



City of Torrance SEMS Introductory Course

The Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) Introductory Course is intended to give participants a basic overview of SEMS, including reference to the law and regulations, standard terms and definitions, and training needs.

The introductory course will provide participants with a basic understanding of the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and assist them in describing:

- The purpose and scope of SEMS;
- Common terminology associated with SEMS;
- Basic elements of the SEMS law;
- The five levels of organization within SEMS;
- The functions and basic concepts of SEMS;
- Basic operating requirements and individual responsibilities; and
- The importance of training in SEMS.

This web hosted course is based on the State of California's Approved Course of Instruction Introductory Course (G606) Participant Reference Manual 2003. Click [here](#) to download a pdf of this entire course. If you have any questions or need assistance please contact the Emergency Services Coordinator via e-mail at TPDSEMS@Torranceca.gov or via phone at (310) 618-5725.





What is SEMS?

SEMS provides for a five level emergency response organization, activated as needed, to provide an effective response to emergencies involving multiple agencies or jurisdictions. It also provides an organization to transition from day-to-day to emergency roles.

The use of SEMS facilitates:

- The flow of emergency information and resources within and between involved agencies at all SEMS organizational levels.
- Coordination between responding agencies.
- The rapid mobilization, deployment, use, and tracking of resources.

SEMS is designed to be flexible and adaptable to the varied emergencies that can occur in California, and to meet the emergency management needs of all responders.

As a management system, SEMS is based on a proven system that has been in use for over twenty years - the Incident Management System (ICS). SEMS provides an organizational framework and guidance for operations at each level of the State's emergency management system. It provides the umbrella under which all response agencies may function in an integrated fashion.





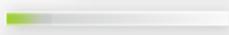
Legal Basis for SEMS

As a result of the 1991 East Bay Hills Fire in Oakland, Senate Bill 1841 was passed by the legislature and made effective on January 1, 1993. The law is found in Section 8607 of the Government Code. The intent of this law is to improve the coordination of state and local emergency response in California.

The statute directed the then Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES), now renamed the California Emergency Management Agency (CAL EMA), in coordination with other state agencies and interested local emergency management agencies, to establish by regulation the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS).

SEMS Regulations took effect in September of 1994 (California Code of Regulations Title 19, Division 2, Sections 2400- 2450).



Progress 

State Agencies and SEMS

By law, State agencies must use SEMS when responding to emergencies involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies.

The governor's Emergency Management Agency (CAL EMA) is responsible for the implementation, oversight and compliance of SEMS within the state.



Progress 

Local Governments and SEMS

Local governments are strongly encouraged to use SEMS, and they must use SEMS in order to be eligible for state funding of response related personnel costs.





Important SEMS Terms and Definitions:

Emergency Response Agency: Any organization responding to an emergency or providing mutual aid support to such an organization whether in the field, at the scene of an incident, or in an emergency operations center.

Emergency Response Personnel: All personnel involved with an agency's response to an emergency.

Emergency Operations Center: A location from which centralized emergency management can be performed. EOC facilities are found at the local government, operational area, region and state levels in SEMS.





Four Components of SEMS

- Incident Command System (ICS)
- Inter Agency Coordination
- Master Mutual Aid
- Operational Area (Op-Area)





Incident Command System (ICS)

ICS was developed as a part of the FIRESCOPE program, (Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies), during the 1970's, by an inter-agency working group representing local, state and federal fire services in California.

After field tests, ICS was adopted by the fire services in California as the standard all hazards response system. ICS also has been adopted nationally by the federal land management agencies as the standard for response to all wildland fires.

ICS is extremely flexible and can be used in both large and small situations.





Inter-agency Coordination

Inter-agency coordination as it applies to SEMS, means the participation of various agencies and disciplines involved at any level of the SEMS organization working together in a coordinated effort to facilitate decisions for overall emergency response activities, including the sharing of critical resources and the prioritization of incidents.

The cooperative and collaborative working relationship between police, fire, public works, and community services departments in an EOC is an example of Inter-agency Coordination as intended in SEMS. Another example would be the collaborative operational coordination that might occur between municipal police, county sheriff, California Highway Patrol, and National Guard elements that are involved in the same response.

SEMS Guidelines and the Approved Courses of Instruction all describe how inter-agency coordination takes place at various SEMS levels.



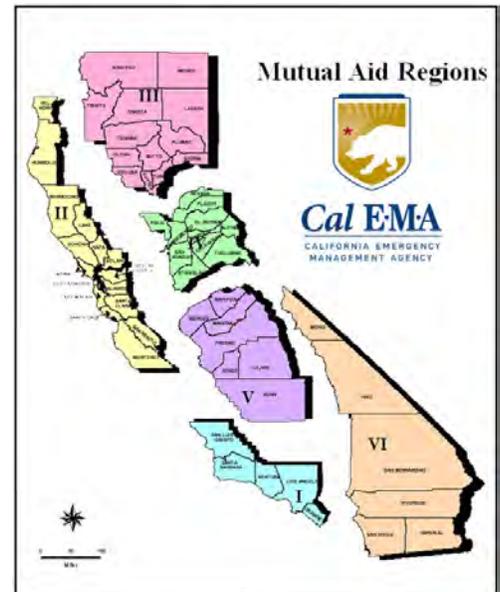


The Master Mutual Aid Agreement

A Master Mutual Aid Agreement in California was originally signed in 1950. Under this agreement, cities, counties and the State joined together to provide for a comprehensive program of voluntarily providing services, resources and facilities to jurisdictions when local resources prove to be inadequate to cope with a given situation.

Written mutual aid plans and operating procedures have been developed for several discipline specific mutual aid systems that function on a statewide basis within the Master Mutual Aid Agreement. Examples of these are fire, law enforcement, public works, coroner, and emergency managers.

There are **6 mutual aid regions** within the State. The mutual aid systems, current and planned, form essential links within SEMS. A comprehensive discussion of mutual aid is contained in the SEMS Guidelines.





Operational Areas

An Operational Area is one of the five organizational levels in SEMS. An Operational Area consists of a county, and all political subdivisions within the county area. The governing bodies of each county and of the political subdivisions in the county shall organize and structure their operational area. The county will be the lead agency for the operational area unless another arrangement is established by agreement. Overall responsibility for the formation of the Operational Area rests with the Chairman of the Boards of Supervisors in each county.

Operational Areas facilitate the coordination of resources between its member jurisdictions. Operational Areas also serve as a communication and coordination link between the Region and State level EOCs and local government EOCs within the Operational Area.

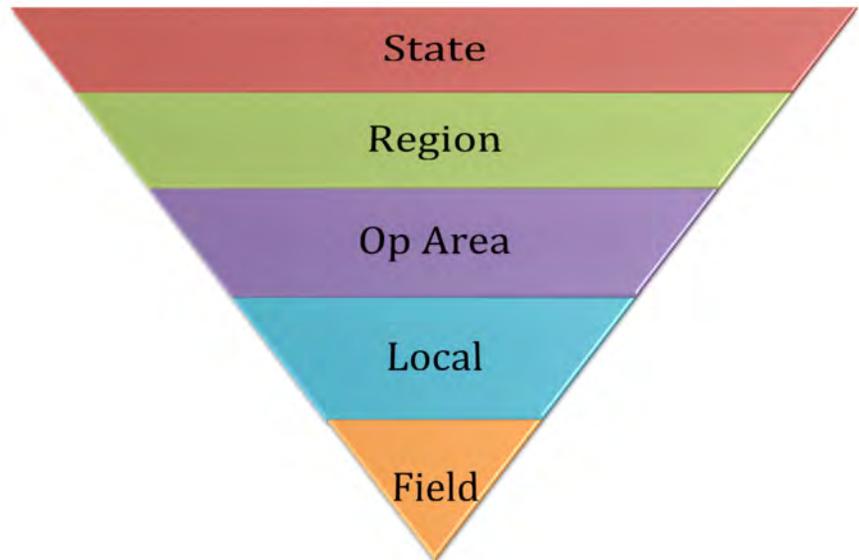




SEMS Organizational Response Levels

SEMS regulations describe five organizational response levels. The levels are:

- Field
- Local
- Operational Area
- Region
- State





Field Response Level

The field response level is the level where emergency response personnel and resources carry out tactical decisions and activities under the command of an appropriate authority in direct response to an incident or threat.

SEMS regulations require the use of ICS at the field response level of an incident.

At this level Incident Commanders can establish and maintain Incident Command Posts as required. Requests for support are coordinated through the Local Government EOC if activated.



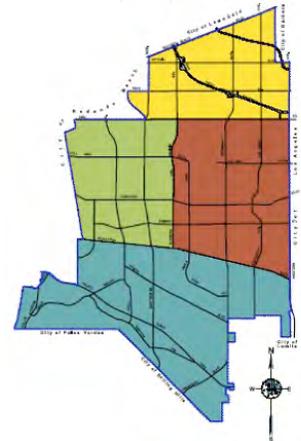


Local Government Level

Local governments include cities, counties, and special districts. Local governments manage and coordinate the overall emergency response and recovery activities within their jurisdiction.

In SEMS, the local government emergency management organization and its relationship and connections to the Field Response level may vary depending upon factors related to geographical size, population, function, or complexity.

To be compliant with SEMS, the City of Torrance will establish and maintain its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and establish Department Operations Centers (DOCs) within those departments with field response resources. The City will also implement Local Emergency Plans, support field level activity, and requests support from Operational Area (OA).





Operational Area Level

Under SEMS, the Operational Area means an intermediate level of the state's emergency services organization, which encompasses the county and all political subdivisions located within the county. The Operational Area manages and/or coordinates information, resources, and priorities among local governments within the operational area, and serves as the coordination and communication link between the local government level and the regional level.

It is important to note, that while an operational area always encompasses the entire county area, it does not necessarily mean that county government itself manages and coordinates the response and recovery activities within the county. In most cases, the county EOC will function as both the Operational Area EOC and the EOC for the county.

The governing bodies of the county and the political subdivisions within the county make the decision on organization and structure within the Operational Area.





Region Level

Because of its size and geography, the state has been divided into six Mutual Aid Regions. The purpose of a mutual aid region is to provide for the more effective application and coordination of mutual aid and other emergency related activities. The California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA) provides administrative oversight over the mutual aid regions through three Administrative Regional Offices.

In SEMS, the regional level manages and coordinates information and resources among operational areas within the mutual aid region, and also between the operational areas and the state level. The regional level also coordinates overall state agency support for emergency response activities within the region.





State Level

The state level of SEMS operates the State Operations Center at Cal EMA Headquarters in Sacramento. It is responsible for coordinating resource requests and resolving priority issues that might arise at the region level, between the three Cal EMA Administrative Regions.

The State Operations Center is also responsible for coordinating with FEMA and other federal agencies involved in the implementation of the Federal Response Plan in California.



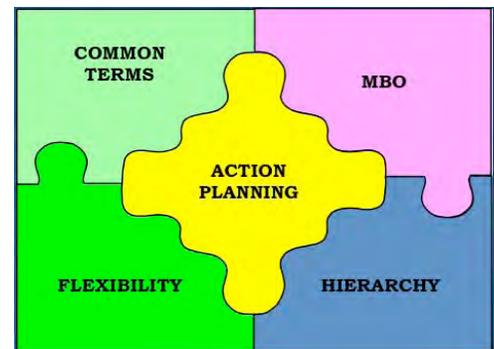


Basic Features used at each SEMS Level

SEMS has several features based on the Incident Command System (ICS). The field response level uses functions, principles, and components of ICS as required in SEMS regulations. Many of these field response level features are also applicable at local government, operational area, and region and state levels. In addition, there are other ICS features that have application to all SEMS levels.

Described below are the features of ICS, which are applicable to all SEMS levels.

- Essential Management Functions.
- Management By Objectives.
- Action Planning.
- Organizational Flexibility and Modular Organization.
- Unity of Command.
- Span of Control.
- Personnel Accountability.
- Common Terminology.
- Resources Management.
- Integrated Communications.



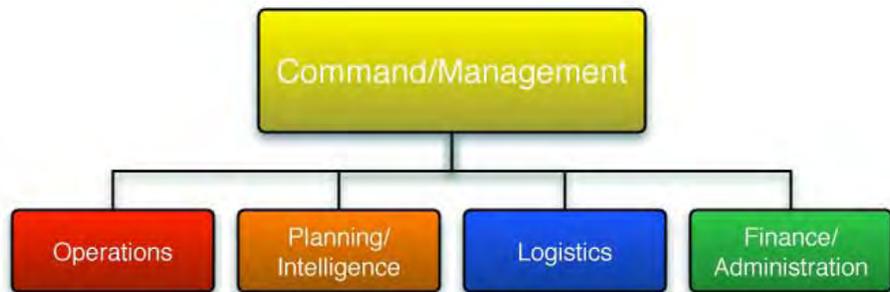


Essential Management Functions

SEMS is based on the Incident Command System (ICS). ICS has five primary functions applicable to any emergency.

These are:

- Command
- Operations
- Planning/Intelligence
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration



These functions are required for use at all SEMS levels. It should be noted that only the SEMS Field level uses the term “**Command.**” SEMS levels above the Field use the term “**Management**” to describe the function having overall responsibility for activated EOCs.





Management Function

Command/Management

Field Response Level: Command is responsible for the directing, ordering, and/or controlling of resources.

EOCs at Other SEMS Levels: Management is responsible for overall emergency policy and coordination, and is ultimately accountable for the response/recovery.





Operations Function



Operations

Field Response Level: The coordinated tactical response of all field operations in accordance with the Incident Action Plan.

EOCs at Other SEMS Levels: The coordination of all jurisdictional operations in support of the response to the emergency in accordance with the EOC Action Plan. Provides direct support for next lowest SEMS level and coordinates inter-agency response.





Planning/Intelligence Function

Planning/Intelligence

Field Response Level: The collection, evaluation, documentation, and use of information related to the incident.

EOCs at Other SEMS Levels: Collecting, evaluating, and disseminating information and maintaining documentation relative to all jurisdictional activities. Develops Situation Status Reports, and performs action planning, advance planning, and demobilization planning.





Logistics Function



Logistics

A blue rectangular button with rounded corners and a black border, containing the word "Logistics" in white text.

Field Response Level: Providing facilities, services, personnel, equipment, and materials in support of the incident.

EOCs at Other SEMS Levels: Providing facilities, services, personnel, equipment, and materials in support of all jurisdiction activities as required.





Finance/Administration Function

Finance/Administration

Field Response Level: Financial and cost analysis and administrative aspects not handled by the other functions.

EOCs at Other SEMS Levels: Broad fiscal and recovery responsibility as well as overall fiscal accountability. Also oversees compensation, claims, and cost recovery.





Roles and Functions for Personnel in SEMS Organizations

Field Level: At the field level, emergency response personnel may assume a variety of positions within the Incident Command System. The concept is to use the most qualified individuals regardless of rank or normal organization assignment. The assignment of ICS positions to personnel will be determined by:

- The kind and size of the emergency.
- Disciplines involved.
- Personnel background and experience.
- Training.
- Qualifications and Certifications.
- Agency policy.

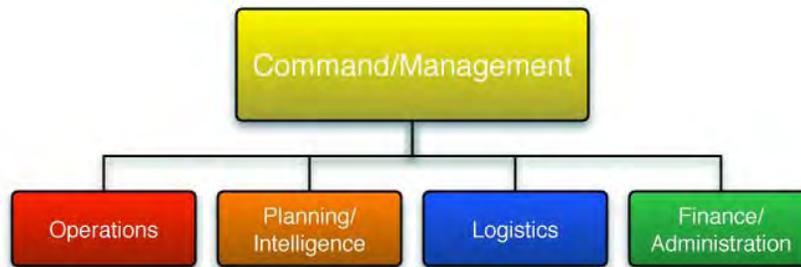
Incident Commanders may at the onset of the emergency be relatively low ranking personnel. ICS provides a mechanism for the transfer of command if the situation requires.

EOC Level: Each SEMS function within the EOC is generally staffed with individuals who have developed appropriate skills from their normal daily organization assignment. Placing the right person in each EOC position can facilitate the effective operation of the EOC. Appropriate training can also be beneficial to those assigned to perform various SEMS functions.





Torrance's EOC SEMS Staffing Relationships



Management Section: City Manager's Office

Operations Section: Law, Fire, Community Services, Public Works, Etc.

Planning/Intelligence Section: Community Development

Logistics Section: General Services, Communications and Information Technology, Transit

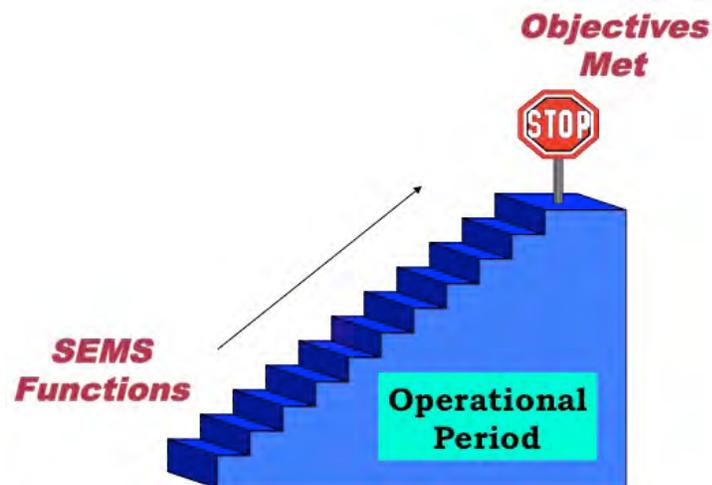
Finance/Administration: Finance





Management By Objectives

The Management by Objectives feature of ICS as applied to SEMS, means that each SEMS level should identify measurable and attainable objectives to be achieved. The time frame necessary to accomplish these objectives is known as the Operational Period.





Action Planning

Action planning should be used at all SEMS levels. The use of action plans provides designated personnel with knowledge of the objectives to be achieved and the steps required for achievement. Once objectives are determined for the operational period, the action plan provides a framework for establishing the necessary organization, making assignments and allocating resources to accomplish those objectives.

Action plans developed at the Field level are referred to as “Incident Action Plans.” Action plans developed at other SEMS levels are referred to as “EOC Action Plans.”

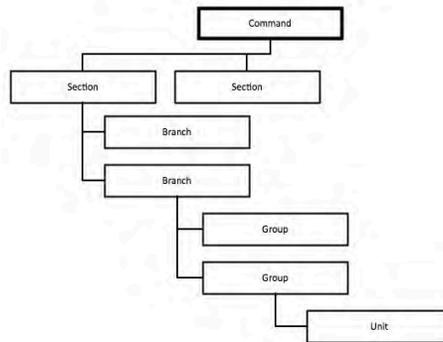




Organizational Flexibility and Modular Organization

At each SEMS level, only those elements necessary to achieve the desired objectives should be activated. The organization can be arranged in various ways within or under the five SEMS functions. The next highest level within the activated organization must accomplish tasks normally assigned to elements not activated for the event.

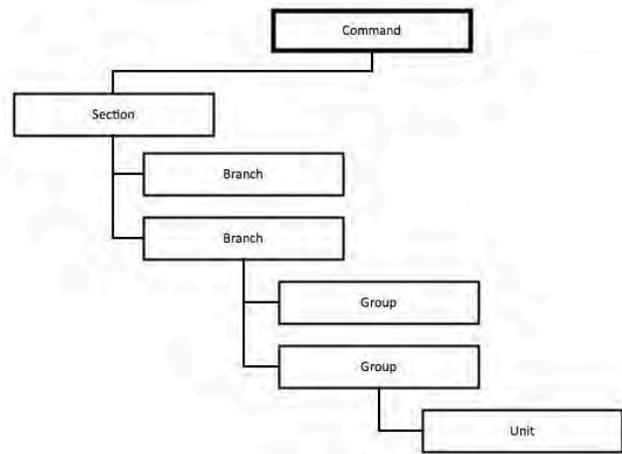
Activate what you need!





Unity of Command

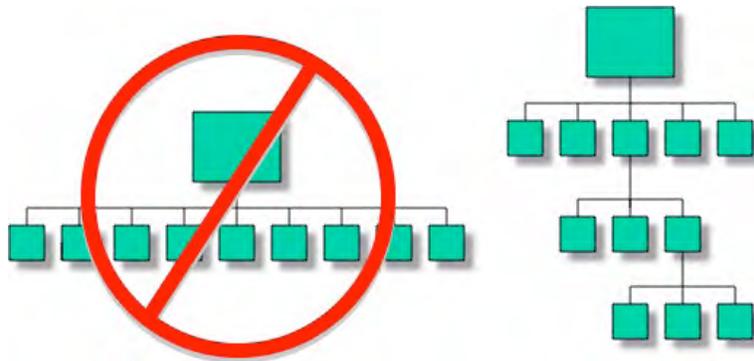
Unity of Command is a management principle that requires individuals working within an organizational structure to report to only one supervisor. Unity of Command also requires that all organizational elements within each activated SEMS level be linked together to form a single overall organization with appropriate authority relationships.





Span of Control

Maintaining a reasonable span of control is the responsibility of every supervisor at all SEMS levels. ICS development established a one to seven ratio as the maximum span of control under emergency response conditions. **A one to five ratio was established as an optimum.** This means that in an emergency response organization, one supervisor should have direct supervisory authority of no more than five positions if they are performing different functions. This ratio may be altered in some situations. For example, a supervisor may remain effective if supervising more than five responders who are all performing the same tasks, particularly if the tasks are not complex in nature.





Progress



Personnel Accountability

Personnel accountability is accomplished through the Organizational Unity and Hierarchy of Command/Management feature along with the use of check-in forms, position logs and various status keeping systems.

CITY OF TORRANCE EOC CHECK IN/OUT		1. EVENT NAME	2. DATE	3. OPERATIONAL PERIOD			
4. EMPLOYEE NAME	5. ASSIGNED POSITION	6. CHECK IN TIME	7. CHECK OUT TIME	8. TOTAL HOURS			
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							
9.							
10.							
11.							
12.							
EOC 230		9. PREPARED BY (NAME/POSITION)		Page of			

EOC 230

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Torrance OES (REVISED 09/10)





Common Terminology

Common terminology is generally applied to describe organizational elements, position titles, facility designations and resources. There may be slight variations in certain terms to facilitate communication and coordination in some disciplines.





Resources Management

The term "resource" can refer to staff, vehicles, materials or any other item that might be used during an emergency. Resource management occurs at all SEMS levels in various ways.

At the Field level, the use of resources is "tactically directed." At levels above the Field, resources are "coordinated and prioritized" for use at the Field level. There are three typical resource status conditions:

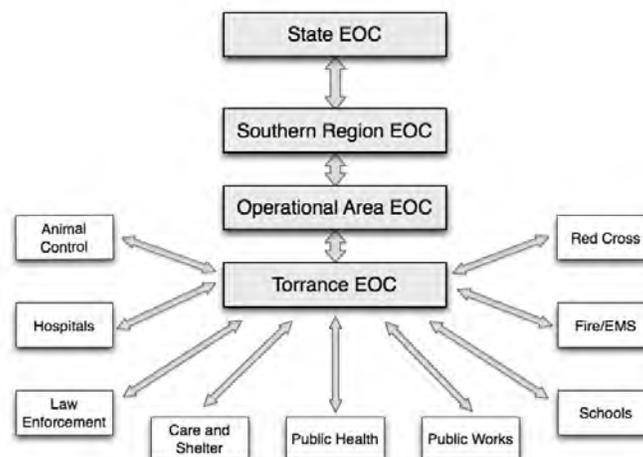
- **Available** – Resource has not received an assignment or has just completed an assignment and is awaiting new assignment.
- **Assigned** – Resource has been assigned to complete a specific mission.
- **Out of Service** – Resource needs to restock equipment, take a break or end of shift.





Integrated Communications

At the field response level, integrated communications is used on any emergency involving different agencies. At all EOC levels, and between all SEMS levels there must be a dedicated effort to ensure that communications systems, planning, and information flow are being accomplished in an effective manner.





SEMS Pre-assignment Responsibilities

The activation of any SEMS level (Field or EOC) may require personnel to be temporarily relocated for an indefinite time. While most activations will generally be of short duration (one day to a few days), there may be situations in which personnel will be absent from their normal workplace and homes for extended periods (many days or even weeks). During protracted activations, responding personnel should follow these guidelines:

- Assemble or update a travel kit containing any special technical information, e.g., maps, manuals, contact lists, and other reference materials that you may need.
- Pack personal items such as prescription drugs and other necessities in sufficient quantities.
- Review your emergency assignment. Know to whom you will report and what your responsibilities will be.
- Have a clear understanding of the decision-making authority you hold for your agency while at an incident or at an EOC.
- Determine what communications procedures should be followed so you can contact your headquarters or home office if necessary.
- Ensure that family members know your destination and how to contact you in the event of a family emergency.
- Familiarize yourself with travel and pick-up arrangements that have been established for you.
- Determine what your return mode of transportation will be if possible.





SEMS Check-in Process

Field Response Levels: All personnel assigned to an incident must check-in upon arrival. The check-in function at an incident ensures that there is complete and continuous accountability over all assigned personnel. There are various specified locations at an incident where personnel and resources check-in can be accomplished.

EOC Levels: To ensure accountability of personnel, it is essential that a check-in function be established at all EOC levels. Currently, this is done through the use of sign-in sheets, rosters etc.





Incoming Briefings in SEMS

All incoming personnel, whether to an ICS organization at the Field Response level, or reporting to an EOC, should be provided with a briefing, prior to assuming their assigned position. Briefings should include:

- Current situation assessment.
- Identification of specific job responsibilities expected of you.
- Identification of co-workers within your job function and/or geographical assignment.
- Availability of communications.
- Location of work area.
- Identification of eating and sleeping arrangements as appropriate.
- Procedural instructions for obtaining additional supplies, services and personnel.
- Identification of operational period work shifts.
- After receiving your briefing and activating your assignment, give a similar briefing to any personnel assigned to you.





General Demobilization/Release Requirements for SEMS

Agency requirements for demobilization at incidents at the Field Response or at EOC levels will vary considerably.

General demobilization considerations for all personnel at either the Field Response or EOC levels are to:

- Complete all work assignments.
- Brief subordinates regarding demobilization.
- Complete and file required forms and reports.
- Follow agency checkout procedures.
- Evaluate performance of subordinates prior to release.
- Return any communications equipment or other non-expendable supplies.
- Report to assigned departure points on time or slightly ahead of schedule.





Summary

SEMS requires emergency response agencies to use basic principles and components of emergency management including ICS, and Inter-agency Coordination.

The five primary functions of Command or Management, Operations, Planning/Intelligence, Logistics and Administration/Finance must be provided for, in all organizations at any SEMS level.

Personnel in a SEMS organization at any of the five levels must be assigned to a designated function within the organization, and at all times have designated supervision.

Personnel assigned within a SEMS organization will safely carry out their assignment for an operational period or until relieved, and will provide a briefing for incoming relief personnel as required by agency procedures.





Important Exam Notice

SEMS compliance is State mandated.

Completion of this examination is an individual effort.

Personnel who feel that test answers are being improperly provided should notify their supervisor to report the unethical conduct.

If a student is found to have acted improperly on an exam, the penalty may include -- but is not limited to -- discipline.

I agree that completion of this examination will be an individual effort.

[Continue](#)





SEMS Introductory Course Test

First Name:

Last Name:

Employee ID#:

Email:

Department:

- SEMS falls under the direction of the State's _____.
 - Emergency Management Agency
 - Office of Homeland Security
 - Highway Patrol
 - Department of Public Health
 - Office of Occupational Safety & Health
- True or False? State agencies with responsibility for responding to emergencies involving multiple jurisdictions or multiple agencies must use SEMS.
 - True
 - False
- SEMS is a system for _____.
 - Activating the EOC
 - Managing emergencies
 - Defining a rigid framework for responders
 - Integrating local resources into the federal response plan
 - Distributing pre/post disaster grants
- Of the concepts/programs below, which four are incorporated into basic framework of SEMS? (check four):
 - The Incident Command System
 - Hospital Emergency Act
 - Inter-agency Coordination System
 - Mobilization Centers
 - The Master Mutual Aid agreement
 - FEMA Response Plan
 - Operational Areas
- Which of the following lists the five organizational levels of SEMS?

- Field, City, County, District, State
- Field, Local, Operational Area, Region, State
- Field, Local, Urban Area, Region, State
- Ground, Local, Operational Area, Region, State
- Ground, City, County, District, State

6. The Incident Command System (ICS) was developed under the _____ program in the 1970s.

- Wildland Fire Taskforce
- FIRESCOPE
- Civil Defense Committee
- Department of Homeland Security
- Office of Emergency Services Fire and Rescue Service Advisory Committee

7. True or False? Operational Areas are defined by city boundaries.

- True
- False

8. How many Mutual Aid Regions has the state of California been divided into?

- Two
- Three
- Six
- Eight
- Ten

9. Match the following terms and definitions:

- a. Emergency Operations Center
- b. Emergency Response Agency
- c. Inter-agency Coordination
- d. Mutual Aid
- e. Operational Area

Voluntary provision of services and facilities when existing resources prove to be inadequate.

Any organization responding to an emergency or providing mutual aid support.

An intermediate level of the state emergency services organization.

A location from which centralized emergency management can be performed.

Agencies and disciplines at any SEMS level working together in a coordinated effort to facilitate decisions.

10. True or False? Primary coordination with the federal disaster response system takes place at the local government level.

- True
- False

11. Which is NOT one of the five primary SEMS functions?

- Command/Management
- PIO
- Operations

- Planning/Intelligence
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration

12. Optimum span of control is ___ supervisor to no more than ___ positions.

- 1:1
- 1:2
- 1:3
- 1:4
- 1:5

13. True or False? Local agencies are encouraged to implement SEMS, but are not required to do so under law.

- True
- False

14. True or False? Under ICS, Incident Commanders are always the most senior personnel at the incident.

- True
- False

15. Which is NOT a factor at the field level that can influence how personnel are selected for ICS positions.

- Personnel background and experience
- Training
- Kind and size of emergency
- Willingness to fill position
- Agency policy
- Qualifications and certifications
- Disciplines involved

16. The _____ activity at an incident ensures complete and continuous accountability over all assigned personnel.

- Check-in
- Check-out
- Demobilization
- Mobilization
- Response

17. Briefings should be provided to _____.

- All personnel
- All supervisory personnel

18. Which of the following is NOT an element that should be provided in a briefing:

- Current situation assessment
- Identification of specific job responsibilities expected of you
- Identification of co-workers within your job function and/or geographical
- Assignment Availability of communications

- Identification of funding source(s)
 - Location of work area
 - Identification of eating and sleeping arrangements
 - Procedural instructions for obtaining additional supplies, services and personnel
19. True or False? Personnel working within a SEMS organization may be assigned to several positions, and may work under several supervisors at the same time.
- True
 - False
20. General demobilization requirements for personnel at the field or EOC levels include (check all that apply):
- Complete all work assignments
 - Prepare After Action Report
 - Clear with the Safety Officer
 - Brief subordinates
 - Complete and file required forms and reports
 - Evaluate performance of subordinates
 - Obtain next assignment
 - Return all non-expendable supplies

Submit Answers



Your test has been successfully submitted.

You will receive an email confirmation at the email address provided on your final exam submission within 7 business days for the course.

If you passed the course, this email will contain your certificate of completion. You will also receive an email notice if you failed your exam.

Should you not receive a confirmation email within 14 business days, please contact the Emergency Services Coordinator via e-mail at TPDSEMS@Torranceca.gov or via phone at (310) 618-5725.

Thank you for your time to help improve the City of Torrance's disaster preparedness efforts.

