



WRHSAC County-Based Multi-Agency Coordination Center Executive Summary

PREPARED BY:

PREPARED ON:

PREPARED FOR:



October 3, 2013



**WRHSAC County-Based MACC Project
Final Executive Summary**

**WESTERN HOMELAND SECURITY REGION
COUNTY-BASED MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION CENTER
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

INTRODUCTION

Over the last several years, significant emergencies affecting Western Massachusetts communities have continued to demonstrate the need for increased coordination, the sharing of scarce resources, and a regional approach to emergency management. Events such as Tropical Storm Irene and the 2011 October Snowstorm brought witness to the number of challenges which arise when large-scale disasters very often overwhelm the ability to rapidly establish common operating picture while fully consuming local resources and staff in order to address immediate response needs. As a result of these types of events, a variety of After-Action Reports produced post disaster sought for the need to establish and improve upon regional planning and response capabilities within the region.

In order to further explore a regional approach to managing larger emergencies, the Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC) selected Fortress, Inc. to perform a situational assessment concerning the past and ongoing planning environment surrounding the utilization of Regional Emergency Operation Centers (REOCs) or Multi Agency Command Centers (MACCs) to manage regional emergency operations at the local level. Fortress was also tasked with developing a Feasibility Study that would explore the factors surrounding the plausibility, ownership, and management of REOC/MACCs within the region, as well as a Concept of Operations that would detail how REOC/MACCs would integrate into the existing emergency management structure within Massachusetts.

FEASIBILITY STUDY

In order to develop the Feasibility Study, Fortress conducted a comprehensive review of existing REOC/MACC plans and planning initiatives at the onset of the project. Documents such as recent disaster after action reports, regional shelter and evacuation plans, and EOC documentation revealed that while regional emergency planning has increased within the WRHSAC area over the last several years, planning regarding the utilization of REOC/MACCs had not yet progressed beyond the identification of the need for a more centralized regional solution to conducting support operations. After establishing the current state of REOC/MACC planning, Fortress moved forward to review organizations at the state, regional, and county level that could demonstrate the ability

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to fund, operate, manage and sustain an REOC/MACC operation. All organizations were measured against the ability to meet three basic criteria. These conditions included (1) the legal authority and ability to operate an REOC/MACC, (2) the existing ownership of a facility that would serve and host an REOC/MACC operation, and (3) the general ability to sustain operations through existing staff, funding, and desire. At the conclusion this process, several County Sheriff's Departments (Berkshire and possibly Franklin County), the existing MEMA REOC located in Agawam, the Franklin Council of Governments, and the City of Springfield met the requirements of the organizational review.

Fortress' resulting research supporting the development of the Feasibility Study lead to the designation of three possible REOC/MACC implementation models. The first model involves the utilization of an REOC based upon an existing model that currently exists within Barnstable County. Since a significant amount of legislation surrounding the authority of an REOC within Western Massachusetts does not exist, this option was disregarded. The second model involves the utilization of a County-Based MACC within a fixed facility. The third model includes the placement of a County MACC within the MEMA Regional EOC (REOC). WRHSAC Project Management Team members uniformly agreed that a hybrid approach, comprised of both model two and three would be most beneficial within the WRHSAC region, given the diversity and preference that exists across the four Western Massachusetts counties.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Once the Feasibility Study had been completed, Fortress moved on to develop a Concept of Operations that would demonstrate how County-Based MACCs would integrate into the existing emergency management structure and system within Massachusetts. Two separate but inter-related Concept of Operations (ConOps) were developed under the umbrella of this project. These deliverables included a Local Community Concept of Operations and a Regional/County-Based MACC Concept of Operations.

The first (Local Community) Concept of Operations focusses upon consistent and synchronized response actions that are to be employed by local communities when conducting response and recovery operations at the local level. The Local Concept of Operations is designed to guide actions related to emergency operations centers (EOC) activation and operation, as well as the implementation of protective actions (sheltering and/or evacuation). This Concept of Operations allows communities to operate independently or to take advantage of higher level support available within an MACC, however, the overall intent of this document is meant to serve primarily a guidance document which can local communities can utilize in order to train or familiarize themselves with regularly occurring emergency actions and decision points during large scale emergency situations.

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The Regional/County-Based MACC Concept of Operations builds upon the foundation that is set forth within the Local Community Concept of Operations, and further establishes the creation and operation of the WRHSAC County-Based MACC program. The operation of County-Based MACCs will provide an additional means to support the 101 local communities that are located within the WRHSAC region during small to large-scale emergency situations. MACCs will provide local communities with a regional emergency management support mechanism that will integrate with the existing local and state emergency management response and recovery structure. MACCs will be primarily responsible for coordinating the flow of information, however, this Concept of Operations also explores the role that MACCs will play in establishing situational awareness across impacted and non-impacted areas, managing and tracking resources on regional basis, supporting regional shelter and evacuation strategies, and coordinating with state level partners located at the MEMA REOC.

While the County-Based MACC project will continue to be a work in progress into the foreseeable future, this Concept of Operations establishes where MACCs will be located, how MACCs will be organized, the services that are to be delivered in support of local communities, and how the program is to be managed on a regular basis.

BENEFITS OF COUNTY-BASED MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION CENTERS (MACCS)

The REOC/MACC Feasibility Study and Regional/County Based MACC Concept of Operations have demonstrated the advantages and benefits of pursuing the continued development and operation of regional MACC operations across the four Western Massachusetts Counties located within the WRHSAC region. MACCs will provide the region with:

- Enhanced capability to perform situation awareness.
- A centralized hub that will assist in supporting regional emergency operations within the areas of sheltering, evacuation, and public information.
- Increased overall operational efficiency in conducting response and recovery missions.
- Alignment with national level policies and trending regional preparedness initiatives

MACCs will provide WRHSAC communities with additional emergency management services that integrate fluidly within the longstanding response and recovery structure within Massachusetts. The operation of these facilities will result in prompt services and support to locally impacted communities from regional staff who live, work, and understand the complexities and challenges that occur when disasters strike in Western Massachusetts.

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NEXT STEPS

Although a considerable amount of analysis and effort has been completed to date, further actions are required in order to implement the concepts outlined within the deliverables presented by this project. Buy-in and acceptance of the County-Based MACC Concept of Operations is required from the communities for which potential MACCs will eventually serve. It is recommended that this process begin in Berkshire County, where an organization and facility (Berkshire County Sheriff's Department) capable of managing and sustaining an MACC operation exists. Once outreach has occurred and support has been obtained from main support organizations (i.e. IMT, REPC groups, etc.), a formal presentation to communities located within the county should be scheduled and conducted in order to gain further support. Once the Berkshire County MACC has been accepted and approved, the process utilized for obtaining buy-in should be proposed and mirrored in neighboring counties in order to further develop the MACC program within each separate county.

Beyond obtaining buy-in, the MACC program requires further development within the area of plans and procedures which will guide actual operations. This task involves the development of Standard Operating Procedure and Emergency Response Training curriculum based upon the MACC Concept of Operations. Following completion of SOPs and training materials, training courses must be scheduled and conducted for staff involved in supporting MACC operations, in addition to actual drills and exercises required to further validate training and overall proficiency.

CONCLUSION

The MACC program presents a strong step forward toward regional integration and emergency management. Because the MACCs will be operating at a local level, MACCs will be able to rapidly coordinate with impacted and non-impacted communities in order to provide informational and resource support. Traditionally, the MEMA REOC has played this role (and will continue to do so). However, the addition of MACCs will further integrate within the existing emergency management system, while also increasing span of control, reducing waiting times and increasing overall responsiveness. Communities within the WRHSAC region will greatly benefit from the services that MACCs will provide, particularly during larger scale emergencies when many local resources are often stretched or overwhelmed. While still only in the developmental stages, the WRHSAC MACC program will greatly advance overall operational proficiency and will contribute to the region's ability to manage larger emergencies as they continue affect Western Massachusetts in the foreseeable future.