

Situational Awareness is Key

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Our Region's ability to act swiftly and decisively to notice and no-notice events can be attributed to its ability to maintain around-the-clock operational monitoring and provide a common operating picture to all its partners. Over a decade ago, FEMA established Watch Centers in each of its regions and FEMA HQs. At the same time, it upgraded its Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCCs) to improve the delivery of services on routine disasters, as well as extend its capabilities to handle larger and more complex disasters.



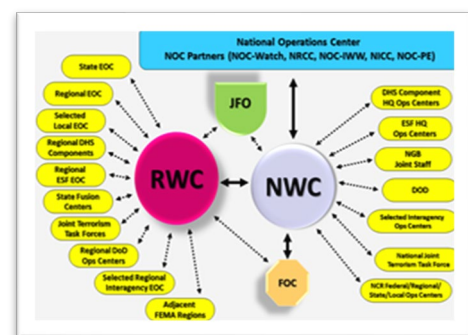
Watch Center staff monitor all types of emergencies across the United States to recognize when a coordinated federal government response may be needed. 24-hours a day/7-days a week, staff maintain situational awareness based on information gathered from a variety of sources including official government sources for hazard and threat information, news, and social media outlets. A Watch Team's monitoring is enhanced by reports and briefings that aim to provide

leadership at local, state, tribal, and Federal levels, a real-time, 360 understanding of a situation and its potential risks.

A situation/event and its individual circumstances will dictate how (and how often) information is communicated. The Region 7 Watch has three main ways it shares information with its customers. The Watch's Daily Readiness Brief provides an analysis of current regional and national threats; status open and impending disasters; identifies upcoming meetings and exercises; provides the status of regional teams; and recognizes any other item(s) that may be of interest or concern to regional staff or leadership. All of Region 7's partners are invited to attend the Daily Readiness Briefing.

The Region 7 Operational Readiness Report is presented the first Wednesday of each month. This briefing is a forward-looking comprehensive (all regional and field programs) assessment of the region's operational readiness including key factors that influence each regional cohort's "readiness to operate" (e.g., staffing and equipment, training/exercising, planning gaps, etc.) The primary audience of the Region 7 Operational Readiness Report is Region 7 staff and senior leadership.

Incident reporting (!IRs) are the result of ongoing analysis and provide more detail and decision-making support to Regional and National leadership than any other RWC report. Incident reports describe the physical effects and operational impacts of a potential or occurring incident. !IRs provide important Hazard Threshold Analysis to our key whole community partners at the Federal, state, local, and tribal levels.



The RWC is the "hub" of R7's communication network.

Incident reporting typically begins at the onset of an event and is updated as needed. The RWC uses any of these four criteria to determine if an incident report should be distributed:

- An event/incident receives national attention (e.g., network newscasts, NWC/NRCC notification, and/or FEMA Administrator's inquiry).
- An event/incident requires or may require a Federal response (e.g., Incident Management Assistance Team [IMAT] or Preliminary Damage Assessment [PDA] Team deployment, and/or other Federal agency [OFA] involvement).
- An event/incident receives a Governor's state emergency declaration.
- An event/incident results in significant tribal/state response activities.

Shared situational awareness influences decision making, minimizes confusion, reduces duplication of effort, facilitates unity of effort, and provides a basis for effective and efficient resource management. If you would like more information or would like to be added to our report's distribution list, contact the Region 7 Watch Center at FEMA-R7-WatchOps@fema.dhs.gov.

The Regional Watches maintain a 24-hour regional situational awareness to identify potential threats, conduct analysis, determine possible impacts, respond to incidents occurring within their respective areas of responsibility, report to their Regional Administrator (RA), and directly support response operations at the regional level. The Regional Watches link the RRCC, state and territory EOCs, regional DHS components, regional ESFs, state fusion centers, JTTFs, and other key state and local operational centers. The core functions of the Regional Watches are to support response operations at the regional level through information collection, analysis, management, and distribution

Daily, regional watches serve as the FEMA regional central point of coordination among the Regional Response Coordination Staff, regional DHS components, regional Emergency Support Functions, state and local fusion centers, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Joint Terrorism Task Forces, and other key state, tribal, local, and private sector operation centers.

When an emergency or disaster occurs, the affected FEMA Region's Regional Administrator may decide to activate the Region's Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC). Staffed by regional personnel, RRCCs become the primary situational awareness and operations coordination centers for support to FEMA field operations at the Unified Coordination Group level. If needed, RRCCs can be expanded to become a multi-agency facility bringing together other emergency management stakeholders like other federal and voluntary agencies and private sector partners. RRCCs remain activated until either a Federal Coordinating Officer takes control of the Federal response or the Regional Administrator decides the event no longer requires the support of the RRCC.