from all sources by the IOC that supports VA Senior Leader decision making exclusive of the formally defined term "criminal intelligence." Only the OSLE Watch Officer or OSLE Duty Agent is authorized to handle criminal intelligence/data as this is generally law enforcement sensitive and not for dissemination to or by the VA IOC.

National Capital Region (NCR): The National Capital Region was created pursuant to the National Capital Planning Act of 1952 (40 U.S.C. § 71). The Act defined the NCR as the District of Columbia; Montgomery and Prince George's Counties of Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Loudon, and Prince William Counties of Virginia; and all cities now or here after existing in Maryland or Virginia within the geographic area bounded by the outer boundaries of the combined area of said counties. The NCR includes the District of Columbia and eleven local jurisdictions in the State of Maryland and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Non-Emergent Response: Non-emergent response operations are day-to-day activities that support ongoing preparedness and planning activities. Non-emergent response operations can include operational responses that are a part of VA's day-to-day mission.

Request for Action: Analogous to a VA IOC or Interagency "*Request for Information.*" A formal request for an Administration/Activity to "do something" (accomplish an "action") such as prepare to deploy VA personnel or equipment.

Stakeholder: A generic reference to those entities, organizations or individuals that have a vested interest in the VA mission (or impacts to the VA mission) or to the VA IOC.

VA IOC: The VA Integrated Operations Center (VA IOC) serves as the Department of Veterans Affairs' information and operations center that provides a single focal point for information sharing, reporting, command and control, communications specialized technologies and information collection, assessment, analysis and sharing for all VA components under emergent and non-emergent conditions. The VA IOC is continuously staffed and operational, 24 hours a day, seven days a week (24/7/365). The VA IOC maintains communication and information exchange with other Federal operations centers, such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) National Operations Center (NOC) and the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) when activated. The VA IOC also is responsible for the monitoring and exchanging information with other interagency participants, including federal, state, and local governments, and non-governmental agencies and private sector partners via the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN).

VA Senior Leadership: A generic reference to VA Federal Employees filling billets at an equivalent level of responsibility to those assigned/appointed as a VA "Administration and Staff Office/Organization" Chief of Staff, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Chairman

of the Board, General Counsel, Under Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Secretary, or those otherwise designated by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

VA Watch Officer (VAWO): Watch Officers assigned by OSP.

Watch Officer (WO): A VA staff member/representative assigned to work as a member of the VA IOC and to staff a watch station within the IOC for a period of duty.