

SECTION 1

Introduction & Overview



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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Purpose and Scope

A Reception Centre is the location designated by a local authority ESS Team as a safe gathering place for people displaced from their homes as a result of an emergency or disaster. At a Reception Centre, individuals may register and receive Emergency Social Services (food, clothing, and/or lodging), as well as information about the emergency situation.

This document is intended to assist those working at a Reception Centre. It includes the guiding principles, organizational structure, function checklists, and function aids (e.g., forms, instructions, etc.) for a fully expanded ESS Reception Centre response. These guidelines can be used not only to guide the actions of local ESS Team members during an ESS Reception Centre response, but also to provide direction to ESS Teams during the ESS planning stage.

Questions and comments relating to ESS Reception Centre model should be directed to the British Columbia Provincial Emergency Program, ESS Office in Victoria, toll free at 1-800-585-9559.

History

In 2002, a discussion paper was sent to ESS Directors, ESS Support Organizations, Ministry of Human Resources staff and Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) staff introducing the concept of organizing ESS response under the Incident Command System (ICS) model. The paper outlined the pros and cons of changing the ESS response model to conform to the British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS), which is based on the ICS. Ninety-four percent of the respondents to the discussion paper were in favor of adapting BCERMS for ESS planning and response. As a result, a provincial working group was formed to develop and recommend to the ESS Office a basic BCERMS based organization and management framework, which would be available to all local authorities for ESS planning and response purposes. The ESS Program Office reviewed the recommendations made by the working group, made some minor modifications, and finalized the model.

At the 2003 Emergency Preparedness Conference in Vancouver, the ESS Program Office announced the formal adoption of BCERMS as the preferred model for providing ESS in BC. The ESS Program Office also committed to the development and distribution of Operational Guidelines for both an ESS Reception Centre response and an ESS Group Lodging response. This document addresses the former.

What is BCERMS?

BCERMS is a comprehensive management system that ensures a coordinated and organized response and recovery to all emergency incidents. It is based on the five primary management functions of the Incident Command System. This structure is used at the site level as well as at the three levels of support and coordination. The diagram below shows the BCERMS response levels.

BCERMS Response Levels

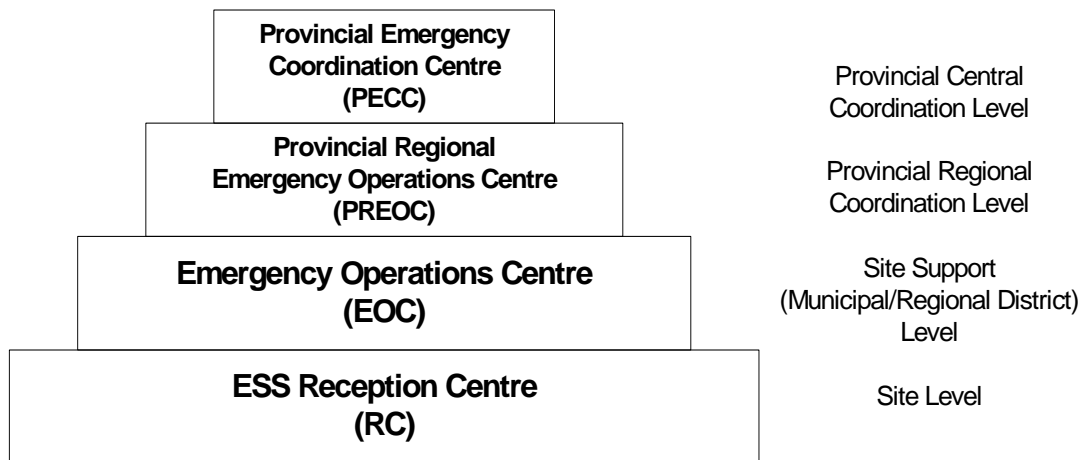


Figure 1-1: Diagram representing the levels of response in BCERMS

BCERMS Response Objectives

- provide for the safety and health of all responders,
- save lives,
- reduce suffering,
- protect public health,
- protect government infrastructure,
- protect property,
- protect the environment, and
- reduce economic and social losses.

Worker Safety

Ensuring the safety of ESS responders is always the first priority of ESS operations. Safety action items are identified throughout this document to reinforce the safety priority message and to help build safety consciousness into the culture of reception centre operations.



Guiding Principles

The following describes the ICS principles that apply to the new ESS Reception Centre model.

Five Primary Management Functions

The ESS Program has adopted five essential management functions from the Incident Command System. These five primary ICS management functions are Command/Management, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance.

Management by Objectives

The management by objectives feature of ICS means that the ESS organization establishes objectives to be achieved for a given time frame, known as an “operational period.” These objectives relate to the response goals. An objective is an aim or desired end result. It is commonly stated as “what” must be done. Each objective may have one or more strategies or tactical actions (commonly referred to as tasks) needed to achieve the objective. Strategies/tasks are stated as “how” actions should be performed.

Operational Periods

An operational period is the length of time set by Command/Management to achieve a given set of objectives. The operational period may vary in length and will be determined largely by the dynamics of the emergency situation.

Action Plans

There are two general types of Action Plans. At the Reception Centre, verbal or written Action Plans contain objectives and tasks for one operational period.

For small incidents of short duration at the site level, an Action Plan might not be written. However, in a larger response when several Reception Centres are involved, resources from multiple agencies are required, or the incident requires changes in shifts of personnel over another operational period, the Action Plan should be written. The Planning Section Chief facilitates the preparation and completion of the Action Plans. The Reception Centre Manager signs them off.

Modular Organization

The ESS Reception Centre organization expands and contracts to meet the needs of various ESS responses.

The organization chart provided in this document is for a fully expanded Reception Centre response. Only those functional Branches/Units that are required to meet current objectives need to be activated. In addition, Branches/Units within a Section may be arranged in a number of ways.

The functions of any non-activated element will be the responsibility of the next highest element in the organization. Each activated Branch/Unit must have a person in charge. However, one supervisor may take charge of more than one functional Branch/Unit.

Chain of Command

There is an orderly line of authority within the ranks of the organization, with lower levels subordinate to and connected to higher levels.

Unity of Command

Each person reports to and receives direction from one supervisor only.

Span of Control

Maintaining a reasonable span of control is the responsibility of every ESS supervisor. The command/management structure shall maintain an effective supervisory span of control at each level of the organization.

An effective span of control is determined by the ability of each supervisor to monitor the activities of assigned subordinates and to communicate effectively with them. At no time should span of control exceed seven subordinates for each supervisor. The optimum span of control ranges between one and five subordinates per supervisor. A larger span of control may be acceptable when the supervised positions or resources are performing similar activities.

Common Terminology

Where possible the Reception Centre organization uses the same terms as those used at other sites, the EOC, the PREOC and the PECC levels.

Colour Coded Identification

For ESS identification purposes a colour coding system has been developed. A green vest is worn by the Reception Centre Manager. Information, Safety and Liaison Officers wear red vests. Those working in the Operations Section wear orange; the Planning Section wears blue; the Logistics Section wears yellow, and the Finance Section wears grey.

Reception Centre Organization Charts

The fully expanded organization for a Reception Centre is shown in **Figure 1-2**.

It is important to note that not every function will be filled or addressed in every emergency. The situation at hand will dictate the functions required. As a minimum, an active Reception Centre requires only a Manager. Other functions will be activated as needed.

Figure 1-3 shows the fully expanded Reception Centre organization chart with appropriate position titles.



The smallest elements in these organization charts are referred to as *Units*. If more than one individual works within a unit, a *Supervisor* may be appointed to the unit. When the number of units in any particular section exceeds seven (maximum span of control), functional *Branches* should be established. Each Branch will have a *Branch Coordinator*. Each major function (Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance) is referred to as a *Section*. The title for each head of a Section is a *Chief*. The head of the Reception Centre is referred to as a Reception Centre *Manager*, and this position may appoint *Officers* to address the management functions of Information, Safety and Liaison.

The ESS Director is not shown on these organization charts as he/she will likely be located at the local authority Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) as the *ESS Branch Coordinator* within the Operations Section (see EOC Operational Guidelines for more information).

ESS Reception Centre Organization Chart - Functions -

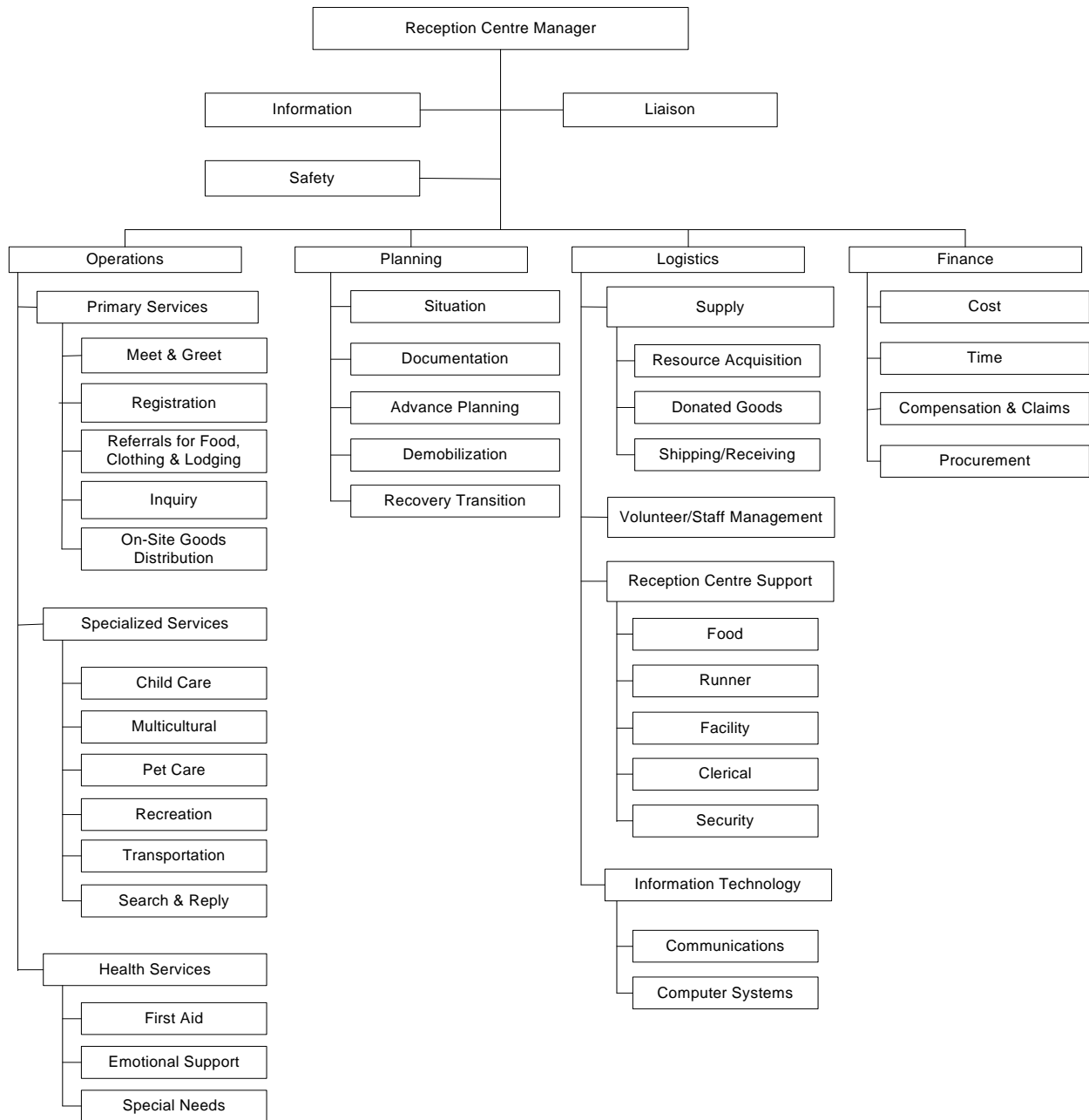


Figure 1-2: Organization Chart in a Fully Expanded Reception Centre



ESS Reception Centre Organization Chart - Position Titles -

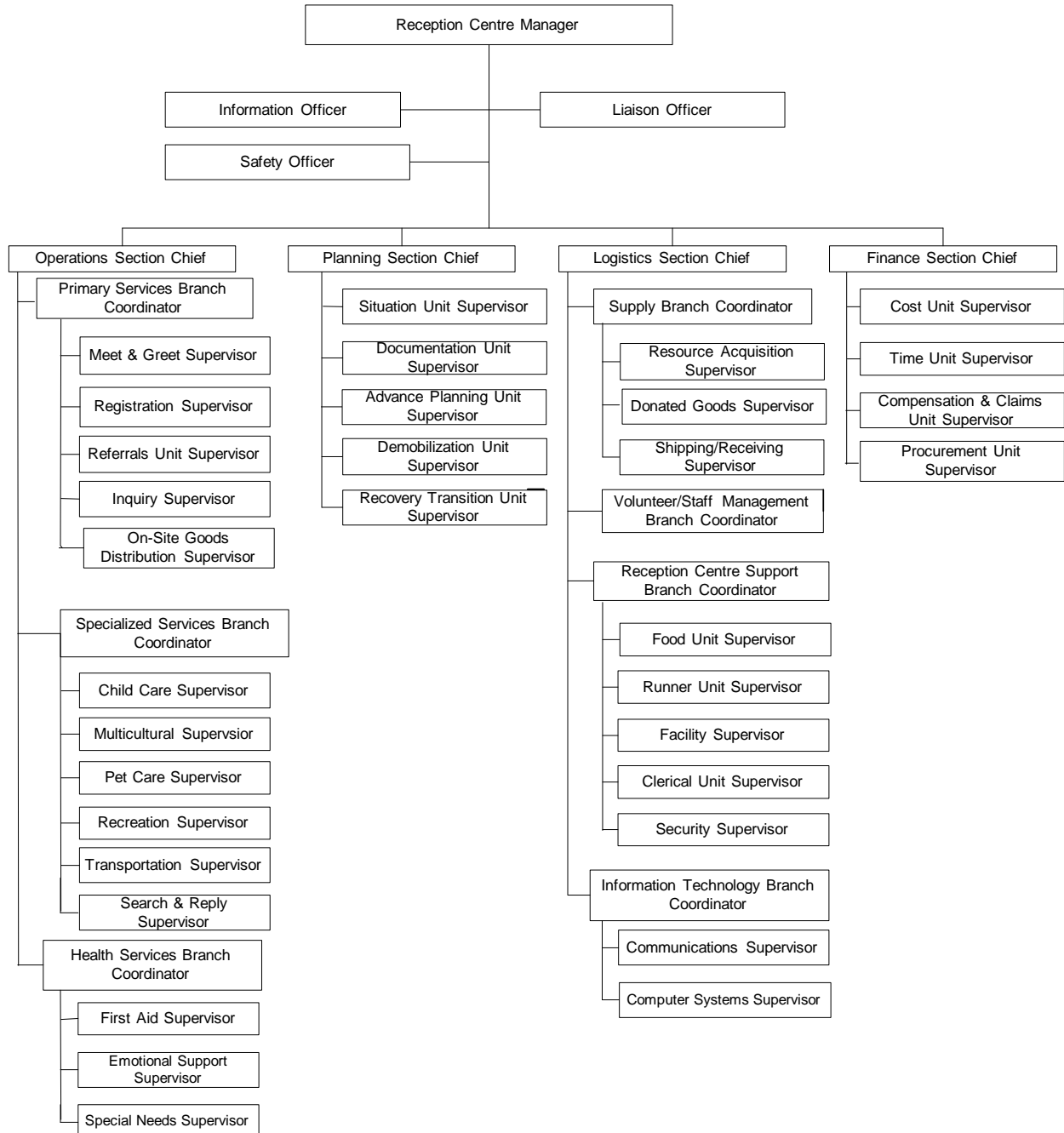


Figure 1-3: Organization Chart with Position Titles for Fully Expanded Reception Centre



Reception Centre Management Team

In the fully expanded Reception Centre organization shown on the previous page, the Reception Centre Management Team consists of the following:

Reception Centre Manager

A Reception Centre Manager is responsible for the overall management of a Reception Centre and ensuring that all required functions are activated and carried out.

Management Staff

Safety Officer

The Safety Officer monitors safety conditions and develops measures for assuring the safety of all personnel. This includes worker care.

Liaison Officer

The Liaison Officer is the primary contact for personnel from ESS Support Organizations and other external agencies arriving at the Reception Centre to work.

Information Officer

The Information Officer serves as a coordination point for media releases (approved by EOC), public meetings, and information gathering and delivery.

General Staff

The Chiefs for Operations, Planning, Logistics and Finance constitute the General Staff. They are responsible for overseeing the internal functioning of their Section and interacting with others to ensure an effective ESS response.

When span-of-control is exceeded in the Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance Sections, functional *Branches* may be established in order to oversee the effective operation of each Unit.

Operations Section Chief

The Operations Section Chief is responsible for the direct service delivery to evacuees at the Reception Centre.

Planning Section Chief

The Planning Section Chief oversees the gathering and analysis of all data regarding Reception Centre activities, conducting planning meetings and preparing the Reception Centre Action Plan for each operational period.



Logistics Section Chief

The Logistics Section Chief is responsible for providing all support needs and resources to the Reception Centre. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: supplies, equipment, personnel, refreshments, facility maintenance, and communications.

Finance Section Chief

The Finance Section Chief monitors Reception Centre costs, administers any EOC approved procurement contracts in conjunction with Logistics, and ensures that all financial records at the Reception Centre are maintained throughout the event.

ESS Activation Levels

There are three levels of ESS activation.

Level 1:

A small localized event such as a fire affecting one or two households; usually less than 12 people. A Reception Centre is not normally established.

Level 2:

A significant event affecting more than 12 people, such as an apartment fire. A reception centre is established – usually for a short duration. An EOC may be established.

Level 3:

A major emergency, such as large scale flooding or interface wild fires, involving a large scale evacuation. More than one reception centre may be established. Duration of operations may be days or weeks. An EOC is established.

Application of Operational Guidelines to ESS Activation Levels

These notes are intended to illustrate the applicability and versatility of the ESS organization structure to any given emergency event. The capacity of the organization to grow and/or compress is a key feature of the system; only those functions required for a particular ESS response should be activated. While most of these functions will take place at the Reception Centre, some may be conducted at the site level or EOC (if activated). Each response is unique. Furthermore, not every function required at the Reception Centre needs to be staffed by a separate person. For example, the same person may effectively assume the security and facility functions within the Logistics Section.

Level 1

Assistance for those impacted by single dwelling fire is an example of a Level 1 activation. The following scenario illustrates the activation of the functions required for an effective response. Due to the small size of a Level 1 event, one or two volunteers may fulfil all of the functions required (noted in parenthesis) and many of the action steps listed within each function checklist would not apply here. A Reception Centre is not normally opened.

- Fire department contacts ESS Level 1 volunteer to assist the family whose home has burned;
- The volunteer contacts PEP to get a task number for the event (Cost Unit)
- The volunteer travels to the family (Meet & Greet Unit)
- The volunteer gives each family member a blanket and each child a teddy bear (On-Site Goods Distribution Unit)
- The volunteer inquires about the family’s immediate needs and provides a “listening ear” and reassurance (Emotional Support Unit)
- If the family has no other alternatives to meet their immediate needs, the volunteer contacts ESS suppliers to confirm their availability to assist the family (Resource Acquisition Unit)
- Upon confirmation from suppliers the volunteer completes the required Referral forms and briefs the family on the services they will be receiving (Referrals for Food, Clothing and Lodging Unit)
- The volunteer ensures that the family is transported to their assigned lodging if required (Transportation Unit)
- The volunteer sends the completed paperwork to the designated community place/authority for processing (Documentation Unit)

Level 2

A large apartment fire response with the opening of one Reception Centre is a typical Level 2 activation. An Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) may or may not be activated in support. Figure 1-2 shows a fully expanded Reception Centre operation where the ESS response is provided from one location, and the resources required for the ESS response can be provided for at the Reception Centre. This document includes all the checklists and aids for each function that may be required for a Level 2 response.

Not all function checklists and aids, however, will be used in every Level 2 response. One must first determine what functions are required for a particular ESS response and to activate only those functions that are needed. For example, if evacuees arrive at the Reception Centre with no pets, the *Pet Care Unit* does not need to be activated. As the situation changes, the organization should also change. Additional functions (Units, Branches etc.) should be activated as needed and deactivated when no longer required.

Moreover, each function at a Reception Centre may not require a separate staff person. One individual may be able to fulfil the duties of more than one function (see Level 1 activation scenario).

Level 3

In a Level 3 activation more than one Reception Centre may be activated and an Emergency Operations Centre will be activated to coordinate additional support to meet the needs of evacuees. When an EOC is activated, some of the functions (Units) listed in this document may be conducted at the EOC rather than the Reception Centre. For example, procurement responsibilities of the Finance Section may be conducted at the EOC rather than the Reception Centre. In this case all that is required at the Reception Centre is a point of contact for passing on procurement information. The Finance Section Chief may fulfill this role.