

WORKER SAFETY AND HEALTH SUPPORT (NCESF-5A)

2023

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this appendix is to provide guidelines for implementing worker safety and health support functions during potential or actual emergencies and disasters. Additionally, this appendix describes the actions needed to ensure that threats to responder safety and health are anticipated, recognized, evaluated, and controlled consistently so that responders are properly protected during incident management operations.

B. SCOPE

The State Emergency Response Team (SERT) activates the North Carolina Department of Labor (NCDOL), Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Division as the coordinator for worker safety and health technical support. The NCDOL then coordinates mechanisms and processes used to provide technical assistance for carrying out incident safety management activities include identification and characterization of incident hazards, assessments and analyses of health risks and exposures to responders, medical monitoring, and incident risk management.

II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. SITUATION

A significant natural disaster or man-made incident may create conditions which would adversely affect the safety and health of emergency responders. A significant disaster such as an outbreak of tornadoes or a Category 4 or 5 hurricane would result in hazards such as downed trees and power lines or severely damaged or collapsed structures. In addition, secondary events such as fires, explosions, flooding and hazardous material releases may compound the problems and threaten both survivors and rescue personnel.

B. ASSUMPTIONS

1. Emergency Management activation of the State Emergency Response Team activates the NCDOL, Occupational Safety and Health Division as the coordinator for worker safety and health technical support.
2. NCDOL, OSH Division assistance and coordination may also be requested during the course of an incident if specific needs are identified by other departments or individual agencies.

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3. Private-sector and public-sector employers are responsible for the safety and health of their employees.
4. NC employers are responsible for worker health and safety pursuant to the Occupational Safety and Health Act of NC (NCGS §95-129) and in some cases 40 CFR 311, Worker Protection. This responsibility includes allocating sufficient resources for safety and health programs, training staff, purchasing protective clothing, and equipment as needed, and correcting unsafe or unsanitary conditions.
5. Worker safety and health representatives work with the SERT or local Incident Commander regarding the release of general occupational safety and health information.

III. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

A. LEAD STATE AGENCY

1. NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (NCDPS)

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (NCEM)

- a. Provides resources, including personnel and equipment, to support and assist NC emergency response agencies and federal organizations in protecting first responders and recovery workers during a local or nationally significant incident.

B. SUPPORTING STATE AGENCIES

1. NC DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (NCDOL)

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH DIVISION (OSH)

- a. Safety and health representatives work with the SERT or local Incident Commander regarding the release of general occupational safety and health information.
- b. Allocate sufficient resources for safety and health programs, training staff, purchasing protective clothing and equipment as needed, and correcting unsafe or unsanitary conditions.

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)
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IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. GENERAL

The NCDOL coordinates state and federal safety and health assets to provide proactive consideration of potential hazards. They ensure the availability and management of safety resources needed by responders and shares responder safety-related information. They coordinate among state agencies, local, and federal governments, and private-sector organizations involved in incident response.

B. NOTIFICATION

Upon notification of an incident, representatives from local, state, and federal governments and the private sector involved in incident characterization, stabilization, and cleanup will meet as directed by the SERT Leader/Incident Commander to identify and resolve conflicts, share information, and provide the SERT Safety Coordinator/Incident Command Post (ICP) Safety Officer with the information necessary to manage responder safety and health risks.

C. RESPONSE ACTIONS

1. INITIAL

- a. Provide staff to support the SERT Safety Coordinator/Incident Command Post Safety Officer.
- b. NCDOL personnel will serve as technical specialists in other ICS elements as required.
- c. Identify likely hazards associated with potential incidents and the preventative actions that can be taken to reduce or eliminate illnesses and injuries that may result from hazardous exposure.

2. CONTINUING

- a. Evaluate the need for longer term epidemiological medical monitoring and surveillance of responders.
- b. Division resolves technical, procedural, and risk assessment conflicts, if necessary through formal recourse to the SERT Safety Coordinator/ICP Safety Officer, SERT Leader or Incident Commander before they adversely affect the consistency and accuracy or the advice and information provided to responders and response organizations.

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D. RECOVERY ACTIONS

1. INITIAL

- a. Collect and manage data (exposure data, accident/injury documentation, etc.) to facilitate consistent data-formatting and data-sharing among response organizations.
- b. Carry out responder exposure monitoring, including task-specific exposure monitoring for toxins and physical stressors (e.g., noise, heat/cold, ionizing radiation).

2. CONTINUING

- a. Provide occupational safety and health technical advice and support to the SERT Safety Officer and ICP Safety Officer(s) involved in incident management.
- b. Representatives from local, state, and federal governments and the private sector involved in incident characterization, stabilization, and cleanup will meet as directed by the SERT Leader/Incident Commander to identify and resolve conflicts, share information, and provide the SERT Safety Coordinator/ICP Safety Officer with the information necessary to manage responder safety and health risks.