

Department of Commerce-National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration-National Weather Service

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-2202***

***September 5, 2006***

***Operations and Services***

***Readiness 10-22***

***CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS***

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**OPR:** W/OPS1 (A.Mongeon)

**Certified by:** W/OPS1 (M. Paese)

**Type of Issuance:** Initial

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***SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:***

Signed by Mark Paese for \_\_\_\_\_ August 22, 2006

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Date

Director, Office of Operational Systems

# Continuity of Operations

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## 1 Purpose.

The Continuity of Operations (COOP) policy assures the capability exists within the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of Government to continue essential mission functions uninterrupted across a wide range of potential emergencies, including localized acts of nature, accidents, and/or terror related emergencies. COOP involves plans and capabilities for a coordinated effort to maintain minimum essential functions (MEFs), maintain a high level of readiness, and are capable of implementation with or without warning. COOP is an integral part of Continuity of Government (COG) and Enduring Constitutional Government (ECG).

The National Weather Service (NWS) operations must continue to be performed in an emergency. While the impact of a particular emergency cannot be predicted, planning for operations under such conditions can mitigate the impact of the emergency on the public, NWS employees, facilities, and mission.

## 2 Authorities

These references direct that NOAA NWS develop and maintain a COOP capability.

- a. United States Code Title 15
- b. Executive Order (EO) 12656, *Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Responsibilities*
- c. EO 13228, *Establishing the Office of Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Council*
- d. Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 63, *Critical Infrastructure Protection*
- e. PDD 67, *Enduring Constitutional Government and Continuity of Government Operations*
- f. Federal Preparedness Circular (FPC) 65, *Federal Executive Branch Continuity of Operations (COOP)*
- g. FPC 66, *Test, Training, and Exercise (TT&E) Program for Continuity of Operations (COOP)*
- h. National Response Plan
- i. Department of Commerce Administrative Order (DAO) 210-1, *Emergency Readiness Actions*, January 3, 1977
- j. DAO 210-5, *Emergency Succession to Key Officials*, January 17, 1977
- k. DAO 210-10, *Emergency Operations for Departmental Continuity*, February 23, 1996
- l. NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 210-2, *Vital Records Program*, June 13, 2006
- m. NAO 210-5, *Order of Succession to Key NOAA Programs*, May 3, 2006

## 3 Procedures.

National Weather Service Headquarters, all Financial Management Centers, Regional Headquarters, and the National Centers for Environmental Prediction will develop, maintain, and exercise a Continuity of Operations Plan. All Financial Management Centers, Regional Headquarters, and the National Centers for Environmental Prediction will also ensure their organizations develop and implement Continuity of Operations Plans. Initial plans will be developed and forwarded to NWS Headquarters not later than December 31, 2006.

## 4 Continuity of Operations Plans.

### 4.1 Notice of Confidentiality

- a. All COOP Plans will be designated as **For Official Use Only** and given appropriate protections.
- b. All COOP Plans will include the following Notice Of Confidentiality:

“Information contained in this Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) is **FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**. Portions of this plan may contain information raising privacy or other considerations, which may be exempt from mandatory disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. The information contained herein is to be used by personnel with an official “Need to Know” based on their responsibilities relative to this COOP activities. Some of the information in this plan, if made public, could endanger the lives and privacy of associates. In addition, the disclosure of information in this plan could compromise the security of essential equipment, services, and systems of the National Weather Service, or otherwise impact NWS’ ability to perform its critical functions. Unauthorized use of this information may constitute an invasion of privacy and a violation of law.”

### 4.2 Sample Plan

Appendix B provides a sample format for use in developing Continuity of Operations Plans. Continuity of Operations Plans will:

- a. Define essential functions and activities;
- b. Establish a decision process for determining actions requiring COOP implementation;
- c. Contain a roster of fully equipped and trained personnel with the authority to perform essential functions and activities;
- d. Contain procedures for employee advisories, alerts, and implementation of continuity of operations procedures with instructions for relocation to pre-designated facilities with and without warning, during duty and non-duty hours;
- e. Require maintenance of operational logs and detailed records of financial activity during COOP operations;
- f. Provide for personnel accountability throughout the duration of the emergency;
- g. Provide for attaining operational capability within 12-hours of Plan activation; and,
- h. Establish reliable processes and procedures to acquire resources necessary to sustain operations for at least 30 days.
- i. Contain a plan for Succession and Delegations of Authority;
- j. Contain a list of alternate facilities, including directions, points of contact, and telephone numbers;
- k. For each alternate facility, include a list of essential services in the immediate vicinity such as hospitals and critical facilities, eating establishments, hotels and motels, etc.
- l. Contain a list of vital records, as well as their location and instructions for recovering;
- m. Identify alternate location security instructions;

- n. Contain a list of interoperable communications (e.g. telephone, facsimile, cell and/or satellite telephones) and instructions for contacting each;
- o. Require a regular COOP training, testing, and exercise program.

## **5 COOP Plan Review and Exercising.**

### **5.1 Plan Review.**

COOP Plans will be reviewed at least annually, not later than January 15, or when the person in charge of the organization is replaced, whichever comes first. The review will be documented with a memorandum for the record. Copies of the memorandum for the record will be provided to Regional Headquarters and the NWS Homeland Security Director not later than 30 calendar days following a review occasioned by a change of organizational responsibility and January 30 of each year for the annual review.

### **5.2 Testing.**

A full test of the COOP Plan will be conducted at least annually and a report of the results of the test will be generated (e.g. scenario, functions activated, alternate site). Results of the annual testing will be forwarded to Regional Headquarters and the NWS Homeland Security Director, no later than January 30 of each year.

### **5.3 Reporting.**

Each Financial Management Center will retain a copy of all subordinate units' COOP Plans. The NWS Homeland Security Activities Director will also maintain a copy of NWS COOP Plans.

## APPENDIX A - Definitions.

- 1 Alternate Database/Records Access.** The safekeeping of vital resources, facilities, and records, and the ability to access such resources in the event that the COOP plan is put into effect.
- 2 Alternate Facilities.** An alternate work site that provides the capability to perform minimum essential department or agency functions until normal operations can be resumed.
- 3 Continuity of Government (COG).** A coordinated effort within each branch of the government to continue its minimum essential responsibilities in a catastrophic emergency.
- 4 Continuity of Operations (COOP).** An internal effort within individual components of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of government to assure the capability exists to continue essential component functions across a wide range of potential emergencies, including localized acts of nature, accidents, and technological and/or attack-related emergencies.
- 5 Designated Official.** The highest-ranking official of an agency or a designee selected by mutual agreement of agency officials.
- 6 Emergency.** A sudden, usually unexpected event that does or could do harm to people, resources, property, or the environment. Emergencies can range from localized events that affect a single office in a building, to human, natural, technological events that damage, or threaten to damage, local operations. The emergency could cause the temporary evacuation of personnel or the permanent displacement of personnel and equipment from the site to a new operating location environment.
- 7 Essential Functions.** Those functions, stated or implied, that are required to be performed by statute or Executive Order, to provide vital services, exercise civil authority, maintain the safety and well being of the general populace, and sustain the industrial and economical base in an emergency, or other functions deemed essential by the heads of principal organizational elements.
- 8 Essential Operations.** Those operations stated or implied, that are required to be filled by statute or Executive Order, or other operations deemed essential by the heads of principal organizational elements.
- 9 Essential Positions.** Those positions stated or implied, that are required to be performed by statute, Executive Order or other positions deemed essential by the heads of principal organizational elements.
- 10 Hot Wash.** An information activity that takes place after disaster response or an exercise simulating a disaster. Its purpose is to identify problems and possible solutions for improving

future responses. Observation and recommendations are used to develop "Lesson-Learned Report".

**11 Interoperable Communications.** Alternate communications that provide the capability to perform minimum essential department or agency functions, in conjunction with other agencies, until normal operations can be resumed.

**12 Management Plan.** An operational guide that ensures the implementation, maintenance, and continued viability of the COOP.

**13 Plan Maintenance.** Steps taken to ensure the plan is reviewed annually and updated whenever major changes occur.

**14 Primary Facility.** The site of normal, day-to-day operations; the location where the employee usually goes to work.

**15 Relocation Site.** The site where all or designated employees will report for work if required to move from the primary facility.

**16 Training and Exercise.** This activity includes: 1) efforts to educate/advise designated staff on COOP responsibilities, and on the existing plans; and, 2) tests to demonstrate the viability and interoperability of all plans supporting COOP requirement.

**17 Vital Records & Systems.** Hard copy or electronic records necessary to maintain continuity of operations during an emergency to recover full operations following an emergency, and to protect the legal rights and interests of citizens and the U.S. Government. The two basic categories of vital records are emergency operating records, and legal and financial records.

**18 Emergency Operating Records.** Records vital to the essential functions of the Federal Government for the duration of an emergency. Such records include emergency plans and directives, orders of succession, delegations of authority, staffing assignments, selected program records needed to continue the most critical agency operations, and related policy or procedural records. These records assist the Homeland Security Program Office in conducting operations during emergency conditions and resuming normal operations after the emergency. They must be available at relocation sites or readily accessible electronically.

**19 Legal and Financial Records.** Records required for the preservation of the legal rights and interests of individual citizens and the Federal Government. These records require protection but need not be placed at or in the vicinity of relocation sites since the records would not be needed immediately. Designated and approved alternate site locations and/or Federal Records Centers may be used for dispersal storage. Examples of these records are those containing proof of ownership, financial interest (e.g., payroll, leave, social security, and retirement, insurance), legal proceeding decisions, and research (e.g., data, programs).

## **APPENDIX B - Sample Contents of Continuity of Operations Plan**

### Notice of Confidentiality

1. Introduction
  - a. Purpose
  - b. Policy
  - c. Authority
  - d. Application and scope
  - e. Organization
  - f. Reference documents
2. COOP Activation/Mission Recovery
  - a. When is COOP activated
  - b. How is COOP activated
  - c. Communication plan
    - i. Organizational notification procedures to include who calls whom, alternate methods of contact (cell, satellite, etc)
    - ii. Notifying intermediate headquarters
      - (1) When
      - (2) How
  - d. Vital Records
  - e. Orders of succession
  - f. Delegations of authority
3. Alternate sites
  - a. Point(s) of contact
  - b. Activating alternate sites
  - c. Driving directions to alternate sites
  - d. Communication information (telephone, facsimile phone number)
4. Restoration
  - a. Roles and responsibilities
  - b. Points of contact
5. Exercise and test program and schedule

## APPENDIX C - References

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