

Business Emergency Operations Center (BEOC) *Concept Overview*

The BEOC is a Private Sector organized, managed, and staffed emergency coordination/operations center focused on all-hazards disaster prevention, preparation, response, and recovery. Its goal is to make the Private Sector self-reliant and self-sufficient during emergencies and disasters through information sharing and shared situational awareness.

The BEOC is being jointly developed through a collaborative effort between academia, led by the NJ Institute of Technology (NJIT), and business, as represented by the New Jersey Business Force (NJBF.)

BEOC development is consistent with the basic guidance provided by President Bush's October 2007 *National Strategy for Information Sharing*¹ as well as the January 2008 *National Response Framework*². We have been informed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that the BEOC private sector engagement model is one of only two prototypes being considered by the DHS for national implementation. This BEOC effort places the NY/NJ region in the forefront of visibility at the both the Federal level and among several Department of Defense (DOD) agencies.



BEOC Roles and Functions

1. Business-to-Business collaboration and communications. The organization and design of the BEOC will facilitate 360 degree communications between private sector participating organizations. It will establish both a physical and technologically enabled virtual hub to connect individual company emergency operations centers (EOC's) on a real-time basis. This will provide for effective cross-industry support during a crisis.
2. Interface with Public Sector Emergency Operations Centers (EOC's.) The BEOC will be independently activated in parallel with Public Sector agencies at multiple levels of government (city, county, state, regional, national) such as the Hudson County EOC. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed with Hudson County as the initial Public Sector partner. Other Public Sector entities have contacted us regarding the expansion of this partnership initiative. Our objective is to provide a timely communication conduit with different levels of Public Sector agencies starting with those in New Jersey as the epicenter. This role is intended to be an additional level of support to the Public Sector and not to intrude upon the incident management responsibilities at play during response scenarios at the municipal, county, state, federal, and DOD levels.
3. Business to Non-Government Organization (NGO) collaboration. The BEOC will provide an important interface and collaboration function with NGO's like the American Red Cross and Salvation Army that are involved in community preparedness and response initiatives. This may include the mobilization of needed supplies and volunteers during an emergency.

¹www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/infosharing/sectionV.html

²www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/nrf-core.pdf

4. Asset and Volunteer mobilization. One of the primary operational functions of the BEOC will be to solicit, both on a pre-arranged and spontaneous basis, supplies and volunteers as needed by the Public Sector EOC partners and member NGO's. The NJBF developed Business Response Network (BRN) is available now and is populated with thousands of items available on a pro bono basis. See www.businessresponsenetwork.org for further information.

Operations

1. Staffing. The BEOC will be staffed by pre-identified, pre-trained, and pre-equipped individuals from the business community who have been empowered by their organizations to participate in BEOC drills and emergency operations. Initial member participation will likely include monthly sessions for planning, training, and exercising.
2. Physical, virtual, mobile components. The BEOC will select a primary and back-up physical facility to be activated for meetings, drills and emergency events. More significantly, technologies are currently being assembled that will enable effective participation on a virtual basis. This virtual capability is critical for both the initial minutes following an event and in cases where travel restrictions are imposed. A mobile component is being investigated with Monmouth University based on their DOD-funded work on advanced mobile command centers.
3. Volunteer registry, training, deployment, and management. An MOU has been signed with The World Cares Center (WCC) in New York City to administer the volunteer component of the BEOC. WCC is a non-profit organization specializing in the training, management, and effective use of spontaneous volunteers. See www.worldcares.org .
4. DOD participation. Negotiations are underway with Picatinny Arsenal in Morris County, NJ for use of their new EOC technology test facility as the primary BEOC physical and virtual hub location. Picatinny has been designated as the New Jersey Center for Homeland Defense Technologies and Security Readiness. See www.pica.army.mil/HLD/ .

Technologies

NJIT is heading the BEOC Technology Committee effort as a function of their role as the State of New Jersey Homeland Security Technology Center. Committee membership includes Apex Innovations, NC4, Verizon Communications, New Jersey Public Television (NJN), Picatinny Arsenal, and Monmouth University. NJIT's strategy for the BEOC is to integrate existing technologies into an effective platform for use in an emergency operations environment – especially as it relates to virtual participation. The following is a list of NJIT BEOC technology research thrust areas for 2008 and 2009:

1. Notifications/Alerts
 - Integration of the National Center for Crisis and Continuity Coordination (NC4) system alerts with other technologies, as well as potential access to NC4's E-Team product.
 - Utilization of NJN's DigitalSecure private channel datacasting capabilities.
 - Deployment of ham radio technologies to augment traditional means of communications through collaborations with RACES and MARS.

2. Collaboration

- *Communications:* 1) Use of the NJEdge Network riding on Verizon developed and maintained broadband facilities, 2) communications capabilities embedded in the NJBF Private Channel within the NC4 system, and 3) Apex Innovations i-INFO system capabilities.
 - *Integrated Platform.* Marratech's desktop video conferencing system with enhanced capabilities (i.e. integrated cell phone communications.)
 - *Physical Collaboration.* The use of the Picatinny Arsenal's EOC facilities as a test bed to build exercise simulations, exercise diverse technologies, and develop protocols for the physical BEOC.
 - *Mobile Collaboration.* An informal partnership has been established with Monmouth University to integrate their Rapid Response Center's mobile technology with the developing BEOC operational protocols.
3. Incident Management Support: Continued deployment and enhancement of the Apex Innovations' i-INFO supported BRN asset and volunteer registry database for resource sharing and inventory control.
 4. Total Integration. Moving the integrative BEOC Web Portal from an NJIT post-graduate program class project to a working prototype. This includes experimenting with adaptable user interfaces.

Governance

A Governance Committee of senior level management from various Private Sector organizations has been established to oversee BEOC policy, interface with top-level Public Sector partners (i.e. Governor, Mayor, OEM Command Staff), and to recruit the participation of senior executives of other companies and organizations. The Governance Committee will likely meet once per quarter for a two-hour session.

Participation

The BEOC is a NJBF initiated and member supported center but does not require NJBF membership for participation. NJBF membership, however, will be encouraged over time for those organizations deriving internal benefits from their BEOC involvement.

NJBF and its member organizations also seek the active support and participation of the NJ State Chamber of Commerce, NJ Business & Industry Association, ASIS, and other trade and professional organizations and associations that may be interested in the BEOC concepts and operations.

The BEOC will continue to seek partnerships with city, county, state, regional, and national Public Sector health and emergency management agencies.

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